MASTER TEACHERS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS:

AN INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY

by

Deborah Renee Moore

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader in South Carolina schools implementing the System for Teacher and Student Advancement, formerly known as the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). This qualitative study sought to explain the role of the master teacher, how the master teacher assumes the role of an instructional leader, what support is provided by the master teacher, what issues master teachers face as instructional leaders as well as how the master teacher enhances the school environment. The focal participant in this study was a SC TAP master teacher with 12 years' experience in this position. The main sources of data included reports, artifacts, and multiple interviews with the participant and stakeholders who observed the master teacher including teachers, principals, and state level employees. All data were analyzed through categorical aggregation and direct interpretation from which themes were formed. The themes that emerged were an overarching umbrella of support provided by the master teacher, the pedagogy necessary for the master teacher to embed authentic application of skills into the school environment, and the characteristics necessary for these to exist.

*Keywords*: master teacher, instructional leader, System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP).

**Dedication**

This manuscript is dedicated to my children, Tanner and Katelyn Ogden.  May you always follow your dreams and accomplish the goals you set for your lives.  I am extremely proud of the young adults you have become.

**Acknowledgments**

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**List of Abbreviations**

Comprehensive Online Data Systems (CODE)

Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)

Individual Growth Plan (IGP)

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

National Institute for Teaching Excellence (NIET)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)

South Carolina System for Teacher and Student Advancement (SC TAP)

Supporting Effective Educators Development (SEED)

System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP)

Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)

United States Department of Education (USDOE)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the master teacher's role as an instructional leader in one South Carolina (SC) K-5 elementary school implementing TAP, Sarolina Elementary (a pseudonym assigned for anonymity). The problem that necessitated the research for this study was a dearth of empirical research in understanding the role of TAP master teachers as instructional leaders in schools. The focal audience for this research would be the education realm, specifically those interested in certified teachers as instructional leaders. Distributed Leadership theory provided the theoretical framework for this study.

This chapter consists of a thorough background of the TAP system and how the research is related to the researcher. The chapter also describes the problem, purpose, significance of the study, and research questions driving the case study:

- What is the role of the master teacher?

- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

The chapter closes with the research plan, delimitations, limitations, and definitions used throughout the study.

### Background

Lowell Milken founded the System for Teacher and Student Advancement, formerly the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), in 1999. It is currently managed by Milken's independent public charity, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). TAP is based on four elements: multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional development, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation (NIET, 2013). One

level in the multiple career paths is the TAP master teacher. "Master teachers are charged with 'making it happen' by turning the school plan into action" (NIET, 2006, p. 8).

Master teachers are the core component of ensuring TAP is implemented on a daily basis at the school level. The master teacher's role in the four components of TAP is displayed not only through multiple career paths but also through ongoing applied professional development. "TAP is a whole system reform intended to develop, motivate, recruit, and retain high quality teachers in order to increase student achievement" (Agam, Reifsneider, & Wardell, 2006, p. 5). The master teacher is at the core of developing and retaining these teachers, which in turn increases student achievement. Many states are struggling to maintain their current work force, and therefore are turning to TAP and its foundational elements (Mann, Leutscher, & Reardon, 2013).

South Carolina is one of 10 states that has recently taken advantage of Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) and Supporting Effective Educators Development (SEED) grants offered by the United States government to implement TAP (Center for Educator Compensation Reform, 2013). According to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), the state has used TIF grants to implement TAP into 83 of its elementary, middle, and high schools (2013, para. 2). On September 18 the US Department of Education (2013) announced that it was awarding another $30 million in grants, $7.5 million going to NIET (para. 1, 5, and 9) for the implementation of more TAP schools in South Carolina. With these continuous awards, TAP schools have increasingly grown, from impacting 3,319 students in 2002, to impacting over 200,000 students in 2012 (NIET, 2014), thus resulting in an increase in the number of master teachers (NIET, 2013). The recent release of TAP Research Summary states, "with an increase in TAP schools over the previous decade, from 2002-03 through 2012-13, students in

approximately three-fourths of the TAP system schools have gained a full year or more of academic growth" (NIET, 2014, p. 5). These gains are also found in TAP supported poverty-stricken schools.

The schools' efforts to keep pace with the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) are another reason for the increase in master teachers and other instructional leaders. Schools are continuously searching for ways to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement. According to Mayo (2002), for successful school change and improvement to occur, schools have begun to adopt the role of teacher leaders. TAP is one system that offers a variety of teacher leadership roles. The principal, assistant principal, master teacher, and mentor teachers make up the TAP leadership team. This group of administrators and teacher leaders manage the TAP system on a daily basis. "Master and mentor teachers receive compensation for their additional work, and all teachers are eligible for bonuses based on measures of their students' growth, the growth of the school, and comprehensive teacher evaluations" (Eckert & Dabrowski, 2010, p. 91). The compensation received by teachers is in addition to the wealth of knowledge gained through weekly professional development.

TAP is grounded in 20 years of research (Danielson, 1996; Elmore; 2000; Fullan, 2001; Hawley, 1985; Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996; Murphy & Hart, 1986), however, since its inception there has been limited research from teachers' perspectives on the multiple career paths of the master and mentor teachers (Williams, 2009). The research in which TAP is grounded is focused on the four elements of TAP. Multiple career paths research has found a positive relationship between employee motivation and the ability for career advancement (Barrier, 1996). It also has shown collective leadership amongst teachers is the most effective style of instructional leadership (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995). One aspect of

ongoing applied professional growth research has focused on Elmore and Burney's (1997)

characteristics of successful professional development:

- Focusing on concrete classroom applications of general ideas;

- Exposing teachers to actual practice rather than descriptions of practice;

- Involving opportunities for observation, critique, and reflection;

- Providing opportunities for group support and collaboration; and

- Requiring evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise in

  teaching methods.  (NIET, 2013)

Other ongoing professional growth research has looked into Guskey's (2000) four principles of

professional development practices which focus on: learning and learners; an emphasis on

individual and organizational change; small changes guided by a grand vision; and ongoing

professional development that is procedurally embedded (NIET, 2013).  Job-embedded

professional development research offered through TAP focuses on student-centered

professional growth opportunities led by master teachers at all TAP schools.

There are currently 83 schools in South Carolina that have utilized the TAP system as a

means of improving student achievement and teaching competency; with the number of master

and mentor teachers on the rise due to the increase of TIF grants, more research was needed to

provide an understanding of these new teacher leader positions.  Current research has focused on

TAP and its effect on teachers' professional growth (Fain, 2012), merit pay (Holland, 2005), and

the master teachers' critical practice on student learning strategies (Paulmann, 2009); however,

there have not been studies conducted on the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader.

Understanding the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader can provide insight into

this job-embedded professional development that has shown to have a positive effect on student

achievement and teacher competency.  This qualitative instrumental case study focused on one South Carolina elementary school master teacher who had served in this role for 12 years in order to gain an understanding of the master teacher as an instructional leader.

## Situation to Self

The motivation for completing this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader.  I currently serve as a regional master teacher in South Carolina; however, I have never held the position of a master teacher.  I am currently assigned to coach 13 master teachers on a weekly basis to improve their ability in leading professional development and field-testing, however I do not have the experience to fully understand the struggles and job requirements of a master teacher nor have I found this in empirical literature.  I have been extensively trained in implementing TAP in schools and have previously worked concurrently with a master teacher while serving as an assistant principal.

This study relied on an ontological assumption by using the actual words of the master teacher and her colleagues, which were obtained through interviews, artifacts, and documents to construct a holistic picture of the role of a master teacher as an instructional leader.  An ontological assumption also correlates with a case study as it uses quotes and themes from the words of the participants (Creswell, 2013).  The paradigm that guided this study was constructivism, as the researcher used open-ended questions to understand the experience of a TAP master teacher (Creswell, 2013).

## Problem Statement

According to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) (2013),

Over the next decade we will face a shortage of as many as 40,000 teachers; and this state of affairs is occurring at a time when our entire U.S. economy is experiencing fierce competition for a limited pool of high quality human capital. (para. 1)

TAP provides education systems an opportunity to offer multiple career paths and performance-based compensation to entice teachers to stay in the profession and also offers in-house professional development to grow the current teacher pool. The problem was a dearth of empirical research in understanding the role of TAP master teachers as instructional leaders in a school. While many studies have looked at TAP and performance pay, few have focused on the multiple career paths (Akiba & Liang, 2011; Gius, 2012; Lavy, 2009). Other studies have examined the role of the mentor teacher at the university level (Gilles, Davis, & McGlamery, 2009) and mentor teachers in teacher preparatory programs (Johnson, 2011); however, only one (Paulmann, 2009) has focused on the role of the master teacher. Paulmann's (2009) study concentrated on master teachers' critical practice and student learning strategies whereas this study focused on determining what is the role of the master teacher and how he or she serves as an instructional leader. According to a review of literature on instructional leaders, Neumerski (2013) found that "our knowledge of how instructional leaders improve teaching remains limited" (p. 311). This study adds to the existing supportive research on instructional leaders, especially the TAP master teacher.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the master teacher's role as an instructional leader in one South Carolina (SC) K-5 elementary school implementing TAP, Sarolina Elementary (a pseudonym assigned for anonymity). The ultimate goal of SC TAP is to develop policies, practices, and procedures regarding evaluation, certification, and teacher

quality to improve teacher recruitment, retention, motivation, practices, and performance (SCDE, 2013; NIET, 2013).  Through the use of multiple career paths, TAP offers long-term professional growth, teacher involvement in school decisions, involvement of senior teachers in induction of new teachers, and the development of relatively permanent promotion to encourage career planning by teachers (NIET, 2013).  These instructional leadership practices increase the current pool of teachers and lead to teacher longevity and increases in student achievement.

## Significance of the Study

This study provides a look at the longest-standing master teacher, of 12 years, in South Carolina and how she pioneered the position in the state.  Many researchers (Fain, 2012; Gius, 2012; Lavy, 2009; Paulmann, 2009) have explored TAP and its impact on student achievement (Dispenzieri, 2009; White, 2009) but none have focused on what it means to be an instructional leader as a master teacher or even what the position of a master teacher entails.  Knowing that "the aims of instructional leadership are tied to the core work of schools: teaching and learning," it is critical that we understand the role of the TAP master teacher and its impact on teaching and learning (Neumerski, 2013, p. 316).

Other studies related to this topic have examined the elements of TAP, such as performance-based compensation and instructionally focused accountability (Akiba & Liang, 2011; Podgursky & Springer, 2007).  When considering the multiple career paths, studies have focused on the distributed leadership model (Lieberman & Miller, 2004); this leadership framework advocates for collective responsibility and a sharing of knowledge and roles (Elmore, 2000).  According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), "in this dynamic global environment, only adaptive individuals and organizations will thrive" (p. 257).  This concept is what TAP offers

through their multiple career paths of master and mentor teachers and what keeps TAP as a thriving school reform model.

In the state where this study took place, TAP was implemented in 83 schools for the 2013-2014 school year. Sarolina Elementary is located in a school district in northwestern South Carolina with a population of 3,050 students, 184 teachers, and six master teachers (SCDE, 2012). All schools in the district currently use TAP; this includes three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Sarolina Elementary has a population of 614 students, 34 teachers, and 1 master teacher (SCDE, 2012). This study offered accountability to other TAP schools by providing insight into the expectations of the master teacher and who best could fill the role within the school. This study may help new and current master teachers understand the magnitude of the position since they are often the sole master teacher in the building. Additionally, this study may assist regional master teachers in coaching current master teachers in reaching their full potential in developing the teacher profession and student academics. This study also provided further insight into the distributed leadership theory and how it affects instructional leaders in schools.

## Research Questions

Given that the purpose of this study was to understand the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader, the following questions framed this study:

- What is the role of the master teacher?
- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?
- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

**Research Plan**

A qualitative study was chosen for this research to explore an issue that cannot be easily measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).  Qualitative research searches for an understanding of complex interrelationships throughout society (Stake, 1995).  By conducting a qualitative study, I was able to gather detailed descriptions of the role of TAP master teacher through the use of interviews, artifacts, and documents, thereby obtaining insightful explanations of personal experiences.

This qualitative case study focused on a unique individual case to understand the particularities (Stake, 1995).  Quantitative researchers regularly treat uniqueness of cases as "error," outside the system of explained science; where qualitative researchers focus on these unique cases as important to understand (Stake, 1995).  Focusing on *how* and *why* questions, as well as a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context has led to an instrumental case study design (Yin, 2009).  This design was best suited for this study due to limited availability of elementary master teachers in South Carolina with extensive experience in the role of a master teacher.  As is true for most instrumental case studies, the issue of understanding the role of the master teacher was of more importance than the case itself (Stake, 1995).

According to Springer (2009), many SC TAP schools do not last beyond the five year grant of the program due to lack of funding after the grant has expired, thus many master teachers have five years' experience or less.  The ideal participant in this study was one with knowledge and experience in the role of a master teacher.  An instrumental case study provided an in-depth understanding of the role of the master teacher (Stake, 1995).

**Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations for this study included limiting the data to the experiences of one participant, for the purpose of gaining a true understanding of the role of an elementary master teacher as an instructional leader. By limiting the participant to the longest-standing K-5 master teacher in South Carolina, it allowed the voice of the most experienced to be heard and maximized what could be learned (Stake, 1995). Another delimitation includes the use of only elementary level as the majority of TAP schools in South Carolina are elementary. This increased the number of master teachers affected in the elementary setting.

Limitations to the study include limiting it to one case study due to the small number of master teachers with 12+ years' experience. Confining the study to one case limited the generalizability of the study; however, "qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize from one case to another because the contexts of cases differ" (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). Broad assumptions should only be applied to those studied—master teachers with multiple years of experience in South Carolina K-5 elementary TAP schools.

**Definitions**

1. *Cluster* – weekly applied professional development led by the master and mentor teachers (NIET, 2013, p. 13).

2. *Master Teacher* – identified member of the TAP Leadership Team who leads cluster meetings and assists in the implementation of TAP (NIET, 2013, p. 25).

3. *TAP* – a school reform model developed in 1999 by the Milken Family Foundation to restructure and revitalize the teaching profession; focused on multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation (NIET, 2013, p. 6).

4. *TAP Leadership Team* – group made up of administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers whom meet weekly to ensure TAP is implemented (NIET, 2013, p. 13).

**Summary**

This chapter provided the background to this instrumental case study, focusing on the history of TAP, its role in South Carolina, and the funding sources associated with TAP. It provided an overview of the research in which TAP is grounded, studies that have since been conducted in relationship to TAP, and the significance to which this study had on the researcher. Chapter one also provided the problem statement, which showed the empirical significance of this study to the field of education, the purpose for this study, and its significance. The chapter introduced the research questions and provided a breakdown of the research plan, delimitations, limitations, and definitions that were discussed throughout this entire case study. This chapter served as an introduction to this instrumental case study focusing on the role of the SC TAP master teacher as an instructional leader. The next chapter will focus on an in-depth review of literature available pertaining to this topic.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Overview

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the role of TAP master teacher as an instructional leader.  A thorough review of literature was conducted to examine the various roles of certified teachers who serve as elementary level instructional leaders.  On review of the limited empirical research available on the TAP master teacher, it was evident that the scope of this literature review needed to broaden to examine TAP mentor teachers, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and other shared leadership positions where teachers stood out as instructional leaders.  Although there was an exceptional amount of research on the principal as an instructional leader, the scope of this review of literature solely focused on that of certified teachers, not administrators.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) is another outlet for certified teachers to grow as instructional leaders, which is why PLCs were included in the review of literature.  Job-embedded professional development, including TAP cluster meetings, and adult learning were researched because of their effect on the growth of teachers as leaders.  To understand the roots of the TAP model, the history and functions of school reform were also included in this review of literature.  Additionally, research was conducted pertaining to distributed leadership theory to support the theoretic framework and provide a lens to understand how the master teacher performs as an instructional leader in schools.  Not only does the distributed leadership theory provide an understanding of the role of the TAP master teacher, the role of the TAP master teacher also helps to extend the understanding of the distributed leadership theory.  The primary source of research for this study was obtained through Liberty University Library, scholarly

journals, and books on educational leadership and distributed leadership theory owned personally by the researcher.

The passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, a more rigorous approach to education, required deeper thinking and understanding by all teachers, administrators, and students; because of this, many schools searched for ways to provide job-embedded professional development to help teachers prepare for more demanding academic expectations. As part of one school reform model, TAP, offers four career paths, designed to restructure the teaching field to enable networking and a new culture to thrive (Fullan, 1996). TAP's multiple career paths are based on research from business and education models that incorporate: (a) significant economic rewards for advancement; (b) continuous high performance demonstrated by employees; (c) clear standards to measure employees; (d) frequent evaluations and feedback; and (e) different roles and responsibilities associated with varying compensation models (Barrier, 1996; Murphy & Hart, 1986; Schacter, Thum, Reifsneider & Schiff, 2013). TAP's career paths include career teachers, mentor teachers, master teachers, and regional master teachers.

Multiple career paths allocate for the implementation of teacher leaders in TAP schools. Teacher leaders provide the opportunity for job-embedded professional development to occur during the school day without having to outsource to another company. Weekly professional development is one of the main responsibilities assigned to a TAP master teacher. According to NIET (2012), "while principal support is crucial, collaborative teams are more successful when facilitated by teacher-leaders who implement the new strategies in classrooms themselves and show evidence of improved student learning" (p. 4). However, much of the empirical research on educational leadership still focuses on the role of principal as the instructional leader in the

school. This case study increased existing supportive research on teachers as instructional leaders.

The term teacher-leader is not a new concept in schools; although it has become more prominent in recent years, it was first mentioned more than 70 years ago by Willard Waller (1932) who advocated for teachers to take a more active leadership role in schools (Bond, 2011). Teacher leaders are often thought of as those who exhibit excellent teaching strategies, advanced student achievement in their classrooms, and are able to assist colleagues in implementing similar teaching strategies that lead to an increase in student achievement in other classrooms (Lieberman, 2011; Neumerski, 2013; Petersen & Conway, 2011; Wetzler, 2010). To add to the limited research on this topic, the role of master teacher as an instructional leader in schools was chosen for this study. With many new master teachers applying each year to an increased number of TAP schools, a better understanding of this position was needed to assist master teachers in becoming the instructional leaders designed by the TAP system. The leadership role of a TAP master teacher is explained further through the lens of Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership theory.

**Theoretical Framework**

Distributed leadership theory delegates authority incorporating multiple leaders in an organization. Dialog among professional educators concerning distributed leadership theory began at the turn of the millennium, prior to that, many researchers focused solely on the principal when observing leadership in schools. A literature review conducted by Bennett, Wise, Woods, and Harvey (2003), found that "distributed leadership is in its infancy and a lack of empirical knowledge base still exists" (p. 11). Again in 2011, a literature review was conducted by Bolden to determine the origins and empirical research of distributed leadership, resulting in a

limited and contradictory knowledge base. According to Cole and Engestrom (1993), distributed leadership theory has roots in the 1980s and early 1990s as developing ideas about cultural and historical influences on individual cognition, which led to an understanding of this cognition being distributed through the material and social artifacts in a particular environment. "However, it is only since the mid 1990s that the idea of distributed leadership has been the focus of serious consideration in the research literature" (Timperley, 2005, p. 2).

Since 2002, there have been four models (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; MacBeth, Oduro, & Waterhose, 2004; Spillane, 2006) of distributed leadership that have been studied (Bolden, 2011). The theoretical framework for this study focused on the model provided by Spillane (2006), as much of the research was conducted in the elementary school setting. Spillane's (2006) perspective helps understand the *how* and *why* leaders do what they do.

According to Spillane (2006), distributed leadership focuses on three essential elements: leadership practice, interactions of leaders, and situation. This provided a framework for thinking about and analyzing leadership and the role of master teacher as an instructional leader in TAP schools. This new way of investigating leadership takes the focus off school principals and places it on other formal and informal leader positions in a school. Spillane's (2006) research focuses on two aspects: the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. The leader-plus aspect relies on the belief that leadership is stretched over multiple leaders; as many as seven in elementary schools (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Spillane, 2006). Camburn et al. (2003) conducted one of the first distributed leadership studies investigating multiple leaders in the context of elementary schools that had adopted a comprehensive reform model similar to TAP. The authors focused solely on the formalized roles of leadership created through the reform

model and suggested further studies on other reform models presenting distributed leadership as the main leadership style.

TAP, a unique school reform model, focuses on what Spillane (2006) refers to as the holy grail of the distributed leadership perspective- the second aspect, leadership practice. Throughout Spillane's (2006) research with various colleagues (Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2000; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2004) three types of leadership practice distributions were identified: collaborated, collective, and coordinated.  Throughout TAP, each of these leadership practices is exemplified.  Collaborated distribution is characterized as "leadership practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who work together in place and time to execute the same leadership routine" (p. 60).  This practice is at the heart of the TAP leadership team.

According to the TAP Leadership Team Handbook (NIET, 2006), the role of the leadership team and of the individual members within the leadership team is clearly defined by four essential tasks of EVERY leadership team member:

1. To develop and monitor progress toward meeting school plan goals leading to increased student achievement.

2. To plan for and monitor effective cluster operations that directly led to increased teacher proficiency and student achievement in specific areas of need.

3. To plan and implement an evaluation and post-conference schedule while continually working to strengthen each team member's skill with evaluating and conferencing, and to use the data from the evaluations to monitor and address score inflation.

4. To monitor Individual Growth Plans, how they are supported, and movement toward meeting both student achievement and teacher improvement goals.

(p. 7)

These responsibilities coincide with collaborated distribution in that all leaders are "co-performing a leadership routine together, creating a reciprocal interdependency" (Spillane, 2006, p. 61). This reciprocal interdependency allows TAP's leadership teams to stand apart from other professional learning communities. Collaborated distribution also allows for each member to grow professionally into successful school leaders.

The second leadership practice, collective distribution, is revealed through interactive work of TAP master and mentor teachers. Collective distribution is considered "practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who enact a leadership routine by working separately but interdependently" (Spillane, 2006, p. 60). The TAP Leadership Team Handbook (NIET, 2006), states that master and mentor teachers primarily work with analyzing student data obtained through action research, referred to as field-testing, in order to enhance and support career teachers in the building through their weekly cluster meetings. Collective distribution practice is exemplified through master and mentor teachers working separately to conduct and analyze field testing in classrooms, then working interdependently to bring results to cluster meetings to improve teacher practices and student achievement. This practice not only strengthens career teachers in the building but also strengthens mentor teachers, who are regular classroom teachers with additional assigned duties as stated previously in the TAP leadership team responsibilities. Collective distribution practice ensures all student strategies are field-tested with like-students in the mentor and master teachers' individual schools before providing strategies to the teachers for implementation. Collective distribution practice strengthens TAP master and mentor teachers as instructional leaders in their schools.

The third leadership practice Spillane (2006) referred to is coordinated distribution,

which is emphasized through the combined efforts of the TAP leadership team and the career teachers in the building. "Coordinated distribution refers to leadership routines that involve activities that have to be performed in a particular sequence" (Spillane, 2006, p. 60). This is evident in TAP cluster meetings, "where teachers use the Five STEPS for Effective Learning to study and develop instructional strategies for classroom application" (NIET, 2006, p. 30). Clusters follow a cycle plan where results of the field-testing are segmented into steps for TAP leadership teams to teach career teachers through clusters and individual follow-up to ensure implementation has occurred. According to Spillane (2006), career teachers were considered the followers, an essential yet narrowly researched group, in the practice of coordinated distribution through the distributed leadership model. These three components of distributed leadership: collaborated, collective, and coordinated, helped provide a framework for understanding the role of TAP master teacher as an instructional leader in TAP elementary schools. Utilizing distributed leadership as the theoretic framework for this case study increased available research in this area to provide a better understanding of distributed leadership theory and instructional leadership.

## Related Literature

### School reform

School reform is a constant reflection of societal needs. In the United States, school reform can be dated back to Horace Mann in the early 1800s (Gutek, 2005). School reform movements occurred after Sputnik, the civil rights movement, *A Nation at Risk* report, and as a result of the United State's constant need to keep pace with other nations (Bunting, 1999). Since the late 1990s the federal government has taken a more vocal approach to school reform with the adoption of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program, No Child Left Behind Act, and

Common Core State Standards. In 2003, 73% of the public believed the existing school system needed to be reformed (Rose & Gallup, 2003). This public opinion increased federal government spending on school reform initiatives with Race to the Top Fund, Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), and Supporting Effective Educators Development (SEED) grants. According to Education Week's 2014 Quality Counts report, 54% of those surveyed felt change needed to be made in the structure of schools and the majority of district administrators reported some level of support for various reform models. This support for change is one reason TIF and SEED grants are awarded to school districts around the country.

According to the US Department of Education website, the focus of the CSR program was to raise student achievement by employing proven methods and strategies to produce comprehensive school reform (USDOE, 2014). The proven strategies at increasing student achievement and teacher competency are the foundation for TAP and why it is considered a successful and federally funded school reform model. John Hopkins School of Education's Best Evidence Encyclopedia website (Slavin, 2014) stated, external comprehensive school reform models typically include

- innovative approaches to instruction and curriculum used in many subjects throughout the school;
- extensive, ongoing professional development, and coaches or facilitators in the building to help manage the reform process;
- measureable goals and benchmarks for student achievement; and
- emphasis on parent and community involvement. (2014)

These frameworks are included in Lowell Milken's TAP model. Adopting an external comprehensive school reform model allows schools to respond to public pressures and external

accountability measures created under NCLB, which require an increase in student achievement.

Under the CSR program, many grant opportunities were established to assist schools in raising student achievement. When the CSR program ended in 2005, more grant opportunities were established with Race to the Top, Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), and Supporting Effective Educators Development (SEED) grants. TIF grants, used by many TAP schools, support efforts to develop and implement performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need schools with the goals of

- improving student achievement by increasing teacher and principal effectiveness;

- reforming teacher and principal compensation systems so that teachers and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement;

- increasing the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff subjects; and

- creating sustainable performance-based compensation systems. (USDOE, 2014)

TIF grants have increased the growth in interest and use of externally developed school reform designs by providing school districts with needed funds to begin implementation (Datnow, 2000). Although TIF grants are designed to give schools 100% of the funds needed the initial year, they slowly decrease the amount of funding to allow schools to eventually sustain the models without funding from the grant. Since 2013, NIET has been using SEED grants to fund TAP in higher education to prepare future educators. SEED grants allow non-profit agencies funding to "enhance preparation of pre-service teachers, provide professional development to in-service teachers and leaders, and disseminate best practices across all 50 states" (USDOE, 2013, para. 2). SEED grants allow for TAP to reach all levels of the teaching profession and ensure continued professional development for instructional leaders.

**Professional development**

Professional development has seen many changes in the 21st century. Changes have occurred in who delivers professional development, what is delivered, and how it is delivered. Many of the changes have occurred as a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and NCLB (2001). To increase student achievement, NCLB (2001) required an increased percentage of "high-quality professional development to enable teachers to become highly qualified and successful classroom teachers" (USDOE, 2014, Sec. 1119). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), schools responded by providing professional development to 99% of public school teachers and 95% of private school teachers. Prior to NCLB (2001), professional development for teachers had largely been in response to educational fads rather than solid research (Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey, 2008). Most professional development experiences failed because (a) they did not affect what teachers do in the classroom each day, (b) teachers had little say in what they learned, (c) transferring learning from training to the classroom was difficult to achieve; and (d) there were few opportunities to practice and refine strategies (Grim, Kaufman, & Doty, 2014). Significantly raising student achievement required schools to restructure professional development for teachers, grounding it in best practices that improved classroom instruction (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, n.d.). According to NIET (2006), in addition to classroom instruction, professional development should also be offered on best practices for lesson planning and classroom environment; this is included in the TAP instructional rubric.

Guskey (2014), believed professional development should be planned backwards, beginning with student learning outcomes, new practices to be implemented, needed organizational support, desired educator knowledge and skills, and optimal professional learning

activities.  By focusing on student learning outcomes, professional development is more likely to have a positive effect on student achievement.  DuFour (2014) stated effective professional development is:

- ongoing, with a sustained, rather than episodic and fragmented, focus;

- collective, rather than individualistic;

- job-embedded, with teachers learning as they engage in their daily work;

- results-oriented, with activities directly linked to higher levels of student learning; and

- most effective in schools and districts that function as professional learning communities.  (p. 31)

These elements are included in the professional development provided in TAP schools.  Through TAP cluster meetings, professional development is offered to certified teachers and administrators by certified teachers and administered within their own building.  Career teachers are given weekly professional development in clusters and leadership team members are given weekly professional development in leadership team meetings.  Weekly professional development ensures staff members continuously grow in their knowledge of best teaching practices to ensure maximum student achievement.  In addition to student strategies taught in TAP cluster meetings, teachers are also trained on the TAP Instructional Rubric, which focuses on classroom instruction, lesson planning and designing, and classroom environment (NIET, 2006).

According to Drago-Severson (2008), growth occurs when there are increases in "cognitive, affective (emotional), interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities that enable us to manage better the complex demands of teaching, learning, leadership, and life" (p. 61).

Professional development requires the improvement of teachers' knowledge and skills to maintain their effectiveness in the classroom. Guskey (2014) believed, "to be successful in professional development efforts we must plan backward, beginning with the student learning outcomes" (p. 10). In South Carolina TAP schools, backward planning is used in professional development by first identifying the school instructional goal based on the previous year's high-stakes testing results. High-stakes tests include the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) for Kindergarten through third grades and the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) test or other state tests for fourth through eighth grades.

In addition to weekly cluster meetings focused on student needs, TAP schools offer "individual coaching and classroom-centered support, based on teacher accountability evaluations given throughout the year" (Armstrong, 2011, p. 48). It is this support that differentiates TAP from standard evaluation-based reform models. According to the 2013 TAP national survey of teacher attitudes, "92 percent of teachers in TAP schools agree with statements reporting a high level of collegiality in their schools and approximately 70% report strong agreement" (NIET, 2014, p. 15). In addition to this high level of collegiality, the survey reported 88% of teachers strongly support the job-embedded professional development provided in TAP schools (NIET, 2014). Support and collaboration are key components in meeting the needs of teachers and students; this is evident in the full year or more of academic growth achieved by students in TAP schools (NIET, 2014).

**Professional learning communities (PLC).**

Another form of professional development that emerged as a result of the school reform model is professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are recognized by the National Staff Development Council as means to improve schools and offer professional development.

According to leading PLC researchers DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006), "a PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all" (p. 3). A PLC is generally described as an

> action-oriented community; (a) gathering evidence of current levels of student learning, (b) developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in that learning, (c) implementing those strategies and ideas, (d) analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not, and (e) applying new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement. (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 4)

This is essentially the description of the TAP leadership team. The main difference is a PLC can often include parents, support staff, and career teachers who unite together on a common cause. There can be multiple PLCs occurring at a school at one time with varying focuses, thus resulting in opportunities for teachers to stand out as leaders within their schools. To ensure success of PLCs, "educators must ensure that professional learning networks are more than a forum for sharing war stories or a platform for promoting personal preferences about instruction" (DuFour, 2014, p. 30). PLCs achieve the most success when they are action-oriented and student-focused.

Another key difference between PLCs and TAP leadership teams is that often PLC meetings take place after school, resulting in teachers missing meetings and opportunities for professional development (Linder, Post, & Calabrese, 2012). By requiring weekly cluster meetings to take place during the day, every career teacher receives professional development from the master and mentor teacher in TAP schools. Key components of both PLCs and TAP leadership teams are collaboration and collegiality (Jones, Stall, & Yarbrough, 2013, p. 357). In his infamous book, *Failure is Not an Option*, Blankstein (2010) stated six principles essential to

schools with PLCs:

     (1) Principle 1- Common mission, vision, values, and goals;

     (2) Principle 2- Ensuring achievement for all students;

     (3) Principle 3- Collaborative teaming focused on teaching and learning

     (4) Principle 4- Using data to guide decision making and continuous improvements

     (5) Principle 5- Gaining active engagement from family and community; and

     (6) Principle 6- Building sustainable leadership capacity.  (p. 56)

Dufour et al.  (2006) and Blankstein (2010) share similarities in their beliefs about professional learning communities.  Professional Learning Communities are seen as a powerful staff-development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement (DuFour, 2004).  Both PLCs and TAP cluster meetings offer a professional learning environment where teachers are given opportunities for personal growth that has a positive effect on student achievement.

Similar to TAP master teachers, PLCs have an assigned member who completes the behind-the-scenes work to ensure each meeting is successful.  These assigned members are teacher leaders working to better their schools and teaching abilities.  "The professional learning community model is a grand design- a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling, but initiating and sustaining the concept requires hard work" (DuFour, 2004, p. 6).  Through PLCs, teacher leaders are given opportunities for professional advancement yet there is no assigned teacher leaders, as with TAP, to ensure research-based professional development.  Each PLC is centered on teamwork and a common focus of analyzing student data and improving the team as a whole, as opposed to individual professional growth, which occurs in TAP cluster meetings with peer coaching by leadership team members.

Individual professional growth allows teachers to work on areas of concern in best teaching practices, such as grouping, presenting instructional content, lesson structure, and pacing.  The differences between PLCs and TAP cluster meetings are what make TAP cluster meetings highly successful for teachers and students.

**TAP cluster meetings.**

The core of job-embedded, ongoing professional development in TAP schools occurs in TAP cluster meetings.  Cluster meetings are based on large-scale studies of effective professional development that demonstrate student achievement and teacher learning.  Teacher-led, on-going, and collaborative professional development has shown to increase teacher learning (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Smylie, Allensworth, Greenberg, Harris & Luppescu, 2001).  Cluster meetings occur each week for at least one hour during the school day and are led by the TAP master and mentor teachers.  TAP recommends that groups remain small to be effective, with at least two leadership team members present to provide individual coaching for career teacher professional growth in the implementation of the teacher and student strategies (NIET, 2006).  According to Hackman (2011), if a group is too large, social loafing can occur and the cluster will be less efficient.  Social loafing may diminish the professional growth obtained by career teachers in a cluster meeting.

Cluster meetings follow the five STEPS of Effective Learning, which include:

1. Identify the need or problem.
2. Obtain new teacher learning aligned to student need and formatted for classroom application.
3. Develop new teacher learning with support in the classroom.
4. Apply new learning to the classroom.

5.  Evaluate the impact on the problem or need.  (NIET, 2006, p. 80)

Along with the five STEPS, effective clusters include three essential parts: (a) an analysis of student work that informs the new learning; (b) new learning; and (c) time for teachers to develop the new learning (NIET, 2006).  The master or mentor teachers use authentic student artifacts from field-testing to provide the analysis of student work, which informs new learning; additionally, each career teacher is responsible for bringing student work to analyze and make connections to during each of the five STEPS.  In the new learning section of TAP cluster meetings, cluster leaders provide: (a) research of where the strategy being studied/applied originated; (b) effectiveness of the strategy illustrating student growth from field-testing; (c) critical attributes which teachers must implement for similar achievement gains; and (d) a model of how teachers effectively teach the strategy (NIET, 2006).  During the development time of cluster meetings, peer coaching occurs by TAP Leadership Team members with career and mentor teachers.  Career teachers are 95% more likely to transfer new knowledge into classrooms when a peer coach is present (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Development time gives teachers an opportunity to take responsibility for planning implementation of new learning while cluster leaders assess the teachers' ability to implement the new learning strategy.  This level of support gives career teachers an opportunity to proficiently implement new learning with students.  When career teachers appear to struggle during development time, leadership team members make plans to co-teach or model new learning in the career teacher's classroom to ensure students have equal opportunities for achievement.  After surveying 2,000 current and former teachers, Futernick (2007), concluded that teachers felt greater satisfaction when they believed in their own efficacy, were involved in

decision-making, and established strong collegial relationships.  These traits are embedded in each TAP cluster meeting to ensure maximum growth of all participants.

Most TAP clusters are composed of the same grade level or same content area groups to ensure the most effective professional development.  A study conducted by Daly, Moolenaar, Boliver, and Burke (2010) found elementary school teachers primarily interact with fellow teachers in the same school and grade level rather than reaching out to others.  TAP offers opportunities twice a year for TAP leadership team members to interact with other TAP leadership team members from around the state and the nation at national and state conferences.

Cluster meetings focus on Elmore and Burney's (1997) characteristics of successful professional development:

- Focusing on concrete classroom applications of general ideas;

- Exposing teachers to actual practice rather than descriptions of practice;

- Involving opportunities for observation, critique, and reflection;

- Providing opportunities for group support and collaboration; and

- Requiring evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise in teaching methods.  (NIET, 2013)

TAP cluster meetings provide continuous learning on a strategy, broken into cycles that last six to eight weeks.  Each year, TAP cluster meetings begin with a review and study of best practices from the TAP instructional rubric.  Several indicators of best practices are studied annually, including: (a) standards and objectives, (b) motivating students, (c) grouping, (d) presenting instructional content, (e) lesson structure and pacing, (f) teacher knowledge of students, (g) content implementation, (h) thinking, (i) problem solving, (j) activities and materials, (k) questioning, (l) academic feedback, (m) instructional plans, (n) student work, (o) assessment, (p)

expectations, (q) managing student behavior, (r) environment, and (s) respectful culture.

Depending on how familiar career teachers are with TAP rubrics determines how the learning is

approached. Some schools focus on how each on the indicators look and sound from a teacher

and student perspective, while others may make connections to each indicator through a certain

indicator, such as thinking. Regardless of the method studies, each cluster cycle is best achieved

through the TAP master teacher and leadership team members' understanding of the adult

learners present in each cluster meeting.

**Adult learners**

Leading effective professional development can only be implemented once the master

teacher's knowledge of how adults learn is reached. Similar to students, adults are diverse

learners whose level of understanding determines how they are challenged and what is gained in

professional development settings (Drago-Severson, 2008). According to Joyce and Showers

(2002), adult learners expect a model with authentic artifacts. They need to try something

immediately, and they need to know the why. This occurs during TAP cluster meeting's five

STEPS of Effective Learning. Each adult learner is given an opportunity to apply the

professional development immediately to his or her students with the assistance of a TAP

leadership team member until their level of understanding is reached. The Center for Public

Education (Gulamhussein, 2013) reported that adults need 20 or more practice sessions to master

a specific teaching strategy; this is one reason cluster meetings have such an affect on teachers'

growth in effective teaching practices- they are modeled each week for career teachers. The

Center for Public Education (Gulamhussein, 2013) also reported that teachers are both

technicians and intellectuals who need to understand practice and theory to have the biggest

effect on student achievement. Practice and theory are embedded in to each TAP cluster meeting

to ensure teachers are given these opportunities.

TAP master and mentor teachers must understand adult learners, but more importantly, the role of teachers as students. Master and mentor teachers' primary role is to support and teach fellow teachers to increase student achievement. Newmann, Bryk, and Nagoaka (2001) and Desimone et al. (2002) found that teacher learning and performance improved when teachers: (a) concentrated on instruction and student outcomes for the specific content and context they taught; (b) had sustained opportunities to experiment with and receive feedback on specific teaching innovations; (c) collaborated with professional peers; and (d) had influence over the substance and process of their professional development. These characteristics are evident in all cluster meetings that occur in TAP schools. "Teachers have a great deal of knowledge about their practice and their students that is incredibly valuable to other teachers" (Van Tassell, 2014, p. 76). Like students, teachers use background knowledge, conversing with others, and learning from others to increase their knowledge. TAP leadership team members' knowledge of adult learners and teachers as students is used weekly during cluster meetings in TAP schools to enhance the growth of teachers professionally.

**Instructional leaders**

Ronald Edmonds (1979) coined the term instructional leadership in his landmark study, which stated "effective schools almost always have leaders focused on instruction" (p. 22). While Edmund's research (1979), focused on principal leadership, the term has since broadened to include other leaders within schools. From the research, it is evident that teacher quality is the number one determining variable impacting student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Tivnan & Hamphill, 2005). With the expansion of educational reform initiatives introduced by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that required increased performance expectations of

teachers and students, schools have felt the pressure to add formal and informal instructional leader positions to assist in the growth of all teachers.  Some formal positions incorporated include instructional coaches, master and mentor teachers, resource teachers, and curriculum specialists; informal positions include grade level chairs and team leaders for certain subjects. Characteristics of highly effective teacher leaders considered for such leadership roles include high levels of content and procedural knowledge, data analysis skills, communication skills, and respect among colleagues (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010).  Throughout the review of literature, it is evident that a need for instructional leaders exists in schools.

Hiring the best master and mentor teachers is arguably the most critical component of TAP because master and mentor teachers:

- lead the school's professional development;

- frequently team-teach with career and specialist teachers;

- evaluate and coach teachers;

- introduce new curricula, assessment, and instructional strategies; and

- assist teachers in continually enhancing their content knowledge.  (Schacter, Thum, Reifsneider, & Schiff, 2013, p. 21-22)

Requiring the most qualified teachers in these formal and informal teacher leadership positions ensures the highest competency of teachers is met, thus resulting in higher gains in student achievement.

There are currently many studies on leader positions in schools including: teachers as leaders, instructional coaches, mentors, and professional learning communities; however, there are few empirical studies on the TAP master teacher.  For that reason, the review of literature examined these examples of instructional leaders and compares them to TAP master teachers.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), leadership is "not about personality; it's about behavior" (p. 15). An instructional leader "attempts to change such school factors as curricular content, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and cultural norms for academic achievement" (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 433). Instructional leadership is defined as "the development or exercise of intentionally planned activities by an educator that leads to significant student achievement (McCoy, 2013, p. 1). This definition focused on all educators as opposed to past definitions that related to the principal or assistant principal as the primary instructional leaders in schools. Neumerski (2013) believed the aims of instructional leadership were tied to the core work of schools: teaching and learning. Through various roles, instructional leaders served as a "resource for teachers: conducting workshops, co-planning and modeling lessons, observing teachers and providing feedback, collecting and analyzing data, facilitating dialogue and reflective critique, and promoting shared practices among peers" (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010, p. 1). Regardless of the activity, instructional leaders are focused on teacher development within the school to reach higher student achievement levels.

**Teachers as leaders.**

According to Mayo (2002), "school change and improvement cannot successfully occur without teacher leaders" (p. 29). The term 'teachers as leaders' is directly correlated with distributed leadership, where all members have a role to play in leadership. Research studies have been conducted on teachers as leaders, especially as it relates to school reform (Ballou & Podgursky, 2002; Carroll, 2009; Crow, 2007; Ghamrawi, 2013; Neumerski, 2013). Through these studies, it was evident that "a strong classroom leader's every action, large or small, contributes to the goal of student learning" (Wetzler, 2010, p. 26); however, the difference from an effective teacher to a teacher leader is that teacher leaders share this knowledge with other

teachers in their building to help build teacher competency. Teacher leaders are defined as "a teacher who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or informal capacity" (Patterson & Patterson, 2004, p. 74).

Formal positions that teacher leaders often hold are "consultants, curriculum managers, department chairs, mentor teachers, professional development coordinators, resource teachers, specialists, coaches, and demonstration teachers" (Neumerski, 2013, p. 320). When teachers are given opportunities to be leaders within the school, they feel "empowered to work collaboratively and to have a say in the decision making so that a collaborative sense of responsibility for improving student outcomes occurs" (Petersen & Conway, 2011, p. 176). According to Ghamrawi (2013), "high-quality, teacher-led professional development has the potential of fueling up the process of developing leaders at school" (p. 180). In TAP cluster meetings master teachers, along with the leadership team, boost career teachers' knowledge and use newfound strengths as examples when leading TAP cluster meetings. Through TAP, teachers become teacher leaders earlier in their careers when compared to schools without TAP (Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011). It is recommended that TAP mentors have three years of experience and master teachers have taught for five years. The opportunity to become teacher leaders early in their career drives student teachers to apply only to TAP schools upon graduation. According to Lieberman (2011), as a teacher leader, teachers are able to influence decision-making through "changing the focus of assessments from an accounting of learning to an accountability for learning, become change agents and help in reshaping the norms and expectations for students, and redefine the teaching profession as an intellectual and collaborative enterprise" (p. 17). This research confirms that the use of teacher leaders continues to grow in schools across the country.

**TAP master teacher.**

The TAP master teacher is as new as the TAP system itself, which is one reason there is a dearth of empirical research on the TAP master teacher. Qualifications of master teachers include holding advanced degrees, at least five years of successful teaching as measured by performance evaluations, excellent communication skills and an understanding of how to facilitate growth in adults, and demonstrated expertise in content, curriculum development, student learning, instructional best practices, data analysis, mentoring, and professional development (NIET, 2006). Master teachers serve as leaders to all staff members in a school and directly affect each student's ability to achieve. Master teachers are expected to have more experience in curriculum development, professional development, and mentoring than a traditional teacher; they serve as a role model for all other instructional staff and are considered the "gold standard" in teaching (NIET, 2012).

Master teachers are independent learners who strive to improve their own learning to deliver effective learning to their peers. The core component of a master teacher is to deliver high-quality professional development to career teachers.

> The master teacher's function is a unique manner relative to the traditional teacher; working with the principal, the master teacher's primary role is to analyze student data, as well as to create and institute an academic achievement plan for the building. (NIET, 2006, p. 11)

According to NIET (2012), "master teachers spend all or most of their time fulfilling instructional leadership responsibilities; they are not simply 'coaches' or 'team facilitators', but true instructional leaders in their schools" (p. 14). Master teachers differ from coaches and team facilitators by providing action research within the school and assisting teachers in data analysis,

professional learning, and evaluating teachers' effectiveness. Instructional leadership

responsibilities vary each day for master teachers. These responsibilities include field-testing,

holding and preparing for cluster meetings, conducting and scoring observations, providing

follow-up to career teachers from meetings and observations, conducting pre and post

conferences with career teachers, and researching effective teaching strategies to use in their

field testing and clusters. "In TAP schools, master teachers provide intensive coaching to

teachers in their own classrooms on a regular basis; coaching can take the form of modeling

particular instructional strategies, giving demonstration lessons, or team teaching" (Jerald & Van

Hook, 2011, p. 32). Each opportunity to provide coaching to career teachers, also improves the

skills of a master teacher as an instructional leader.

Professional growth is an expectation for the master teacher, not only providing it to

others in the building but also searching out opportunities for themself. Master teachers are

provided professional development from regional master teachers and the state TAP director.

Weekly to bi-weekly coaching and feedback on cluster operations and coaching skills is

provided to master teachers by the regional master teacher. Quarterly professional development

is provided by the entire state team to enhance skills of the master teacher in field-testing, cluster

operations, and evaluation using the TAP Instructional Rubrics with fidelity.

In addition to these opportunities for growth, NIET provides an annual conference for

TAP leadership team members. Each state team provides a summer institute incorporating all

necessary skills to improve master teachers' educational knowledge in best practices. These

continuous professional development opportunities for the TAP master teacher ensure they

remain the most knowledgeable instructional leader in the school. The master teacher epitomizes

what it means to be an instructional leader yet their impact on the educational system is only now

starting to emerge. This study helps to understand what it means to be a master teacher and how they are the instructional leaders in their school.

**TAP mentor teacher.**

Mentor teachers are another step in the multiple career paths offered through TAP. Qualifications for a TAP mentor teacher include student data that illustrates increases in student achievement, demonstration of instructional excellence, an effective communicator, and an understanding of how to facilitate growth in adults (NIET, 2006). The TAP mentor teacher often serves as a liaison between the master teacher and career teachers and is actively involved in enhancing and supporting the teaching experience. TAP mentor teachers often lead and participate in cluster meetings with the support of the master teacher. Providing follow-up from cluster meetings and evaluations is a daily responsibility of a TAP mentor teacher.

Prior to TAP, teachers who wanted career advancement only had the option to move into administration. TAP's mentor teacher career path allows classroom teachers to establish themselves as experts, taking on more responsibilities, impacting more teachers and students, while staying in the classroom (Armstrong, 2011). TAP mentors often co-teach with career teachers and provide a sounding block to improve teachers' instructional knowledge and ability. In addition to co-teaching, TAP mentor teachers often provide model lessons for career teachers to assist in proper development of how the instructional strategies should be implemented in the classroom. Co-teaching and model lessons are often provided by mentor teachers because teachers believe mentors better understand their strengths and weaknesses in the classroom. Coaching opportunities develop strong working relationships for the TAP mentor teacher as an instructional leader while allowing them to stay classroom teachers.

**Instructional coaches.**

Job responsibilities and structures of instructional coaches vary across states and districts. "The concept of instructional coaching developed in the early 1980s as a response to new ideas about teacher leadership; districts recognized that some teachers needed to learn how to meet the mandated, more stringent standards for student learning" (Neumerski, 2013, p. 322). Over the past 30 years, many definitions have been used for this position. Some believe instructional coaches are "master teachers who offer on-site and on-going instructional support for teachers; however, do not directly instruct or tutor students unless used as a means to model instruction for teachers" (Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2010, p. 873). Others believe "an instructional coach is a former teacher whose central role is to partner with the principal and teachers to bring research-based instructional practices into classrooms" (Knight, 2012, p. 54).

The instructional coach model was influenced by cognitive and situational learning theories that "built on a philosophy of partnership that values teacher choice and views the coach and teacher as equals in the process of improving instruction" (Knight, 2012, p. 54). Since the term was first introduced, there has been "little peer-reviewed research that (a) defines the parameters of the role, (b) describes and contextualizes the work of instructional coaching, or (c) explains how individuals learn to be coaches and are supported to refine their practice over time" (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010, p. 920).

Coaches, like master teachers, have been narrowly researched as to how they perform their duties and what impact they have on the school environment. Their assigned duties may include: (a) enrolling teachers to be coached; (b) identifying appropriate interventions for teacher learning; (c) model teaching; (d) gathering data in classrooms; and (e) engaging teachers in dialogue about classroom and other data (Knight, 2009). The overarching goal is for

instructional coaches to develop a learning community and support for teachers' professional

growth (Heineke & Polnick, 2013). Instructional coaches are the most used formal leadership

position in schools, especially in the areas of literacy and math. The main responsibility of an

instructional coach is to "help teachers develop critical learning behaviors and learn how to

utilize those behaviors to think deeply about what it means to teach well" (West & Cameron,

2013, p. 2). This differs from a TAP master teacher's responsibilities.

The main difference between an instructional coach and a TAP master teacher is that a

TAP master teacher conducts action research (direct instruction) in career teachers' classrooms

and provides weekly professional development during the school day, as well as weekly follow-

up to teachers' understanding of applying the concepts learned that week. Master teachers are

often seen as more of an equal than an instructional coach since they are down in the trenches

with the teachers. Often times, there is a "lack of rapport between an instructional coach and

teachers that may constrain the coach's ability to provide support to all teachers" (Marsh et al.,

2010, p. 901). According to Garcia, Jones, Holland, and Mundy (2013), it was determined there

were significant differences between schools that utilized coaches and those that did not;

however, the results were not always positive on the school environment, depending on the grade

and subject. This could be related to the lack of rapport between the coach and teacher or lack of

professional development provided for the coach (Gallucci et al., 2010).

Another area of concern for instructional coaches is the lack of feedback on their

progress. "The loneliness of the position and unwillingness of some teachers to try new

strategies for improvement can create hostile environments for instructional coaches" (Heineke

& Polnick, 2013, p. 48). This lack of support can be detrimental to the effectiveness of an

instructional coach. TAP leadership teams offer an immense amount of support for master

teachers, thus resulting in the success of these positions. Often the instructional coach relies solely on the support of the principal (Heineke & Polnick, 2013). Instructional coaches partner with the TAP leadership team in TAP schools, to strengthen the team's content knowledge and to provide support for instructional coaches.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

This review of literature covered school reform, professional development, adult learners, and various types of instructional leaders found in public schools. Each of these is integral in the role of a TAP master teacher. It examined how educational policy is providing new meaning to the term instructional leaders, especially at the elementary level through the jobs of instructional coaches, master and mentor teachers, and professional learning communities. This shift in roles exemplifies that "instructional leadership requires more than just passing tests and achieving minimum standards; it requires leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions that move schools to an inquiry footing and a path of continuous improvement with respect to teaching and learning" (Brazer & Bauer, 2013, pp. 646-647).

Forty-three states have adopted the Common Core State Standards as of December 2014, meaning more changes are sure to take place in the makeup of instructional leadership in schools (Common Core State Standards Initiatives, 2014). Adopting the distributed leadership theory can provide a framework for schools to analyze leadership responsibilities across several positions to provide job-embedded professional development needed to help teachers meet the Common Core State Standards. This instrumental study on the TAP master teacher provides educators with an in-depth examination of the qualifications of a master teacher and how to become a strong educational leader in schools. Understanding qualifications of a master teacher as an instructional leader could help current master teachers and leadership teams strengthen

current practices.  It may also provide an analysis for future schools that are considering

becoming TAP schools.  This study increased available research on the understanding of the

TAP master teacher position.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

## Overview

According to Yin (2009), the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events to understand complex social phenomena. An instrumental case focuses on a single case bounded by the investigator in the process of designing the research (Stake, 1995). This instrumental case study was conducted by interviewing a former SC TAP elementary school master teacher and collecting data and documents from her time as a master teacher. (The master teacher recently took advantage of the multiple career paths and began a position as a regional master teacher). Multiple sources of data were used including documentation, archival records, physical artifacts, and interviews (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) with the master teacher and her former colleagues to provide a holistic view of the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader. The researcher transcribed all interviews for this case study and analyzed them for specific patterns and themes. Various checks were made throughout the data analysis process to ensure enough detail was provided to assess the trustworthiness and dependability. Following this format, the goal of this case study was to provide a vivid description of the case to allow others to learn about the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader (Creswell, 2013).

## Design

The approach for this study was categorized as an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study differs from an intrinsic case study because it is a study of one bounded case used to understand something rather than a need for a general understanding obtained through multiples cases (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). An instrumental case study was chosen based on the limited number of master teachers in South Carolina with at least 12 years'

experience.  The length of experience was instrumental in developing a deeper understanding for the role of master teacher.

An instrumental case study also helps to understand the *how* and *why*, which is what was sought in this study (Yin, 2009).  These questions help the researcher and audience understand the complexity of the case (Stake, 1995).  By conducting a qualitative study, the researcher created a deeper understanding of the role of an elementary master teacher.  Stake (1995) argued there are three major differences in qualitative and quantitative research: (a) the distance between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry; (b) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role of the researcher; and (c) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (p. 37).  These differences demonstrated why this study was considered a qualitative case study and the understanding behind the following research questions.  In keeping with the design of qualitative research, the researcher was the instrument of data collection, which continuously guided the study.

## Research Questions

Formulating rich research questions is an instrumental part of designing a solid case study.  "The design of all research questions requires conceptual organization, ideas to express needed understanding, conceptual bridges from what is already known, cognitive structures to guide data gathering, and outlines for presenting interpretations to others" (Stake, 1995, p. 15).  The design of the research questions is also an important deciding factor in which research method is chosen (Yin, 2009).  Given that the purpose of this study was to understand the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader, the following questions framed this study:

- What is the role of the master teacher?
- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

The research questions guided the case study and refocused the researcher when needed. The research questions were designed to help narrow the focus of the TAP master teacher by investigating the role and characteristics of the position. The questions aimed to address the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader in TAP schools.

## Setting

The setting for the instrumental case study was a South Carolina elementary school, Sarolina Elementary (a pseudonym assigned for anonymity), which had been successful in sustaining TAP for the past 13 years. The site was chosen for its longevity with TAP and the years' experience of the master teacher. Sarolina Elementary was one of only 10 elementary schools in South Carolina that had sustained TAP beyond the five-year grant period and the only K-5 elementary school that had a master teacher with over 10 years' experience (SCDE, 2013). The school utilized TAP's multiple career paths with career teachers, mentor teachers, a master teacher, assistant principal, and principal. The school district had several schools utilizing the TAP model including the middle and high school. The school had a student population of 614 students. Of these students 51% are Caucasian, 36% African American, 7% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 5% with two or more ethnicities. In South Carolina, 17 school districts, hosting 78 schools, were currently implementing TAP, with 24 more projected to begin the next school year (SCDE, 2013).

## Participants

The participants for this instrumental case study were chosen through purposeful sampling. The master teacher was chosen based on years' experience in the role of the SC TAP master teacher. Other participants were chosen based on interactions with the master teacher and

their understanding of the role of master teacher. To create a holistic analysis of the role of

master teacher, snowball sampling was used to access multiple units within the bounded case

(Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling led to participants that had worked with the master teacher

over the past 12 years. Snowball sampling "identifies cases of interest from people who know

people who know what cases are information rich" (Creswell, 2013, p. 127). The master teacher

provided names of individuals with whom she worked as a master teacher; these individuals

included mentor teachers, career teachers, principals, superintendents, and the state director of

SC TAP. To ensure bias did not occur with participants, names offered by the master teacher

were cross-referenced with the state director of SC TAP to ensure participants were

knowledgeable and reputable individuals. From interviews, more names were collected until the

researcher exhausted the list of potential participants who worked with the master teacher. The

goal of interviewing stakeholders who were involved with the master teacher was to gain a

holistic picture of the role of the TAP master teacher in one South Carolina elementary school.

This holistic picture ensured a true understanding of the role of the SC TAP master teacher,

characteristics of the TAP master teacher, and if the SC TAP master teacher served as an

instructional leader in the school.

**Procedures**

The steps necessary in conducting this study began with an initial inquiry with the focal

case subject and her superintendent to gain approval for advancement of this instrumental case

study. Once this was obtained the proposal was developed and defended; this included chapters

one through three and incorporated a plethora of research into instrumental case studies and

instructional leaders such as the TAP master teacher, school reform models, and job-embedded

professional development. After successfully defending the proposal, the researcher submitted

and secured Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (See Appendix B) and elicited

participants for the study through the focal case subject (See Appendix C and D).  Prior to

interviews and defending the proposal, the researcher developed interview questions that were

reviewed by experts in the field of TAP. Following IRB approval, the interview questions (See

Appendix A) were piloted with a small sample of SC TAP leadership team members including:

master and mentor teachers and administrators.  The sample group was not part of the study and

assisted the researcher in ensuring clarity of questions and wording.

Once participants were selected and consent was granted, the researcher began collecting

data via interviews and document collection from the focal case subject.  All data were recorded

electronically via audio recordings or hard copies of documents and artifacts and emailed

interviews.  Data that was obtained via audio recording was then transcribed using a computer-

software program, Dragon, and then hand corrected via the researcher in Microsoft Word.  Once

all interviews were transcribed the researcher used categorical aggregation software, Atlas ti, to

analyze the data for trends by combining all interviews based on answers to questions.  Key

words and phrases were identified for each question to help identify these trends.

After identifying the trends and patterns, chapters four and five were completed using the

research obtained in this instrumental case study in comparison to the literature reviewed in

chapter two.  The manuscript was then submitted for review and edits were made until ready for

the dissertation defense.

### The Researcher's Role

I grew up in a Midwest state and traveled to the East Coast after graduating high school.

As a child, I attended public schools and began college after marrying and having children.  I

graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education.  Following degree

completion, I began teaching first grade.  After two years of teaching, I obtained a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction.  I taught first grade for a third year while working on my second Masters of Education in Educational Leadership. After completing my third year of teaching, I was promoted to Assistant Principal at the same school.  I graduated in 2009 with my second master's degree and quickly began working on my Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership at Liberty University.  The school at which I previously worked became a TAP school in the 2011-2012 school year and I served on the school's leadership team for two years before moving into my current position as a regional master teacher with SC TAP.

Throughout this study, I served as a human instrument in developing an in-depth understanding of the elementary master teacher.  As a former assistant principal in a TAP elementary school, I experienced working with a master teacher and several regional master teachers; however I did not have prior relationships with any of the case study participants.  The focal master teacher of this case study and I were both hired as regional master teachers for SC TAP at the same time.  In my current position, I have monthly conference calls with the master teacher but limited contact otherwise as we work in different parts of the state.  I did not have contact with the site participants of this study except while conducting the research.  Having been in a TAP school and seen its success with teachers and students, I was bias to the system but kept this separate during the research through reflective journaling.  Strict data protocols, such as member checks, peer reviews, and verbatim interview transcripts, were used to limit bias on the subject of TAP and master teachers.

### Data Collection

A critical aspect of qualitative inquiry is rigorous and varied data collection techniques. According to Yin (2009), there are six sources of data that can be used in case studies; these

include: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. Creswell (2013) added a final source of data- reflective journaling. In this instrumental case study, the researcher used documentation, archival records, interviews, reflective journaling, and physical artifacts. The only observations that could have occurred were that of the master teacher in her role as a regional master teacher, so these were not used for the case study.

After gaining IRB approval, data collection began in the fall of 2014. To maximize data collection, three principles were used:

- Multiple sources of evidence

- A case study database

- A chain of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Although previous studies had focused on single sources of data, this case study used multiple sources of evidence to ensure a coherent understanding of the role of the master teacher. Using multiple sources, data was triangulated to ensure accuracy in the findings. The case study database included notes, documents, tabular materials, and narratives that could be retrieved to inspect the data used to determine the case study's findings (Yin, 2009). Maintaining a chain of evidence allowed external observers to come to similar findings by reviewing the data collected and housed in the case study database. A combination of these principles ensured that the study remained at the highest validity and reliability. In addition, permission was obtained from the superintendent of the school district as well as each participant prior to being interviewed (see Appendix C).

**Interviews**

Interviews are one of the most important sources of information obtained in case study research (Yin, 2009). Interviews can be in the form of in-depth (over multiple visits) or focused (one hour) (Yin, 2009). While an in-depth interview was planned for the main participant, focused interviews were planned for additional interviewees unless an in-depth interview was deemed necessary in providing a better understanding of the role of the master teacher. Participants were chosen based on their unique insight into the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader. During the untimed, fluid interviews, additional probing questions were asked to allow participants to express the details of their experience with the TAP master teacher as related to the case study's research questions. For participants unable to meet in person, phone and email interviews were allowed to get as many participants as possible. These interviews were followed up with second emails and phone calls when needed to provide clarification and further insight.

Throughout the interview process it was essential for the researcher to: (a) follow the line of inquiry, and (b) ask questions in an unbiased manner to avoid defensiveness (Yin, 2009). A deliberate effort was made to ensure the message shared was captured in its entirety (tone, body language, and words). Interviews were conducted with those involved with the master teacher including: career teachers, mentor teachers, a master teacher, principal, and the SC TAP director. After analyzing the data, follow-up interviews were conducted to ensure a firm understanding and that triangulation amongst the different evaluators was evident (Patton, 2002). After conducting the interviews, verbatim transcripts were made and each script was analyzed for common themes and patterns (Creswell, 2013).

An initial approval from the main participant was received in June of 2013. Prior to conducting interviews, an initial email or meeting took place introducing the researcher to individual stakeholders. Participants were notified of the study and the value of their input in the study. An initial set of open-ended interview questions (See below and Appendix A) were developed for this study (Creswell, 2013). These questions were piloted amongst the SC TAP regional master teachers prior to interviewing the participants.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

*Role of the TAP Master Teacher as an Instructional Leader*

1. Tell me about yourself, your job/work, what you do.

2. How long have you been in your current position/education field?

3. What led you to your career choice?

4. How long have you been associated with TAP?

5. Describe a "typical" day at work.

6. Describe your understanding of the master teacher position. (Prompts: cluster, leadership team, field testing, student achievement)

7. What characteristics are needed to be a master teacher?

8. With whom does the master teacher interact?

9. What support is offered to master teachers?

10. How is the master teacher an instructional leader at your school?

11. Based on your experience, what concerns do you feel master teachers face as instructional leaders?

12. How does the master teacher position enhance the school environment?

13. Is there anything else significant about master teachers that you would like to share?

The purpose of the questions pertaining to the background and current position of the participant (questions one through five) was to gather information about the participants and their experience and involvement with TAP and the master teacher.  Question four was designed to inform the researcher on the years of experience the participant had in a TAP school. Question six allowed the participant to reveal their understanding of the master teacher position, which gave the researcher an opportunity to look for trends in their answers.  Question seven was developed to see if participants' answers reinforced current research on characteristics of instructional leaders including: high levels of content and procedural knowledge, data analysis skills, communication skills, and respect among colleagues (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010).

Given the discrepancies in research (Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2012; Marsh et al., 2010) on the interactions of the master teacher or instructional coach, questions eight and 10 were developed to assess this understanding.  Question nine, 11, and 12 helped to clarify the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader.  These questions also provided insight into how master teachers can be supported and best serve as an instructional leader in SC TAP schools. Question 13 allowed the participants an opportunity to share any other information pertaining to master teachers that would be beneficial to this case study.  All of the questions were developed to answer the following research questions:

- What is the role of the master teacher?

- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

**Document Analysis**

Documents were used to corroborate and augment evidence collected through the interviews (Yin, 2009).  The documents analyzed for this instrumental case study included Skills,

Knowledge, and Responsibility scores for the focal participant, school report card data, and value-added data. Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibility scores are a compilation of the master teacher's observation data, personal survey on how she performed her duties, and how the leadership team and career teachers viewed the master teacher in relation to her duties. Throughout the focal participant's time as a master teacher her scores ranged from 4.0 – 4.87 on a one to five scale which placed the master teacher above proficient in all areas.

The report card data showed the school was at below average growth rating prior to participation in TAP and has since remained at an average growth rating. The value added data ranged from an average growth rating of -1.8 (regressing students academically one year and eight months in a one year time period) to a +3.4 (increasing students academically three years and four months in a one year time period). These numbers fluctuate based on individual teachers, district and school initiatives, and individual students. These data points scored the school a value-added average of a five the first, sixth, and seventh years, a value-added four the third, fourth, and fifth years and a value-added three each other year. These scores are based on a five-point scale and show that every year since implementing TAP, students have grown one to two years academically each year. The documents analyzed in this case study provided the researcher with exact details of events and helped provide a holistic account of the role of master teacher (Yin, 2009). To ensure accuracy, documents were verified with the main case study participant and the state director of SC TAP.

**Artifacts**

Artifacts obtained through the interview process were collected to provide a thorough understanding of the role of master teacher (Creswell, 2013). These documents provided insight into the technical operations and cultural features of TAP at Sarolina Elementary (Yin, 2009).

Artifacts analyzed for this instrumental case study included the master teachers field-testing notes, cluster long-range plans, and calendars of support provided to teachers. The field-test notes and cluster long-range plans helped to show how the master teacher researched strategies to support teacher and student learning and how she used data to track trends in student work. The calendar of support showed the various types of support provided by the master teacher and any reflection notes for follow-up support needed to ensure the success of the teacher. The artifacts analyzed reinforced the themes that emerged in this study.

**Reflective journaling**

Throughout data collection, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to record personal biases, thoughts, and feelings on the data obtained (Creswell, 2013). The journal helped the researcher identify further questions for participants and possible research topics. Qualitative researchers must become experts in reflective practice to gain true understanding of their case (Stake, 1995). The reflective journal was reviewed frequently for trends in thoughts obtained throughout the case study.

**Data Analysis**

According to Stake (1995), there is no right way to analyze data and each researcher must determine the way that works best to answer their research questions. Throughout the entire study, data analysis occurred by examining observations and impressions from the interviews, documents, and artifacts while searching for common themes and patterns. Having a clear plan for analysis ensured the researcher remained proactive in data analysis and was able to navigate the case study database.

The researcher used categorical aggregation and direct interpretation in analyzing data from which themes were formed (Creswell, 2013). This occurred through the use of computer-

assisted software designed for qualitative data analysis, ATLAS ti, in which repeated words and phrases were grouped and analyzed for deeper understanding. As the researcher continued to search for meaning, one strategy stood out more than the other in finding the greatest meaning when the researcher coded notes and transcripts (Stake, 1995). This strategy was the old-fashioned paper and pencil method, highlighting and marking the transcript texts. According to Yin (2009), there are four things the researcher must do to have the highest quality data analysis: (a) attend to evidence, (b) address rival interpretations, (c) address the most significant aspect of the case, and (d) use prior, expert knowledge in the analysis. Once the researcher examined the results, conclusions revealed a deeper understanding of the role of master teacher in SC elementary TAP schools. These conclusions were then used to form themes: an overarching umbrella of support provided by the master teacher, the pedagogy necessary for the master teacher to embed authentic application of skills into the school environment, and the characteristics necessary for these to exist.

**Interviews**

According to Yin (2009), interviews are essential sources of case study information, which provide a targeted-focus directly related to the case study topic. To reduce bias, interview questions were piloted and reviewed by experts prior to the actual interviews in this study. Any necessary changes were made prior to conducting the first interview. Prior to recording of interviews, permission was obtained by all interviewees. All interviews were then transcribed by the researcher and read thoroughly; notes were made in the margins of all transcripts to identify themes (Creswell, 2013). In transcribing the interviews, recordings were replayed frequently to ensure all feedback was recorded. While examining interviews for patterns and trends, the transcribed interviews were re-read frequently to ensure information was not overlooked.

**Documents/artifacts**

Documents and artifacts provide stable and unobtrusive objects that can be reviewed repeatedly and contain exact details of an event (Yin, 2009). According to Stake (1995), "documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly" (p. 68). In this case study, documents and artifacts were scanned or copied so that notes could be written in the margins and coded accordingly. Upon analysis of data, categorical aggregation was used to establish themes or patterns (Creswell, 2013); Yin (2009) refers to this as pattern matching. According to Stake (1995), the need for categorical aggregation is greater in instrumental case studies.

**Reflective journaling**

The researcher compared notes in the reflective journal to data collected to ensure a holistic description was obtained without bias from the researcher's personal experience (Creswell, 2013). The reflective journal was re-read throughout the data analysis to insure thoughts and feelings recorded had been scrutinized for future development.

## Trustworthiness

To ensure dependability of the research, trustworthiness was addressed throughout every phase of this study including: understanding the researcher's biases, member checking, peer reviewing, and utilizing a triangulation of data. In addition to these measures, follow-up interviews were conducted as needed to ensure accurate accounts of each participant's disposition of the role of master teacher.

To address bias, the researcher kept an open-mind when interviewing participants. To ensure an accurate understanding of each participant's perceptions, member checking was performed. According to Creswell (2013), in member checking "the researcher takes data,

analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 252). This gave participants an opportunity to clarify the interpretation and contribute new or additional perspectives on the case.

To ensure information was honest and interpreted appropriately, the researcher participated in peer reviews and debriefings with the dissertation committee. Throughout the study the researcher worked with a colleague to ensure information was accurate. Peer reviews, along with member checking, provided external checks of the study to increase reliability. Transferability of this study was only accurate in other South Carolina elementary TAP schools.

Utilizing all three forms of data analysis ensured triangulation was met. Once the relevant themes or patterns emerged, the researcher developed naturalistic generalizations to help others understand the role of master teacher and its relevance in their setting.

## Ethical Considerations

Many ethical considerations were upheld to ensure an honorable case study. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process was completed prior to contact with participants to ensure there were no harmful effects on participants. Prior to participation in the study, each participant completed a consent form that stated the purpose of the study as well as their voluntary participation in the process. It also stated that only pseudonyms would be used at all times, including all written documents to protect the identities of all participants. Respectful working relationships were in place between the participants and me prior to the start of the interviews. I also held no position of authority over any of the participants.

Although not encouraged, all participants were allowed to share information "off the record" when deemed necessary to provide a better understanding of their stance on the role of TAP master teacher. Multiple interviewees ensured an essence was captured from statements

made during interviews. All data collected remained in a password-protected location throughout the study and will remain for five years following the dissertation approval when they will be destroyed. I, as the researcher, was the only one with the password. All data were also backed up on a password-protected external hard drive. Records of this study will remain private and will never be made public.

## Summary

This chapter focused on the methods of the study and provided an overview of the design of this instrumental case study. The chapter also reviewed the research questions, setting, and participants of the study and provided a detailed list of the procedures followed in completing this study. Another key element of this chapter was the breakdown of data collection and analysis, which included: interviews, document analysis, artifacts, and reflective journaling. The conclusion of this chapter focused on trustworthiness and ethical considerations for this instrumental case study on the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader.

# CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

## Overview

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the master teacher's role as an instructional leader in one South Carolina K-5 elementary school implementing TAP. Documents, artifacts, and individual interviews were used to provide an understanding of the master teacher as an instructional leader. Data from interviews, artifacts, and documents are presented in this chapter through themes that were derived from the research questions investigated during this instrumental case study:

- What is the role of the master teacher?

- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

Each of these questions was asked directly to participants, as well as other questions that helped to understand the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader (See Appendix A). The themes that emerged were an overarching umbrella of support provided by the master teacher, the pedagogy necessary for the master teacher to embed authentic application of skills into the school environment, and the characteristics necessary for these to exist.

## Participants

Participants for this instrumental case study were chosen through purposeful and snowball sampling. A total of eight out of 11 potential participants agreed to participate in this study. Multiple attempts were made at reaching the other three participants, but those efforts were futile. In this case study, eight participants were interviewed totaling 188 years of experience in education and 88 years of experience in a TAP setting. All participants currently live and work in South Carolina and had worked within a TAP elementary school setting.

Participants were chosen based on their previous work experience with the identified case study participant, Lily, the PreK-5 SC TAP master teacher with the most years of experience. The participants' current positions ranged from TAP mentor, TAP master teacher, TAP principal, TAP reading coordinator, TAP regional master teacher, to TAP state director (See Table 4.1). Each participant had advanced degrees and had taken advantage of the multiple career paths associated with TAP to advance beyond the classroom teacher position.

Table 4.1

*Participant Overview*

| Participant | Current Position | Previous Positions | Years in Education | Years in TAP |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lily | TAP regional master teacher | TAP master teacher, K4-5$^{th}$ grade classroom teacher | 30 | 14 |
| Natalie | K5 teacher, TAP mentor | 1$^{st}$ grade teacher | 33 | 10 |
| Barbara | TAP principal | Master teacher, math coach, curriculum specialist, technology coach, classroom teacher | 30 | 12 |
| Emily | TAP regional master teacher/program specialist | Classroom teacher | 12 | 8 |
| Abby | TAP master teacher | TAP mentor, classroom teacher | 20 | 14 |
| Jack | State TAP Director | TAP Principal, TAP, | 19 | 8 |

| | | Assistant Principal, classroom teacher | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ava | TAP regional master teacher | Director early childhood school, classroom teacher | 17 | 8 |
| Lucy | TAP reading coordinator | 1$^{st}$-5$^{th}$ grade classroom teacher | 27 | 14 |

**Lily**

The focal case study participant for this case, Lily, is a soft-spoken married mother of three adult children and two grandchildren.  She and her family enjoy attending sporting events such as football and baseball and participating in water sports, including jet skiing and boating.  Lily enjoys reading, traveling, and assisting with children's activities at church.  As long as Lily can remember she has always wanted to work with children in helping them succeed.  In her education journey, she has obtained both Bachelors and Masters degrees in early childhood education and is nationally board certified as an early childhood generalist.  Lily has been in the education field for 30 years as a classroom teacher of all grades K4-5$^{th}$.  She has been a TAP master teacher for 12 years, and a SC TAP regional master teacher for two years.  In her current position Lily supports 11 master teachers within seven schools.  Lily describes herself as a reflective learner who always volunteered for new innovative practices throughout her teaching career.  As an educator, Lily served on various committees and teams including: evaluation of teachers and students, data teams, curriculum mapping, and assessment teams.

When asked about her previous job experiences Lily stated:

As a TAP Master teacher, I worked with students and teachers as well as administration and my school's leadership team. I completed a lot of research and looked at data and found research on best practices, and field tested specific strategies that our leadership team had decided may work with our students, I then field tested to make sure that the strategies worked with our students and then carried those strategies into cluster. I had seven clusters per week with 42 classroom teachers. I supported them not only through implementing strategies in their classroom through modeling and team teaching but also through providing various other help they needed in the classroom. I also worked with groups of students in classrooms and taught classes. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Lily has worked with TAP for the last 14 years.

I first became aware of the program through my principal but we had not implemented it in our district at that point so I visited other districts who were beginning to implement TAP, became interested in it, talked to the state director at the time, learned a lot more about it, was able to hear the overview and the advantages of having TAP in my school and then the faculty voted on it and of course started implementation. (Lily, personal communication, September 3, 2014)

When asked what led to her career choice in TAP Lily stated:

Well as a teacher for all those years I wanted to go to the next level without becoming an administrator because I still wanted to work with the students closely and in the classroom so when the opportunity arose to become a master teacher in my building I applied. I received the position and stayed in that position for several years and then decided to take it to the next level so that I can help in various schools across the state. (Lily, personal

communication, September 3, 2014)

To understand Lily's duties as a master teacher and a regional master teacher, she was asked to provide information on both of these positions.

> As a master teacher in my building it was my job to work with the leadership team and administrators to look at the data carefully, and analyze the specific needs in our building. From there we went to researching various strategies to see what we needed to do, not only student strategies but pedagogical strategies for teachers, would field test those, implement them in cluster, implement them in classrooms, revisit the data, benchmark a lot to make sure what we were doing was working, then tweaked what we needed to tweak. We then provided various types of support in the classroom to ensure students were successful. And then as a regional, I did pretty much similar things; I also researched strategies, focusing on schools that I work with now across the state. I also help their master teachers and their leadership teams and administrators research strategies, look at the data, identify needs of teachers and students and help them to implement TAP with fidelity in their buildings. (Lily, personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Lily exemplifies the role of a master teacher through her supportive personality and willingness to work with teachers and students on whatever is needed.

**Natalie**

Natalie's own school experience and role models led her into the education field 33 years ago. "I guess I found that over time I seemed to have a gift when working with children. I had worked with children through babysitting and through church and tutoring children as well" (Natalie, personal communication, November 5, 2014). Since the start of her career Natalie has

served as a classroom teacher and TAP mentor teacher. "I have been teaching for 33 years; 13 of

them in 1st grade, 20 of them have been in 5K. I have been a mentor for the past 10 years with

TAP and that was my position when I worked with Lily" (Natalie, personal communication,

November 5, 2014).

> A typical day for Natalie begins at 7:00 A.M. with setting up her classroom.
>
> I do teach a full day of Kindergarten and I am responsible for them except when they are in
>
> the related arts for 40 minutes a day so I teach ELA large group and I have Literacy centers
>
> and small group guided reading. I teach math and we have math learning stations as well
>
> as Science and Social Studies. At least once during the week I will have a mentor release
>
> time in which I am going in to teachers' classrooms to observe and coach teachers, team
>
> teach, and provide model lessons. I also assist in cluster with modeling the new strategies
>
> and field-testing. We have field-testing in our classrooms as well. I think that is kind of
>
> typical. Usually I am not leaving out of here until about 4:30 P.M. or 5:00 P.M. on a
>
> good day. (Natalie, personal communication, November 5, 2014)

Natalie's experience provides insight into the master teacher position through the eyes of a TAP

mentor teacher. Natalie served as a mentor teacher alongside of Lily when she was a master

teacher.

**Barbara**

Barbara is currently a TAP middle school principal with 12 years of TAP experience.

She serves 700 students and 85 employees.

> I have been a principal for nine years. I was the principal of Sarolina Elementary School
>
> for 6 years and the principal of my current school for the last three years. Before being a
>
> principal I served various schools in the position of TAP master teacher (three years),

math coach, curriculum specialist, technology coach, and classroom teacher. (Barbara,

personal communication, September 24, 2014)

When asked what led her to her career choice, Barbara stated:

Honestly, I went to college at first to be a nurse as I wanted to work in the Emergency

Room. In the summer before my senior clinical, I had a terrible car accident. After

surgeries, rehab, and recovery, I was unable to drive or enroll in my senior year. So, once

I was finally released from the doctor, I enrolled back in school but was told that I was

put back on a two-year waiting list. So, since I was already coaching because I coached

two sports at a school in college, I decided to sign up for a few education courses. I

realized real quickly that I could complete an education degree before I could re-enroll in

nursing. After graduating and landing my first job, I never looked back. I loved

everything about teaching. (Barbara, personal communication, September 24, 2014)

She candidly said she has no typical day at work.

I oversee the implementation of all school, district, and state initiatives. On any given

day, I attend meetings, visit classrooms, meet with parents, staff, or students, handle

discipline, deal with complaints, complete paperwork, return phone calls, lead

professional development, analyze data, etc. I have duty assignments to supervise

students during arrival, dismissal, and lunchtime. (Barbara, personal communication,

September 24, 2014)

Barbara's insights as a TAP principal and former master teacher help provide an understanding

of the role of TAP master teacher as an instructional leader from multiple facets. Barbara served

as principal of Lily when she was a master teacher.

**Emily**

Emily is currently serving her eighth year as a regional master teacher/program specialist for SC TAP. Her job requires that she work with eight schools and their TAP implementation. She also works with the Value-added analysis and the TAP payouts for the entire state.

When asked what led her to her career choice as a classroom teacher she stated:

I had a job in the private sector right after I graduated from college that I did not like and one of the things that I found out that I did was I enjoyed teaching the other people that I worked with, how to do their jobs, so that I didn't have to do mine. So I decided that maybe I should be a teacher. (Emily, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

Emily was a classroom teacher for four years in a non-TAP school before she took her current position. When asked what made her decide to come out of the classroom and accept her current position she stated, "I was in a graduate class and my professor had worked with TAP and she told me a little bit about it and that there was a position coming open and maybe I should apply and I just kind of did; kind of fell into it" (Emily, 2014). Emily describes her typical day:

Usually begins with at least an hour drive to one of the TAP schools that I work with, then I go to a school… there's really no typical day… that is part of the problem. I'm either working with a cluster leader in planning for cluster or the principal on planning for leadership team meetings. I may be in classrooms doing walkthroughs or follow-up or observing field-testing. I could be observing cluster meetings or LT meetings. I typically try to go to more than one school in a day when I can. Six of my eight schools are within 30 minutes of each other so I usually try to transition around lunchtime and then go to another one in the afternoon then I have another hour drive home. (Emily, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

As a regional master teacher and program specialist, Emily has a unique perspective on the role of a master teacher as an instructional leader. Emily also served as regional master teacher for Lily when she was a master teacher.

**Abby**

Abby, former mentor teacher at Sarolina Elementary and currently serving her 2nd year as master teacher has been teaching for 20 years and worked with TAP for 14 years. When asked to tell about herself, Abby (personal communication, September 24, 2014) stated,

> I have a BS in Early Childhood Education, National Board Certification (Early Childhood Generalist), and a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership (Administration). I am currently working on a 2nd master's degree – this one in Teaching Math and Science K-12 through Clemson University. (Abby, personal communication, September 24, 2014) Abby was led to a career in education from her passion to help others, "both students and adults" and to help them "succeed and reach their potential" (Abby, personal communication, September 24, 2014). She added, "having great teachers along the way inspired me to try to be the same positive change in the lives of others that those teachers were in mine" (Abby, personal communication, September 24, 2014).

For Abby:

> A typical day at work begins with a quick check-in with the other master teacher to discuss the day's schedule and discuss anything that may have come up at the end of the previous day or questions about a field test, cluster or follow-up. After that, my day consists of field testing in at least one classroom, completing follow-ups in classrooms, teaching a small group reading lesson, facilitating cluster, and meeting with mentor teachers to debrief about field testing or discuss critical attributes for strategies. (Abby,

personal communication, September 24, 2014)

Abby worked alongside Lily as a mentor teacher and then took the position of master teacher when Lily moved into the regional master teacher position.

**Jack**

Jack, a 19-year educator, is currently serving his seventh year as the state director for TAP. Jack is a previous classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal for elementary and middle-aged students, and associate state director for TAP. When asked about his job Jack replied, "My job basically entails the political side of what TAP is, the training, the setup, and creating the state structure to merge with all of the other state systems to ensure that TAP is a successful and viable model within the state" (personal communication, September 3, 2014). Jack was principal of the focal case study participant, Lily, when he hired her from the kindergarten classroom to serve as the first master teacher at Sarolina Elementary. Twelve years later, he also hired her to join the state team as a regional master teacher to assist in training other master teachers.

When asked what led him to his career choice he stated:

When I had the opportunity to become an assistant principal I chose to at a school that was a TAP school because I wanted to be more involved with curriculum and instructional leadership; then I became the assistant principal there and then the principal at the elementary school that was to begin TAP and later at a middle school. Then I was given an opportunity to take on the associate director role for our TAP system because my former master teacher from the middle school that I hired became the state director so he called me back up and wanted me to be involved in that. He left six months later and

then I became the state director and have been ever since.  (Jack, personal

communication, September 3, 2014)

Jack's long-standing experience with TAP (TAP began in 1999 and Jack became involved in

2001) has allowed him to lead many state and national trainings to help others implement TAP

successfully.  As Emily stated earlier, Jack agreed that he has no typical day on the job:

My schedule is dictated completely by others.  I am the one who puts out fires, the one

who deals with the superintendents, the district, the state, and the national

representatives; so I am at everyone else's whim, so where as my typical day is

concerned, I would be going to work with the regionals, following them around, coaching

them, working with superintendents, finance, curriculum and professional development to

embed that within the state system.  However, here lately my typical day has been thrown

more into state and national initiatives, leading professional development by training

either state directors, regional master teachers, principals, or master teachers on the

effectiveness of TAP and the effectiveness of implementation.  (Jack, personal

communication, September 3, 2014)

Jack's perspective is unlike any other because he has been involved at the state and national level

for so long that he has helped to form the expectations for the role of the master teacher as an

instructional leader in SC TAP schools.

**Ava**

Ava, a current regional master teacher and former regional master teacher to Lily, has

been in the education field for 17 years and with TAP since 2002.  She has served as a classroom

teacher, TAP mentor, assistant principal, TAP regional master teacher, and a director of an early

childhood center.  When asked what led to her career choice, Ava (personal communication,

September 3, 2014) responded, "I think it was a way for me to grow when I was looking for a change and a way that I could impact others and not be isolated in one position and it would help me grow professionally" Ava currently holds two positions as a part time regional master teacher and early childhood director. When asked about her typical day as a regional master teacher she stated:

> Now is different but when I was a full time regional master teacher, I was traveling to different schools and helping them to develop their goals, analyze their student work, and figuring out where clusters needed to go to address the needs of all students in different capacities, grade levels, and subjects. I also was sitting down with the principals and helping the principals with coaching their master and mentor teachers. I also looked at clusters and coached leadership teams. I was really there to do anything that the principals and master and mentor teachers needed and sometimes career teachers as well. (Ava, personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Ava is the first-hired SC TAP regional master teacher and offers a perspective from how the master teacher position has shifted over the years and been transformed into an instructional leader in TAP schools.

**Lucy**

Lucy, Reading Coordinator, at Sarolina Elementary served as a career teacher when Lily was master teacher at Sarolina Elementary. Lucy describes her job as,

> I work with teachers to improve literacy in our school by providing resources, assisting in planning lessons, modeling lessons, and coaching lessons. I also test students to establish their current reading levels and make suggestions as to how teachers may work with that child. (Lucy, personal communication, November 6, 2014)

Lucy is in her 27<sup>th</sup> year of teaching students in grades one through five; this is her first year out of the classroom and 10<sup>th</sup> year working in a TAP school.

Lucy chose her career "because I love children and wanted to help make a difference in their lives" (Lucy, personal communication, November 6, 2014). A typical day at work for Lucy begins in classrooms:

> I go into classes to work with teachers and/or students. I observe lessons and coach teachers. During the day I meet with teachers to locate resources, plan lessons, or discuss strategies that may help students in their classroom. I am also in charge of ordering resources that teachers need. (Lucy, personal communication, November 6, 2014)

Lucy's responses help to provide insight from the career teacher's perspective of the regional master teacher as an instructional leader.

## Results

The information gathered from interviews, artifacts, and documents served as a basis to answer the research questions guiding this instrumental case study and to form themes for the study. Interviews were conducted in person, via email, and via phone to meet the needs of all participants. (See Table 4.2)

Table 4.2

*Participant Interview Type*

| Participant | Interview Type |
| --- | --- |
| Lily | In Person |
| Natalie | Phone |
| Barbara | Email |

| | |
|---|---|
| Emily | In Person |
| Abby | Email |
| Jack | In Person |
| Ava | In Person |
| Lucy | Email |

All interviews were then transcribed and sent back to participants for verification. Documents

and artifacts were obtained online, via email or in person from the case study participants. These

documents, along with the transcribed interviews were combined and analyzed to reveal several

themes and sub-themes. The three themes that emerged were an overarching umbrella of support

provided by the master teacher, the pedagogy necessary for the master teacher to embed

authentic application of skills into the school environment through cluster and field-testing, and

the characteristics necessary for these to occur. (See Table 4.3) These themes help explain how

the master teacher serves as an instructional leader in SC TAP schools.

Table 4.3

*Emergence of Themes Through Research Questions*

| What is the role of the master teacher? (Number of participants cited) | How is the master teacher an instructional leader? (Number of participants cited) |
|---|---|
| Lead professional development (9) | Supports teachers (9) |
| Improve school scores (8) | Leads professional development (6) |
| Support teachers (7) | Researches strategies (6) |
| Analyze data (7) | Supports students (5) |
| Research strategies (6) | Analyzes data (4) |

Improve teacher efficacy (5)                    Supports the school goals (3)

Conduct field testing (5)                         Conducts field-testing (3)

Provide follow-up (5)

Support the school goals (4)

---

**The Master Teacher Provides Support**

The responses obtained by all participants and artifacts that were analyzed expressed the overall role of the master teacher was to support teachers resulting in improved student achievement and teacher efficacy in TAP schools.  The participants shared multiple ways in which the master teacher provides support to teachers in a school environment.  The best way to understand the responses provided in relation to support would be through the locations in which the support occurs.  These locations include in leadership team meetings, in the classroom, and outside of the classroom environment.

All participants stated that the ways in which the master teacher provides support is differentiated for the needs of every teacher.  According to Lily:

The one word that I would use to describe the master teacher position would be support, support for teachers, administrators, leadership team members, and also students. Support may take the form of working with teachers in their classrooms to help with their instruction, but it also may be working with groups of students to help them as they are learning and to help them improve what's going on with them.  Master teachers also provide support through formal observations of teachers in which they provide feedback to teachers using the TAP rubrics.  (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Similar comments on how master teachers provide support to teachers were reiterated throughout every participant's interview.

**Support through leadership team meetings.**

According to the participants, support is provided by the master teacher through leadership team meetings in a multiple of facets including: analyzing data, setting goals, and researching strategies on how to support and coach teachers in order to grow leadership team members, teachers, and students within the school. Master teachers complete these tasks along with the help of administrators and mentor teachers; interacting daily with students, career teachers, and regional state structures to provide support (Ava & Natalie, personal communication September/November 2014).

Participants shared how a master teacher is an integral part of planning and leading the leadership team to ensure all staff members are supported on a daily basis through a prescriptive plan derived from data analysis obtained from teacher observations and student work. According to Abby, "Master teachers are a part of the leadership team which works to ensure that data is being used to make effective and sound instructional decisions, provide support and development for teachers, and conduct classroom observations" (personal communication, September 24, 2014). Master teachers have a lot of work to do with data analysis on a school-wide level as well as with individual classrooms (Lily, personal communication, September 3, 2014). In leadership team meetings the master teacher plans with the administrators and mentors to determine who needs what type of support, researches strategies, and helps determine the direction of the school through goal setting, improving school test scores, and improving teacher efficiency and effectiveness (Natalie, personal communication, November 5, 2014).

Participants shared how master teachers support career teachers in the school through leadership team meetings and how they also assist in growing the entire leadership team in these meetings. The master teacher assists the principal in planning leadership team meetings to help grow all TAP leadership team members (Lily, personal communication, September 3, 2014). According to Lucy (personal communication, November 6, 2014), "Master teachers are always interacting with leadership team members and administrators in the building, also with district level people because they play a huge role in determining what happens in a school." Participants believed leadership team meetings were vitally important to ensure all teachers and leadership team members were provided a supportive model to assist them in growing professionally.

**Support in the classroom.**

The participants equally shared how support can take many forms in the classroom including team teaching, model lessons, whisper coaching, working with students, and written academic feedback from walkthroughs focusing on an area of improvement. According to Jack, SC TAP State Director, the master teacher is:

> Not a mini administrator but rather an instructional coach that works along teachers in the classrooms. The structure that we have in South Carolina is based off of the national structure, but it is more specific here to the design of support; support for change in instructional practices and change in reform for teacher efficacy and not so much the idea of what we typically see as an instructional coach that is there to tell you what to do instructionally. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

He continues this by stating:

> The master teacher should interact 80-90% of the time with the career teachers. The remainder of time should be working on field-testing with individual students, working

with mentor teachers to grow them, or working with administration on leadership team

activities to be able to ultimately implement the overall TAP System; but again 80-90%

of time should be in classrooms with career teachers in one form or another. (Jack,

personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Barbara (personal communication, September 24, 2014) adds to this by saying, "Master

teachers follow up with teachers and provide support on any concept related to improving

teaching and learning." The data master teachers use to determine support comes from testing,

observations, and research and are combined to help teachers through cluster meetings and

individualized support in the classroom. From a principal viewpoint:

> The master teacher is responsible for knowing and understanding the data and helping to
>
> set learning goals for teachers. Master teachers are expected to be in classrooms
>
> supporting classroom teachers by researching to find new materials and strategies to
>
> target specific areas of need as identified by data.

While understanding the importance of providing support to teachers, master teacher, Lily

states that is can also be a difficult task:

> I think time management is the most difficult aspect that master teachers face when
>
> supporting teachers. It's hard because you need to be in the classrooms, you need to be
>
> supporting teachers and students, and in most cases master teachers are teaching
>
> classrooms or groups of students and so what comes with that territory is the planning,
>
> assessing, and all that the normal classroom teacher would do. In addition to that, master
>
> teachers are researching, looking for best practices, and supporting teachers through
>
> modeling and team teaching and working closely with administrators to make sure the
>
> vision is being carried out in the building. (Lily, personal communication, September 3,

2014)

According to participants, master teachers are an essential member of the school community whose main focuses is ensuring the teachers are supported.  TAP principal, Barbara (personal communication, September 24, 2014) stated, "In my nine years as principal, I could not have effectively led a school without the help, structure, and support of master teachers being on the front lines working one-on-one with teachers." This statement shows the powerful relationship that exists in SC TAP schools between principals and master teachers.  As mentioned by Lily earlier, master teachers provide a magnitude of support in and out of the classroom.

**Support outside of the classroom.**

Participants shared many examples of ways in which master teachers provide support outside of the classroom.  Lucy, Emily, and several other participants stated that master teachers spend time working with teachers through planning lessons and offering coaching sessions.  Barbara added, "Master teachers work with teachers to plan and implement effective lessons and create assessments" (personal communication, September 24, 2014).  Lily's calendar of support reinforced that various types of support that was offered outside of the classroom.  These included: coaching and planning sessions, post conferences, IGP (individual growth plans) conferences, analysis of student work sessions, and many drop by sessions for relationship building purposes.

According to Lily, with every observation that occurs in a TAP school, teachers are provided a post conference in which professional growth in the ultimate goal.  These coaching sessions provide the teachers with an area of reinforcement (something that positively impacted the lesson) and an area of refinement (something to work on for professional growth).  In these

sessions, plans are also made for the leadership team member to support the teacher with the area of refinement.

Another opportunity that allows master teachers to support teachers outside of the classroom is through their Individual Growth Plan (IGP) reflecting conferences. This was evident in Lily's support calendar as well as through the participant interviews. Ava stated that, IGP sessions allow the master teacher an opportunity to reflect with the teacher on classroom activities that are performing and their impact on student achievement. Master teachers can support teachers on reflecting on what is working for the students and what needs to be adjusted. This is done through analyzing student work samples.

Based on the data gathered, TAP schools offer 360 support; occurring everyday, with everyone, in every facet. Regardless of the support offered inside and outside of the classroom or in leadership team meetings, master teachers strive to ensure every teacher and leadership team member feels supported and grows in their profession. According to Lily (personal communication, September 3, 2014), without the support of the master teacher, instructional change would not occur to increase the achievement of students or the pedagogy of teachers.

**The Master Teacher Must Have Pedagogy To Embed Authentic Application of Skills**

The second theme that emerged through the analysis of data was the need for the master teacher to have strong pedagogy, which impacts all areas of the master teacher's job, including: supporting master teachers (discussed in the first theme), field-testing strategies in the classroom, and leading clusters.

According to the state director, Jack:

Master teachers require pedagogy in curriculum strategies to understand what is effective

for students. Since master teachers work with individual teachers, they have to

understand how to analyze data to then identify the needs of students, to be able to then

identify the curriculum strategies that are needed.  Master teachers also need to look at

the needs of teachers and design professional development that will enhance the specific

needs of the classroom teacher to ultimately increase teacher efficacy that then will, as

research shows, increase student achievement.  (personal communication, September 3,

2014)

As Jack stated the master teacher must have pedagogy to embed authentic application of skills

into field-testing (working with student strategies) and in leading clusters (job-embedded

professional development for teachers).  "A master teacher is like a curriculum facilitator.  A lot

of people don't understand TAP but when you say like a curriculum specialist/facilitator, they

understand it better" (Ava, personal communication, September 3, 2014).  There are some areas

that can cause angst for master teachers in regards to pedagogy:

Master teachers, based on training in college and as in their job as instructional leaders,

do not get trained enough on analyzing data; some don't understand how to truly analyze

data assessment for enhancing teachers and students.  The second thing master teachers

often lack training on is coaching; dealing with adults is different than dealing with

students, so even understanding the idea that you have kids that are, or you are, a

dynamic teacher, doesn't necessarily translate to a dynamic coach.  The needs of an adult

learner are different than the needs of child learners.  (Jack, personal communication,

September 3, 2014)

Lily clarifies this from a master teacher perspective:

Sometimes I didn't feel I was a great instructional leader but I think it is knowing that

you are not the expert in everything but being willing to find out, find the answers, and

find the way to help through your support of students and teachers. I think that the

biggest thing is not being the person that knows everything and can do everything exactly

right but be the person willing to investigate, research, and provide that assistance to

those who need it. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Career and then mentor teacher, Natalie expounds on this by stating:

I do believe the master teacher has challenges based on making the best academic

decisions for the school. I'm sure the master teacher feels the pressure of making sure

there are adequate student, school, and teacher growth. I'm sure there are concerns that

the master teacher has as far as making sure that information is updated, that strategies

are current and that resources are viable. Finally, I'm sure there are concerns at

orchestrating all of the components of TAP including teacher growth and student growth.

(personal communication, November 5, 2014)

Jack believes:

The key to that is that the job of a master teacher is so big and as an instructional leader

you can't do one thing and another and keep adding them together; you actually have to

be able to start weaving things together like working in cluster which is the immediate

strategy needed for the students however working on the overall needs of the teacher

identifying how that pedagogically can fit into the strategy and then doing support and

follow-up that is specific to both so that you can then best utilize your time to increase

the teacher efficacy as well as the student achievement or student understanding.

(personal communication, September 3, 2014)

**The master teacher must have pedagogy to embed authentic application into cluster meetings.**

In order for master teachers to embed authentic application of teacher and student strategies into cluster meetings, they must have a strong understanding of the pedagogy necessary to lead adult learners and maximize learning for students.  Emily summarizes how master teachers utilize this need for pedagogy:

> The master teacher is the professional development leader in the school.  They need to have a strong background in curriculum; they need to work well with their peers in the teaching profession.  They need to be a sponge of knowledge and be able to relate it back to the teachers that they work with.  They need to be on the ground, looking for strategies, helping teachers, assisting in whatever way they can with the idea of improving student achievement.  (personal communication, September 18, 2014)

Ava reiterates this by saying:

> The master teacher is doing the research and collaborating with everyone; they are the ones who are guiding and leading the professional development to assists others in understanding the strategies, their students, and what needs to take place in the classroom to be effective.  (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

From a regional master teacher position, Emily stated:

> Master teachers are the instructional leaders.  They are part of the TAP leadership team and work to set the goals that are the driving force at improving teaching competency and student achievement through cluster meetings.  Master teachers develop and test out the content for the professional development presented in the cluster meetings; they interact with teachers in classrooms to try and improve their individual instruction.  Master teachers do all facets of instruction daily.  (personal communication, September 18, 2014)

Each participant described how the master teacher was a pedagogical leader through the professional development they offer in cluster. The participants shared how the master teachers embedded authentic examples from working with teachers and students into cluster. Many participants shared how these authentic examples prove the master teacher had the pedagogy necessary to make improvements in teacher instruction and student achievement through the learning that took place in cluster meetings.

**The master teacher must have pedagogy to embed authentic application into field-testing.**

In addition to leading professional development, master teachers must spend a lot of time conducting action research, known as field-testing, to ensure authentic strategies are embedded into cluster meetings that have been proven to work with students in his or her school. According to Lily, master teachers field-test strategies with small groups of students prior to providing the strategy to the entire school to ensure the strategy is successful for the students in that particular school. Participants shared how important it was for the master teacher to have pedagogy in understanding how to conduct effective field-testing in their buildings especially since it eventually impacts their entire school. Lily's artifacts showed the intricacies of field-testing and how lack of pedagogy could negatively impact the results.

Natalie expounds on field-testing by stating: "The master teacher works not only with the mentors with field-testing to determine the need but also plans how the field-testing impacts clusters and helps determine benchmarks, pre- and post- testing and monitoring of all aspects of TAP" (Natalie, personal communication, November 5, 2014). According to Abby (personal communication, September 24, 2014), "Master teachers serve as mentors and support for teachers – facilitating cluster meetings, teaching new strategies, field-testing strategies to

measure impact on student achievement and fine-tuning ways to present the strategies." Emily and Natalie shared how master teachers spend a lot of their time analyzing their field-test data to ensure they are supporting teachers and students in the areas most needed. They shared how the data analyzed from field-testing is later embedded into classrooms and cluster meetings to impact all learners in the building. From the data obtained, it is evident master teachers often complete the behind-the-scenes work that teachers do not have time to complete, such as field-testing strategies to ensure success occurs for all students in the school.

A strong pedagogy of teacher and student learning is necessary for master teachers to embed authentic application of skills into field-testing and clusters. Master teachers must understand standards, skills, students, and adults to best apply the knowledge gained from data analysis of strategies presented in field-testing and clusters. To be successful in embedding authentic application of skills, there are many characteristics master teachers must exhibit. These are discussed in the final theme.

**Characteristics Necessary To Be A Master Teacher**

The third theme that emerged from the participant interviews, documents, and artifacts were the characteristics that were necessary to be a master teacher. Every response from participants had an underlying theme of personal and professional characteristics exhibited by the master teacher. (Table 4.4 summarizes these characteristics and who supported them.)

Table 4.4

*Characteristics Necessary to be a Master Teacher*

| Personal characteristics | Who supported these characteristics | Professional characteristics | Who supported these characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Effective time manager/record keeper | Ava, Barbara, Emily, Jack, Lily, Natalie | Ability to coach/ understand adult learners | Abby, Ava, Barbara, Emily, Jack, Lily, Natalie |
| Honest/Trustworthy | Abby, Barbara, Lucy | Data analyzer | Ava, Barbara, Jack, Lily, Lucy, Natalie |
| Integrity | Abby, Barbara, Lucy | Knowledgeable | Ava, Barbara, Emily, Jack, Lily, Lucy, Natalie |
| Listener/Non-Judgmental | Abby, Lily | Leader | Abby, Ava, Emily, Jack |
| Nurturing/Encourager | Abby, Barbara, Natalie | Learner/Researcher | Ava, Barbara, Emily, Jack, Lily, Lucy, Natalie |
| Open to new ideas/Flexible | Abby, Emily, Lily | Organized | Natalie |
| Self-motivated/Hard-working | Barbara, Emily | Reflective | Barbara |
| Work well with others (teachers, students, parents, administrators) | Abby, Ava, Barbara, Emily, Jack, Lily, Lucy, Natalie | Supportive | Abby, Ava, Barbara, Emily, Jack, Lily, Lucy, Natalie |

**Personal characteristics.**

There are many personal characteristics necessary to be an effective master teacher.

Barbara (personal communication, September 24, 2014) summarizes the master teacher as "self-motivated, eager to learn, reflective, honest, having integrity, knowledgeable, able to work with adults, effective time manager, and firm but understanding." Abby (personal communication, September 24, 2014) confirms this by saying, "a willingness to serve, flexibility, honesty, integrity, nurturing, ability to coach, a good listener, a thick skin, and openness." Jack believes master teachers have to be a people person.  Lily adds to the characteristics shared by her colleagues:

> Master teachers must have a good rapport with teachers.  They need to know that they can go to master teachers as allies.  They also need to know that master teachers will roll up their sleeves with them and meet students' needs.  Master teachers need to be trustworthy.  Teachers should not have to worry about a master teacher reporting every detail to the administration or spreading rumors around the school.  Master teachers also need to be able to set personal opinions and relationships with others aside when being an evaluator.  (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

According to Abby and Lily, master teachers must also be a good listener and open to new ideas. Finding someone who has all of these skills is often difficult which is why master teachers go through a rigorous interview process to ensure they are the right fit for their school and the position.

**Professional characteristics.**

In addition to the personal characteristics necessary to be a master teacher, there are also professional characteristics.  According to Jack:

> Master teachers have to have an understanding of pedagogy, they have to have an understanding of strategies, but mostly they have to have an understanding of

differentiation so that they can truly differentiate professional development for everyone

in their building. I see the deposition where as an instructional coach takes a strategy and

implements it across the board; that is only one portion of a master teacher's job so they

have to have that curriculum understanding but they also have to have the rapport and

understanding of each individual teacher so they can then coach the individual, provide

strategies for the individual, model, team teach, and demonstrate; so not only do they

have to be an exceptional teacher they have to be an exceptional coach and truly an

exceptional person to understand how to work with the individual and differentiate

everything to grow the individual teacher. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Natalie described the characteristics needed by master teachers to develop teachers:

The master teacher has to be proficient at data analysis, planning, organization, and their

knowledge and being able to carry out the goals of TAP as well as being able to work

with people at all levels; be it administration, leadership team members, career teachers,

and with students. The master teacher also needs to be an efficient record keeper to be

able to analyze the data. (Natalie, personal communication, November 5, 2014)

Other professional skills needed to successfully fill the role of a master teacher include

being "open to new ideas and being willing to research them and make them work for their

students in their schools" (Emily, personal communication, September 18, 2014). Lily (personal

communication, September 3, 2014) continued this saying "being supportive and

nonjudgmental." According to Emily (personal communication, September 18, 2014), it is also

important for master teachers to have been a strong classroom teacher.

A professional characteristic that stood out for most participants was being able to analyze

data to best support the needs of teachers and students as well as understanding adult learners to

be able to coach them towards higher teacher efficacy. Jack begins this discussion by stating:

> Master teachers need to be seen as a support structure and not a punitive or evaluative measure. This is especially difficult in a new implementing school because the school doesn't know what to expect and all they have known for evaluations is punitive so to overcome years and years of educational practice to help them understand what truly is, whether they're good at it or not, becomes a difficult hurdle. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Sometimes as master teachers, they become that label, you are one of "them" and so sometimes teachers don't accept everything they have to say; although good things, they kind of put them as an outcast. (Ava, personal communication, September 3, 2014) TAP principal, Barbara confirms this:

> Master teachers often face credibility issues – because master teachers often do not teach a full load, many career teachers often think differently of them because they don't carry as much credibility as other teachers. Master teachers also face time constraints; to be a superior master teacher, it takes many, many tireless hours. Master teachers are often pulled in so many directions; it is easy to lose focus on teaching and learning. Master teachers have to complete career teacher observations, because of this sometimes, master teachers are seen as "one of them" like an administrator with power over dismissal and job performance. (personal communication, September 24, 2014)

Lucy (personal communication, November 6, 2014) adds:

> Master teachers face the hurdle of teacher buy-in; if teachers are not comfortable with the knowledge or experience of master teachers, it is difficult to look at them as an instructional leader. If a master teacher spends too much time "hanging around" the

office, this may cause teachers to questions their reliability or worthiness. (If regular teachers do not have time to waste, then neither should a master teacher.) When a regular classroom teacher must stay until 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. each day and a master teacher leaves at 3:15 p.m. each day, this may also put into question the workload of the master teacher.

Not all master teachers exhibit the necessary professional characteristics upon being hired, which is why SC TAP offers a support structure to ensure master teachers grow and refine their craft to best serve their teachers. From the state level, regional master teachers offer support to master teachers. According to Emily (personal communication, September 18, 2014), "I offer support through my role as regional master teacher; working with them (master teachers) one-on-one or giving them feedback either on classroom field-test lessons or cluster observations." Emily (personal communication, September 18, 2014) then added other support offered to master teachers including: "summer training at the TAP summer institute, the TAP national conference, master teacher trainings, and of course there are a lot of online resources, like the TAP portal, which are available for training too." According to Jack:

> Here in the state of South Carolina we offer support through our regional master teachers with the idea that the regional master teachers have an understanding of the implementation of TAP but also have more of the bigger picture. They are the ones who give the day-to-day support of the master teachers; where as a master teacher works with career teachers, a regional master teacher works specifically with mentor and master teachers to help them understand what comprehensive reform is, what instructional leadership actually looks like, and how to utilize strategies and pedagogy to best enhance the needs within their building so more of a data analysis/curriculum analysis. The state

team, as well as national trainings, and the national TAP team are the immediate support

structures. We have a comprehensive online data systems (CODE) that they can use, we

also have portal systems that give good model clusters, model leadership, model lessons,

and then there is the individual aspect of the individual personal growth that they need

which is done through STEM for example if they are specific to a STEM master teacher

or done through ASCD or national science project or anything else specific to the needs

of the individual to help them grow to ultimately benefit them in their job. The principal

should be supporting master teachers on a day-to-day basis. The structure that we have is

such that we do the training, we do the initial, we do the debrief, the guidance but we

should ultimately work ourselves out of a job in the fact that the master teacher should

then be working and that the support structure should be within the school or within the

district system to be able to ultimately enhance their understanding so that it is

completely sustainable within the school rather than always rely on an outsider.

(personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Although this is a lot of support offered to master teachers from the state level, when asked how

master teachers are supported Barbara (personal communication, September 24, 2014) stated

"honestly, not as much as should be." This may be coming from the principal view as Ava

(personal communication, September 3, 2014) adds "a lot of the times, the principal doesn't

understand that we can't be in the buildings as much as we need to so principals need to support

the master teachers as well as the mentors." Lily adds:

Most of the support for master teachers comes from principals who are willing to be

involved and active in the implementation of TAP but also through the state regional

master teacher because those are the people who are in there and supporting the same

way that the master teachers is in there supporting classroom teachers. If you have a leadership team who's not supporting you, trying to find the time to balance everything that you're supposed to be doing, as far as clusters and planning to get into the classrooms is difficult. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

Personal and professional characteristics play an integral part of the master teacher role. It takes a special person to fill all of the characteristics necessary to be successful at leading professional development for adult learners and completing data-driven field-testing in the classroom. Although master teachers are provided a state-level coach to help them refine these professional characteristics, they must be skilled at forming relationships to ever be successful at supporting teachers and embedding authentic application of skills into clusters and field-testing.

From the three trends identified it is evident that the research questions were answered:

- What is the role of the master teacher?

- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

Trends one and two provide answers to the first and third research questions. The role of the master teacher is to support teachers and provide job-embedded professional development that has been field-tested in the classrooms. The master teacher provides support to teachers in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and in leadership team meetings. In order for the master teacher to be a true instructional leader they must have the pedagogy necessary to embed authentic application of skills into clusters, field-testing, and classrooms. The third trend answers the second research questions by identifying the personal and professional characteristics necessary to fill the role of a master teacher.

**Summary**

Data in this chapter provided insight into the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader. Participants shared characteristics needed to successfully fill this position as well as challenges faced by master teachers as instructional leaders in their schools. The role of a master teacher as an instructional leader includes being a support structure and having a strong pedagogy to embed authentic applications of skills into research-based professional development and field-testing to increase teacher efficacy and student achievement through data analysis and individualized support.

Characteristics of an effective master teacher include being able to coach adults through data analysis, an understanding of research-based strategies to improve student achievement, and an honest, reflective, people person willing to grow themselves as well as others. Challenges in meeting the needs of teachers and students include: time constraints, coaching and data analysis abilities, credibility amongst the staff, and being viewed as "one of them." This summary shows the overall beliefs of the participants and also lays the foundation for the themes that emerged through this case study. Chapter five provides an overview, summary of findings, discussion, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research relating to the role of a SC TAP master teacher as an instructional leader.

**CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Overview**

As explained in Chapter 1, the purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand how the TAP master teacher served as an instructional leader in one South Carolina elementary school. Documents, artifacts, and individual interviews were used to provide an understanding of the master teacher as an instructional leader. These sources of data were then analyzed for common trends using categorical aggregation and direct interpretation. The following research questions guided all aspects of data collection:

- What is the role of the master teacher?

- How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

- What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher?

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results of the study and to generate conclusions from the data gathered. This chapter consists of a summary of findings followed by a discussion of the importance of these findings in relation to the research. The chapter concludes with implications of the findings for various stakeholders, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research. This chapter will explain how this study adds to the current research and also challenges current understanding of certified teachers as instructional leaders in their building. The chapter also provides insights into the limited empirical research on the role of the master teacher.

**Summary of Findings**

To ensure a true understanding of the research questions was obtained, multiple interviews were conducted with educators at all levels of their careers including: career, mentor, and master teachers, coaches, administrators, and state level educators. The interview questions

utilized in this case study searched for the how and why master teachers serve as instructional leaders in their buildings, as well as what exactly is a master teacher in SC TAP schools.  In addition to interviews, documents and artifacts such as professional development training logs and notes from the master teacher, value-added scores of the school, and photographs were used to capture the true understanding of the role of the master teacher.  Through uncovering the answers to the research questions, three themes emerged.  These were: 1).  An overarching umbrella of support provided by the master teacher, 2.) The pedagogy necessary for the master teacher to embed authentic application of skills into the school environment through cluster meetings and field-testing, and 3.) The characteristics necessary for master teachers to be successful instructional leaders.

**The Master Teacher Provides Support**

According to NIET (2012), leading professional development and supporting classroom teachers by providing demonstration lessons, coaching, and team-teaching are the main duties of the master teacher.  These duties were evident in the responses and documentation collected for this instrumental case study.  However, data obtained also showed that the master teacher supported all aspects of the teacher, not just cluster implementation.  Differentiated support allowed the master teacher to ensure all teachers effectively implemented the strategies provided in the weekly cluster meeting as well as meeting other personal and professional needs of the teachers, including supporting them with their area of refinement.

The support offered by the master teacher and other leadership team members included conducting walk throughs for feedback, providing modeled lessons, team teaching with career and mentor teachers, holding planning sessions, and coaching teachers before and after lessons and feedback application to ensure effective implementation of the field-tested cluster strategy

and best practices.  Support provided by master teachers and leadership team members was not limited to these modes.  Support took place in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and non-directly through leadership team meetings.  Based on these findings, individualized support was the cornerstone of what made a master teacher such a constructive instructional leader in SC TAP schools.

**The Master Teacher Must Have Pedagogy To Embed Authentic Application of Skills**

The role of the master teacher can best be defined as a data-driven support structure that leads professional development where authentic application from field-testing is embedded to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness.  In order to be successful in this role, the findings revealed that master teachers needed to have a strong pedagogical background in student strategies as well as in best practices for teaching and learning.  DuFour et al.  (2006) believed that PLCs worked interdependently to achieve common goals; however, this instrumental case study revealed that the master teacher is truly the change agent in SC TAP schools, conducting amass of behind-the-scenes work.  According to Emily (personal communication, September 18, 2014), "Master teachers are the hardest working people in their buildings." Master teachers use researched-based strategies to guide teachers in improving teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement.  The master teacher must conduct sizable amounts of prep work prior to and following cluster meetings to ensure transfer of knowledge takes place.  Master teachers serve as instructional leaders in SC TAP schools by weekly embedding authentic application of skills into research-based professional development to improve teacher efficiency and student achievement.

Master teachers also serve as instructional leaders by embedding authentic application of skills into field-testing strategies as they work with small groups of students prior to providing

the strategy to the entire school in cluster; this ensures the strategy will work with the students in that particular school or class. This practice is unique to the role of the TAP master teacher and challenges current research on instructional leaders (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Neumerski, 2013; Schacter et al., 2013).

Based on the data obtained, master teachers should be in the trenches supporting the teachers while also completing the behind-the-scenes work that teachers often do not have time to complete, such as field-testing strategies to ensure they work for students in the school before actually bringing them to cluster for teachers to implement. The master teacher, along with the guidance of the leadership team, uses the data obtained in field-testing to structure the sequence of the weekly professional development provided. Therefore, the more pedagogy the master teacher has with teacher and student strategies, the better he or she will be able to serve as an instructional leader in SC TAP schools by implementing authentic application of skills into the school environment.

**Characteristics Necessary To Be A Master Teacher**

The data obtained revealed there are personal and professional characteristics that are necessary for master teachers to hold in order to be successful in their roles. These included being a reflective and honest instructional leader who has excellent coaching skills and enjoys supporting others in the building. According to Gabriel (2005), "if a teacher leader is honest and ethical, he or she will be respected, which is most important" (p. 15). These characteristics will ensure the master teacher is able to gain the reverence of colleagues and effectively communicate to reach all learning styles of teachers, regardless of their educational level and experience.

Some professional characteristics necessary to fill the role of the master teacher included being knowledgeable of data, understanding the characteristics of adult learners, and having a

strong pedagogy of effective research-based instructional strategies. In addition, master teachers should be organized and effective in time management to utilize every minute to best meet the needs of students and teachers. "Being organized means having some kind of system in place, however foreign it may appear to others, to stay focused and on track, which facilitates being able to handle the myriad responsibilities necessary for teaching and leading" (Gabriel, 2005, p. 16). These characteristics helped the master teacher serve as an effective professional development leader and support structure to all teachers and students.

An essential personal characteristic of the master teacher included being able to build relationships with peers to effectively coach them on the skills needed. "A coach needs to be able to reflect on his integrity, intentions, and communication skills in order to effectively build a relationship" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 78). According to the data, having a trusting relationship with the master teacher will ensure teacher and student growth occurs. Forming these relationships is a crucial step in being a successful master teacher; without these relationships, teacher buy-in will be limited and minimal student gains will be achieved. This is one reason why, according to Jack (personal communication, September 3, 2014), schools should spend the first few months with a new master teacher solely focusing on supporting teachers to form these trusting relationships. "Master teachers are trained to focus, say the first month or two months of school, on building rapport and doing what is needed to be able to ultimately help the teacher see that they are a support structure and not a mini administrator" (Jack, personal communication, September 3, 2014). Having the personal and professional characteristics discovered in this case study will allow master teachers the opportunity to excel as an instructional leader in their school.

**Discussion**

This instrumental case study confirmed previous research on distributed leadership theory (Spillane, 2006) and furthered research on the topics of professional development (DuFour, 2014; Guskey, 2014) and instructional leaders (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010) while showcasing the results of one school reform model, the SC TAP system. The study adds to the limited empirical research available on the role of the master teacher and certified teachers as instructional leaders in schools as well as the characteristics necessary to be a successful master teacher. The following discussion will look at each of these topics in comparison to the data obtained through this study.

**Distributed Leadership Theory**

The focus of this case study was on the role of a master teacher as an instructional leader, which increases the research available on certified teachers as instructional leaders, rather than relying solely on administrators. While focusing on the TAP master teacher, the data included findings on how the master teacher interacts simultaneously with the TAP leadership team, which reinforced empirical research on distributed leadership theory. "Education policymakers who view leadership from a distributed leadership perspective must acknowledge that the work of leading schools involves more than the leadership of the school principal" (Spillane, 2006, p.103). A group of teacher leaders must support the administrator in meeting the needs of the adult learners in the building, which is the case of TAP master and mentor teachers. "Just as there is no single theory that explains all of human learning, there is no single theory of adult learning" which is why a team approach is necessary to ensure all learner needs are met (Knowles, Horton, & Swanson, 2014, p. 2).

Master teachers, alongside the TAP leadership team, focus the school on an instructional

goal geared towards individualized support for teachers and students. Their combined efforts added to the available research on Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership theory. Having multiple leaders in a building helping all teachers feel supported was the overarching theme established in this case study and would not have been achieved without the Distributed Leadership theory. Ava reiterates this by saying:

> I think the best part of a having a master teacher is having that support system because I think about when I was in a school that was not a TAP school, I didn't have anybody that I could go to or someone to support me but in a school that is a TAP school with a master teacher, the master teacher goes around collaborating with everyone, trying to get them on the same page; because of this you become more of a family and not just in that room by yourself doing your own thing without knowing if you are doing something correctly or incorrectly. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

The multiple leaders (masters, mentors, administrators, and sometimes career teachers) in SC TAP schools collectively work together to ensure students achieve at least one year's growth and teachers effectively implement research-based strategies presented in weekly cluster meetings and follow-up coaching sessions. Using a distributed leadership model as in TAP schools ensures the opportunity to grow multiple leaders in a school without overwhelming one or two administrators. According to Jack:

> The data clearly shows the support for career ladders to allow the master teacher to support teachers. When you are looking at 92% - 95% of schools saying that collegiality increases because of the support structure designed by the TAP leadership team, but also the one-on-one support from the master teacher to the career teacher, as well as the overall professional learning community in the teachers working together; that cannot be

done without the instructional leadership of the master teacher in general. (personal

communication, September 3, 2014)

Without the use of distributed leadership theory, the master teacher would not excel as

the support system in SC TAP schools. This instrumental case study provided an insight into

how the distributed leadership model is used over consecutive years in one elementary school

and how it evolved over the course of 12 years. The collegiality formed in SC TAP schools by

master teachers provides the foundation for professional development to occur for the adult

learners in the building and demonstrated in this instrumental case study the impact of distributed

leadership theory on one elementary school system.

**Professional Development For Adult Learners**

According to Knowles et al. (2014), adults are motivated to learn as they experience

needs and interests that learning satisfies, prefer a life-centered orientation to learning where

experience is the richest source of learning, need to be self-directed, and increase individual

differences with age (p. 166). Master teachers address these needs of adult learners as they

embed authentic application of skills into clusters and have teachers implement them into their

own classrooms. The results of the first and third research questions show the role of the master

teacher was similar to that of an instructional leader who develops teachers and improves student

achievement through professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2000; McCoy, 2013);

however, the master teacher position differed in the type of support provided to classroom

teachers as follow-up to the professional development. Robert Marzano (personal

communication, March 21, 2015), stated schools are not jumping into effectiveness because of

their lack of implementation, which is generally the hardest part. The TAP master teacher offers

a new model of teacher leadership that addresses the implementation process for adult learners to

increase teacher efficiency and student achievement through a unique support model where job-embedded professional development is entrenched with authentic application of skills, in addition to working in the trenches with teachers following cluster meetings. The follow-up to the professional development is the crucial difference with the TAP master teacher. Drs. Raymond & Julie Smith (personal communication, March 21, 2014) believe you have to follow-up on feedback provided to teachers weekly to ensure implementation occurs. While Guskey (2014) believed professional development should begin with student learning outcomes, the SC TAP master teacher begins professional development and support each year focused on building relationships and best practices of instruction before shifting the focus to a student-learning outcome. This was a different mindset than what is currently offered in research. Support on the basic pedagogy of teaching helps to ensure all teachers grow students at least one year every school year, but more importantly, that they continuously improve their craft of teaching. "The majority of teachers and principals want professional development; they want to improve their craft, be more effective, implement new skills, and see students learn more" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 7). This trend of desiring improvement of one's skills was acknowledged in this instrumental case study.

Having a strong understanding of adult learners was a required professional characteristic that was revealed in this case study through the interview process. According to Venables (2014), "PLCs that flourish and accomplish high results for themselves and for their students are almost without exception led by a well-trained coach" (p. 104). In SC TAP schools, the master teacher is charged with being a well-trained coach who leads professional development and offers follow-up support. Characteristic trends of highly effective professional development leaders that were obtained in this study and that reinforced current research included high levels

of content pedagogy and procedural knowledge, data analysis skills, communication skills, and respect among colleagues (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010). Characteristics that added to the current research included someone who is non-judgmental, an encourager, supportive, and a learner and researcher.

Where this study challenged the literature was to ask if the master teacher was truly serving as a support system for the teachers and not just an instructional coach focusing on student achievement. According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), "leadership is not about personality; it's about behavior" (p. 15). The behavior of the master teacher in this case study showed how important it is for professional development leaders to form trusting relationships to best meet the needs of the adult learners in a school. Once these relationships are formed it is essential for the master teacher to remain at the forefront of best practices in teaching as well as instructional strategies to help boost student achievement and teachers' pedagogical understanding of best practices.

**Instructional Leaders**

The results of the third research question, how is the master teacher an instructional leader, had varying answers based on the current position of the participant and their experience; however, all participants did share the same underlying tone of supporting career teachers in leadership team meetings, in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and through professional development and field-testing. According to Gabriel (2005), "there is scant realistic material explaining how to be an effective teacher leader" (p. ix). This instrumental case study answers this for the TAP master teacher role. Master teachers must offer support not only to the career teachers in the building but also to the administrators and the mentor teachers. The goal of the master teacher is to ensure staff members feel supported while increasing their knowledge of best

teaching practices and student achievement. "Teachers ultimately feel alone because of the singular nature of the job; they need to feel supported; they need to believe they are supported" (Gabriel, 2005, p. 105). The master teacher ensures the principal and teachers feel supported on a daily basis. The master teacher assists the principal in creating agendas and compiling research used for facilitating TAP leadership team meetings.

The data revealed the master teacher stood out as the most significant support structure in SC TAP schools. The TAP master teacher serves as an instructional leader by supporting teachers through increasing teacher efficiency and student achievement, which is accomplished through professional development and individualized support. While some of the research on instructional leaders mentions support (Gabriel, 2005; Knight, 2007), they do not provide a thorough description of the support provided as revealed in this instrumental case study.

"Master teachers work to enhance the school environment by providing a lot of support in the way of encouragement as well in the way of resources and tools that benefit both teachers and students" (Natalie, personal communication, November 5, 2014). "The master teacher position offers teachers another support structure to continue to do what is best for students and improve instruction. It gives teachers a "coach" to help lead them and support them as they make instructional decisions" (Abby, personal communication, September 24, 2014). This coach supports teachers with elements of TAP as well as taking into consideration personal need and general competency. According to Jack:

> The key is that a master teacher has to be a teacher first; has to be seen as a teacher, has to be seen as a curriculum leader/a strategic leader, but as a teacher; a teacher of adults and a teacher of students. Sometimes what we see is that master teachers forget what it's like to be in the trenches and when this occurs you see a ineffective master teacher, so

they have to be seen as someone who truly understands the needs of learners, whether

that be an adult or a child. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

The authentic application of skills from field-tested and research-based strategies

provided by the master teacher in weekly cluster meetings ensure that students and teachers are

receiving instruction geared towards their needs. "Master teachers enhance the school by

analyzing data and helping teachers see weaknesses within the school and specific classrooms.

They work to pull strategies that will help eliminate the gap between student performances and

expectations" (Lucy, personal communication, November 6, 2014). These findings are

consistent with research available on instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mangin &

Stoelinga, 2010; McCoy, 2013; Tivnan & Hamphill, 2005).

According to Barbara:

When a school is lucky enough to have a hard working, knowledgeable, go-getter as a

master teacher, everything dances with harmony. Teachers adore the support master

teachers provide. Administrators like that instruction is front and center and the heart of

decision making, even when I am being pulled in one million directions, I know that the

master teachers are working on instruction and keeping that time sacred. Master teachers

are able to coach and refine teachers in a less threatening way than school administrators.

(personal communication, September 24, 2014)

Characteristics such as these distinguish master teachers as instructional leaders and ensure

teachers and students continue to achieve success. Therefore the findings of this case study

extend current research on instructional leaders and provide new research on master teachers as

instructional leaders. This study provided detailed descriptions of the role of the TAP master

teacher and how she served as an instructional leader in her school.

**Implications**

This instrumental case study focused on one bounded case, providing an in-depth look at the role of a TAP master teacher as an instructional leader. The implications of this research provided an understanding of the role of a TAP master teacher and added to the limited empirical research on this topic. Data obtained had implications for various stakeholders in education including policymakers, administrators, teachers, and especially for those currently working with TAP or prospective TAP schools. The implications of this instrumental case study will increase the support that is available to teachers and students in all schools, not just SC TAP elementary schools.

**For Policymakers**

According to the results of this study, providing authentic application of job-embedded professional development and follow-up support should be at the forefront of all educational policies. Teachers and students alike thrive when differentiated job-embedded professional development is provided that meets the needs of their teachers and students. As policymakers are looking at reform models in education, it is essential that they provide funding for positions, such as master teachers, to allow support of teachers and job-embedded professional development to occur. Job-embedded professional development that should occur at all schools includes: understanding how to effectively use data, how to design and create daily classroom assessments, and effective teaching practices such as grouping and providing academic feedback. Once this professional development is provided, there must be a person assigned to provide the necessary support to ensure implementation occurs.

Weekly job-embedded professional development opportunities that embed authentic application of skills from field-testing will assist teachers in strengthening their teaching abilities

to best meet the needs of their students. Without school reform models, such as TAP, schools will continue to struggle to provide the support needed to increase teacher efficiency and student achievement because funding is often not allowed for these positions in public education budgets. Without master teacher positions, schools will continue to institute PLCs that offer no follow-up support model to ensure implementation occurs from the actions determined in the PLC.

**For Administrators**

Data obtained in this case study show that administrators no longer need to be the sole instructional leader in a school. By utilizing the findings of this study, in correlation with Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership theory, principals can form leadership teams who work to develop others in their building to create an environment of shared leadership. Through shared leadership, leadership team members can support teachers by providing individualized instruction and support such as team teaching, modeled lessons, and coaching sessions. This individualized support will positively impact the career teachers in the building and also increase student achievement and strategy implementation across the school.

In addition to the support offered to career teachers, administrators should look for opportunities to empower teachers to grow in their profession by encouraging teachers to take leadership role positions such as the TAP master teacher. The more teachers are empowered by an administrator to take a leadership role, the easier the administrator's job becomes because he or she knows everyone in the building has a shared focus of instructional best practices. This shared focus on instructional best practices will allow all students to achieve their highest levels of success. Having this support system in place will ensure all students and staff grow academically each year and encourage teachers to stay in the profession longer.

**For Teachers**

Through the analysis of data in this case study it is evident there is a strong need for teacher support in schools. Teachers are overwhelmed with the pressure placed on them by policymakers, district personnel, and administrators of ensuring each student grows; yet teachers often are not provided the skills or tools needed to ensure this happens. Providing teachers with a support person or team of support leaders gives the teachers an opportunity to improve their instructional abilities alongside a pedagogical expert and broadens their knowledge of research-based strategies to increase student achievement. This collaborative partnership ensures teachers are given an opportunity to implement administrator's initiatives with the support of a trusted leader on the staff. Lily emphasized this by stating:

> I guess that's the theme throughout this process is the support, that's the key. That's what's going to make it successful instead of being the gotcha, it's got to be a support system and so if you can build that support and understanding and collaboration and you can build that support system then a school can be successful in TAP. (personal communication, September 3, 2014)

In schools across South Carolina and many other states, teachers are required to teach grade levels or subjects they are unfamiliar with and given little support to be successful. Through this case study, teachers are shown the level of support that can be provided to them in TAP schools. The support model offered in SC TAP schools will help current teachers stay in the field longer and grow in effective teaching practices and instructional strategies to move their students forward. The pedagogical knowledge gained when working within a support model such as TAP also provides teachers with opportunities to apply their newfound knowledge in leadership positions while still staying in the classroom.

**For Current & Future TAP Schools**

For those currently involved in TAP schools across the United States or prospective TAP schools, this instrumental case study provides a foundation for understanding whom would best serve the role of the TAP master teacher. When conducting interviews, it is important to note the personal and professional characteristics necessary to be an effective master teacher. These characteristics, along with the master teacher model of providing support, explain how the master teacher serves as an instructional leader. Embedding authentic application of skills into cluster meetings also ensure the master teacher serves as an instructional leader.

The support model designed in SC TAP schools works to enhance the whole teacher by supporting personal and professional needs affecting teacher efficacy and student achievement. This instrumental case study provides an understanding of what prospective TAP schools can expect when implementing this school reform model. It also assists current TAP schools in understanding how the role of the master teacher grows by the 12th year of implementation.

**For Master Teachers**

Current and future master teachers can gather a firm understanding of the role of a master teacher as an instructional leader from these findings. This study revealed the characteristics necessary for master teachers to be an instructional leader in their school. Current master teachers can reflect on their skills and contributions compared to those discovered in this instrumental case study. They can receive support on their areas of weakness from their regional master teachers and professional development designed for instructional leaders. Current master teachers can also achieve a deeper understanding of their position and how they can support teachers through follow-up support and differentiated professional development embedding authentic applications from field-testing.

Future master teachers can decide if the master teacher role is something they want to pursue after understanding the characteristics and pedagogy necessary to truly be a support system for teachers and students in SC TAP schools. They can also form an understanding of the necessary characteristics and choose to develop these skills prior to applying for a position. Future master teachers can also learn from Lily's experience of being an instructional leader and the necessary requirements of the job. The implications provided in this section provide an understanding for how the findings of this study can impact policymakers, administrators, teachers, TAP schools, and TAP master teachers.

## Limitations

Limitations are present in all studies. In this instrumental case study seeking to understand the role of the TAP master teacher there were several limitations that existed. The researcher served as a regional master teacher for SC TAP while completing the dissertation process. The researcher's knowledge of TAP and the master teacher position may have created bias in the self-reporting of data analysis and discussion. Although the researcher has never served as a master teacher, the researcher has worked extensively with master teachers for the last four years. To address this issue, reflective journaling was used and triangulation of data to ensure accuracy and non-bias.

In addition to the researcher serving as a regional master teacher for SC TAP, the focal participant, Lily, also took a position as a regional master teacher during the time this dissertation was completed. Lily taking the position of a regional master teacher added several limitations to this study. First, this meant that she was no longer at Sarolina Elementary as the master teacher, which meant no direct observations, could be conducted. According to Yin (2009), direct observations are one form of data that should be used in an instrumental case

study.   A second limitation for this study caused by Lily's job advancement meant that the participants were answering questions about Lily's role of the master teacher as an instructional leader six months after working with Lily in that position.  These limitations could have skewed the perceptions of participants as they may have forgotten some of the roles or characteristics pertaining to this case study.

Another limitation of the study is that the boundaries of this case may not permit naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995).  While these findings were true for this master teacher, findings may differ across schools based on the characteristics, pedagogy, and support provided by other master teachers.  The findings from this study focused on a seasoned master teacher who pioneered the position in the state of South Carolina.  Readers may identify with only parts of the findings and must make comparisons to their own situation.

A final limitation of this case is that relies on some subjective data: the opinions of participants interviewed.  The participants' descriptions, opinions, and feelings provided a large amount of the findings in this instrumental case study.  To address this limitation, these opinions were cross-referenced with data from documents and artifacts to ensure the opinions were valid.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This research analyzed the role of a TAP master teacher as an instructional leader. Through the use of interviews, artifacts, and documents, the researcher gained an understanding of the role of the TAP master teacher, characteristics necessary to successfully fill this role, and how the TAP master teacher served as an instructional leader in SC TAP schools.  Future research that may add to the limited literature on master teachers includes conducting another instrumental case study looking at the role of a master teacher as an instructional leader in another state, school, or grade level configuration such as a middle or high school.  Another

suggestion would be to conduct another instrumental case study similar to this yet featuring a different master teacher. These studies would add to the limited research available on master teachers and would provide insight into the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader in these settings with other master teachers.

Another suggestion would be to conduct a phenomenological study featuring multiple master teachers to determine if similar results are found from multiple participants. This study could focus on the experiences of master teachers employed in the System for Teacher and Student Advancement. By looking at multiple master teachers, the results of the study would be more easily generalized across multiple settings as opposed to this instrumental case study.

A third suggestion would be to conduct a mixed-methods study focusing on qualitative research as the primary and quantitative as secondary by incorporating surveys and testing results of schools with a master teacher and those without a master teacher. This could showcase how having a master teacher as an instructional leader affects student achievement and teacher efficiency. Incorporating electronic open response surveys into the mixed-method study would allow participants to share information anonymously to provide a deeper picture of the master teacher as an instructional leader. The results would hopefully provide similar results yet deeper insight into the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader. Other forms of data that could be incorporated into a mixed-methods study would include observation scores of master teachers to determine their effectiveness. Quantitative research may focus on value-added measures of teachers who are provided job-embedded professional development.

A final suggestion would be to conduct a case study on TAP master teachers and the challenges they face as instructional leaders. This study would focus on master teachers as instructional leaders in their buildings but would extend on the struggles of master teachers as

professional development leaders in their schools. The study may include how master teachers overcome these challenges to assist current and future master teachers in decreasing these challenges. This study would also provide insight to policymakers when considering interventions needed to successfully implement job-embedded professional development into the public education system.

Regardless of the future study conducted, it would be imperative that the study includes an observational component. According to Stake (1995), "observations work the researcher toward greater understanding of the case" (p. 60). This understanding is essential to ensure the empirical research is provided on the TAP master teacher. With the dearth of empirical knowledge available, observations will provide further insight into this position and how the master teacher serves as an instructional leader.

**Summary**

This instrumental case study adds to the knowledge base available on distributed leadership theory, certified teachers as instructional leaders, and the role of the SC TAP master teacher as an instructional leader. Through a categorical aggregation of the findings, three themes emerged. These were: 1). An overarching umbrella of support provided by the master teacher, 2.) The pedagogy necessary for the master teacher to embed authentic application of skills into the school environment through cluster meetings and field-testing, and 3.) The characteristics necessary for master teachers to be successful instructional leaders. Through these themes some current research was confirmed while other research was challenged. The limited research that was available on the role of the master teacher as an instructional leader prior to this instrumental case study, has been further explained through this study. While this

study may not be reflective of all master teachers, it does provide a basis for researchers to understand this role and how it serves as an instructional leadership position.

This chapter provided my interpretation and ideas of the findings and conclusions of this instrumental case study on the role of a master teacher as an instructional leader.  In addition to these findings and conclusions, the chapter also included a summary of the findings, an in depth discussion on these findings in relation to the available literature.  The chapter closed with implications for various stakeholders, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.   From this instrumental case study it is evident that the master teacher is an effective instructional leadership position that is needed in all schools to ensure effective implementation from PLCs is achieved to improve teacher efficiency and student achievement.

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# APPENDIX A

## Interview Guide

1. Tell me about yourself, your job/work, what you do.

2. How long have you been in your current position/education field?

3. What led you to your career choice?

4. How long have you been associated with TAP?

5. Describe a "typical" day at work.

6. Describe your understanding of the master teacher position. (Prompts: cluster, leadership team, field testing, student achievement)

7. What characteristics are needed to be a master teacher?

8. With whom does the master teacher interact?

9. What support is offered to master teachers?

10. How is the master teacher an instructional leader at your school?

11. Based on your experience, what concerns do you feel master teachers face as instructional leaders?

12. How does the master teacher position enhance the school environment?

13. Is there anything else significant about master teachers that you would like to share?

Mention/request a follow-up interview

**APPENDIX B**

**IRB Approval**

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 20, 2014

Deborah Moore
IRB Approval 1940.082014: Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders: An Instrumental Case Study

Dear Deborah,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

# APPENDIX C

# Case Subject Consent Form

**CASE SUBJECT CONSENT FORM**
Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders: An Instrumental Case Study
Deborah Moore
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study analyzing the role of master teachers as instructional leaders. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the longest-standing K-5 South Carolina master teacher. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be a part of this study. Deborah Moore, a student in Liberty University's School of Education, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to understand the master teacher's role as an instructional leader in one SC K-5 elementary school implementing TAP. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the role of the master teacher? (b) What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher? (c) How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Agree to answer the attached questions via (a) a 30-minute in-person interview at an agreed upon location that will be audio-recorded for accuracy in transcribing; (b) a 30-minute phone interview that will be audio-recorded for accuracy in transcribing; or (c) an email interview.
2. Provide any artifacts or documents that may help answer the research questions.
3. Review the transcription for accuracy (an additional 10-20 minutes).
4. Answer any additional follow-up questions that may need to be answered for clarity.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risk to this study is no more than you would encounter in everyday life. There are no direct benefits to you in this study; however, there are societal benefits. These benefits are to offer accountability to other TAP schools by providing insight into the expectations of the master teacher and who could fill this role best within the school. A second societal benefit is to assist new and current master teachers in understanding the magnitude of the position especially because they are often the sole master teacher in the building. A third societal benefit would be to assist regional master teachers in coaching current master teachers in reaching their full potential in developing the teacher profession and student academics. A final societal benefit to participating in this study is to provide further insight into the distributed leadership theory and how it affects instructional leaders in schools.

**Compensation:**

You will not be monetarily compensated for your participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private by using pseudonyms for all participants. However, because you are the only master teacher with this level of experience, it may be possible for someone to discover your identity. Research records will be stored securely in locked files or on a password-protected computer personally owned by the researcher to which only the researcher will have access. All data obtained will be deleted or shredded three years after the date of IRB approval. Audiotapes of all interviews will be destroyed by the researcher or sent back to participants at the end of the three years.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or ▨▨▨▨ School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. At any time the participant may withdraw from the study by emailing their desire to withdraw to the researcher at ▨▨▨▨▨.

**How to Withdraw:**

You may withdraw from this study by contacting the researcher, Deborah Moore, or her chair, Dr. Mark Angle, verbally or in writing. If you choose to withdraw, the audio recordings will be hand or mail-delivered to you within two weeks of expressing your desire to withdraw.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Deborah Moore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▨▨▨▨ ▨▨▨ or her Dissertation Committee Chair, Mark Angle, at ▨▨▨▨▨▨.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨ or email at ▨▨▨▨▨.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

_____I have read and understood the above information. I have asked any needed questions and have received answers to all of my questions. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ I understand and agree to audio-recordings of all interviews conducted for this study.

_____ The researcher may dispose of the audiotape at the end of the three years.

_____ I would like the audiotape sent to me for disposal at the end of the three years.

<div align="center">(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL
INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS
DOCUMENT.)</div>

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

# APPENDIX D

# Participant Consent Form

**CASE SUBJECT CONSENT FORM**
Master Teachers as Instructional Leaders: An Instrumental Case Study
Deborah Moore
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study analyzing the role of master teachers as instructional leaders. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the longest-standing K-5 South Carolina master teacher. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be a part of this study. Deborah Moore, a student in Liberty University's School of Education, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to understand the master teacher's role as an instructional leader in one SC K-5 elementary school implementing TAP. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the role of the master teacher? (b) What characteristics are necessary to successfully fill the role of a master teacher? (c) How is the master teacher an instructional leader in SC TAP schools?

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Agree to answer the attached questions via (a) a 30-minute in-person interview at an agreed upon location that will be audio-recorded for accuracy in transcribing; (b) a 30-minute phone interview that will be audio-recorded for accuracy in transcribing; or (c) an email interview.
2. Provide any artifacts or documents that may help answer the research questions.
3. Review the transcription for accuracy (an additional 10-20 minutes).
4. Answer any additional follow-up questions that may need to be answered for clarity.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risk to this study is no more than you would encounter in everyday life. There are no direct benefits to you in this study; however, there are societal benefits. These benefits are to offer accountability to other TAP schools by providing insight into the expectations of the master teacher and who could fill this role best within the school. A second societal benefit is to assist new and current master teachers in understanding the magnitude of the position especially because they are often the sole master teacher in the building. A third societal benefit would be to assist regional master teachers in coaching current master teachers in reaching their full potential in developing the teacher profession and student academics. A final societal benefit to participating in this study is to provide further insight into the distributed leadership theory and how it affects instructional leaders in schools.

**Compensation:**

You will not be monetarily compensated for your participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private by using pseudonyms for all participants. However, because you are the only master teacher with this level of experience, it may be possible for someone to discover your identity. Research records will be stored securely in locked files or on a password-protected computer personally owned by the researcher to which only the researcher will have access. All data obtained will be deleted or shredded three years after the date of IRB approval. Audiotapes of all interviews will be destroyed by the researcher or sent back to participants at the end of the three years.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or ███████████ School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. At any time the participant may withdraw from the study by emailing their desire to withdraw to the researcher at ████████████

**How to Withdraw:**

You may withdraw from this study by contacting the researcher, Deborah Moore, or her chair, Dr. Mark Angle, verbally or in writing. If you choose to withdraw, the audio recordings will be hand or mail-delivered to you within two weeks of expressing your desire to withdraw.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Deborah Moore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ████████ or her Dissertation Committee Chair, Mark Angle, at ████████████

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ████████████████████████ or email at ████████

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

_____I have read and understood the above information. I have asked any needed questions and have received answers to all of my questions. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ I understand and agree to audio-recordings of all interviews conducted for this study.

_____ The researcher may dispose of the audiotape at the end of the three years.

_____ I would like the audiotape sent to me for disposal at the end of the three years.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL
INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS
DOCUMENT.)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____