VOICES OF WORTH- LISTENING TO TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL

STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND

INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE

Jennifer A. Roberts, B.S., M.Ed.

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APPROVED:

Andrew J. Milson, Major Professor
Kathleen Whitson, Minor Professor
Leslie Patterson, Committee Member
Carol Wickstrom, Committee Member and
    Interim Chair of the Department of
    Teacher Education and
    Administration
Jerry Thomas, Dean of the College of
    Education
Michael Monticino, Interim Dean of the
    Robert B. Toulouse School of
    Graduate Studies

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe and explain teachers' perceptions about effective professional development as well as to identify the environmental factors that affect the teacher participants' ability to engage in and implement various behaviors and beliefs transferred from the professional development experience. Four teachers were studied in depth for one school year, and data collected included in-depth interviews and classroom observations. Findings indicate three main themes related to the research questions, which sought to understand how teachers perceive and describe their experiences of participating in professional development and the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development. These themes are that: (a) Effective professional development must have a supportive context and meaningful purpose which: meets the physical and cognitive needs of participants; focuses on improving practice, content knowledge, and pedagogy; provides participants with choice, adequate time and ownership of learning experiences; and includes opportunities for sustained learning and accountability; (b) Learning experiences are greatly affected by interpersonal relationships and opportunities for social learning and should be built upon the principles of: taking risks in the learning environment; sharing beliefs in a community of practice with effective support structures; involving all members, including the leaders, in the community of practice; and including opportunities for dialogue and the sharing of best practices as tools for learning, and (c) Implementation efforts are influenced by multiple sources, including: collegial and administrator support; curriculum and standardized testing; and time. Effective professional development must include attention to assisting teachers in dealing with these influences when they become barriers to implementation efforts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research conducted on effective teaching concludes that employment of a wide and varied repertoire of behaviors, models, and strategies leads to effective teaching in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Harris, 1998). Tenets of effective teaching include the use of effective communication, classroom management techniques, student-teacher relationships, a wide variety of approaches to instruction, a strong content-knowledge base, differentiation of instruction based on student needs, a flexible use of tools and resources, teaching for varying levels of transfer, and a positive sense of self-efficacy that promotes teacher confidence (Harris, 1998; Kennedy, 2006; Madsen, 2003; Polk, 2006; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). Many of these tenets, introduced and practiced during preservice training, develop further during inservice professional development, and offer an avenue for the necessary continued growth of the components of effective teaching.

Guskey and Huberman (1995) remind us that the dynamic profession of education provides professional development to enhance instruction and personal development rather than strictly for remediation. Because effective teaching requires many complex behaviors that include communication, interpretation, and intuition, revision and enhancement of skills and dispositions become paramount for success. Professional development, training, and continuing education contribute to effective teaching by assisting teachers in refining necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Professional development engages multiple models for delivery that guide inservice

teachers in the understanding of current teaching methods, strategies, theory, research, and new curricula.

One successful model of professional development is the National Writing Project (NWP), a professional development network created in 1974 to encourage teacher collaboration, critical discourse, and reflection on writing instruction (NWP, 2007). This professional development model, based on the principle that "teachers are the best teachers of other teachers" (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 8), recognizes the importance of knowledge, expertise, and leadership among those in the profession. The key social practices of the NWP include treating every colleague as a potentially valuable contributor; sharing; discussing; and critiquing in public; turning ownership of learning over to learners; situating learning in practice and relationships; reflecting on teaching by reflecting on learning; sharing leadership; and adopting a stance of inquiry (Lieberman & Wood, 2002a).

These practices often then transfer into similar patterns of behavior in the classroom. By allowing participants to learn experientially by observing effective teachers, learning from experts in their field through university partnerships, reading and discussing current research, sharing their own writing and experiences, and adopting a stance of inquiry to current and future beliefs and behaviors, NWP activities embody tenets of effective teaching and effective professional development in many ways. The long-standing mindset of teachers as consumers of professional development excludes the experiences educators learn from in their classrooms each day. Teacher experience can instead be used as a learning tool within professional development activities, which is found in the NWP model.

The NWP seeks to assist teachers in learning from other teachers in order to improve practice and to ultimately boost student achievement. Teachers engage in learning activities throughout the five-week NWP Summer Institute to learn more about effective writing instruction. The audience for this experience is adults, and the goal is adult learning. Therefore, it seems only natural to examine the practices and theoretical constructs of the NWP in light of theories of adult learning, which will be discussed within the review of the literature. This adult learning framework allows for the variances in adult motivation, learning style, and ways of knowing that are as much a part of professional development as any other structured educational experience.

Context of the Problem

The implementation of knowledge and skills gained by teachers from experiences during professional development such as the NWP remains elusive (Guskey & Huberman, 1995). When teachers return from inservice activities, an expectation of action persists. Professional development leaders expect teachers to act on their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and beliefs and to implement these in their classrooms in order to increase student achievement. The assumption of professional development, that the overall quality of effective teaching will become widespread and lead to increased student learning, necessitates a critical examination of the models and tenets of effective teaching used during professional development activities, in relationship to how teachers transfer these effective teaching models to their own classrooms. Additionally, environmental and social conditions can support or constrain the implementation of newly-learned knowledge and skills acquired during professional development. It was these characteristics, including the conditions of the individual

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participants' campuses and classrooms, which served as the focus for the present research study.

In order to elucidate the effects of professional development on teacher behavior, and to understand the forces that impact implementation behaviors, it was necessary for the researcher to study teachers in depth to determine their transfer of learning from professional development experiences to classroom implementation. It was not clear what, if any, factors related to the professional learning or school environment were more likely to lead to increased implementation and engagement with professional development activities (Guskey, 2002b; McBride, Reed, & Dollar, 1994; Richardson, 1990; Supovitz & Turner, 2000). These areas of inquiry led to the present research study of the effects of professional development on teachers' actions and beliefs.

As a researcher, my interest in professional development began while I was working as a teacher in the Texas public schools. I taught in two districts, at two different grade levels, in the north Texas area from 1997 to 2008. During my ten years of teaching, I attended a great many professional development workshops, institutes, and seminars. These activities were most often organized by an agent outside of the school district or by curriculum specialists within the district who wished to impart knowledge about new curriculum or instructional strategies. Rarely was I treated as a professional who possessed knowledge to bring to the educational experience. Most often, as a session participant, I was told what I needed to learn and instructional activities were based on others' perceptions of my needs as a teacher.

After nearly all of these learning experiences, I returned to my classroom with a desire to use what I had learned to improve my teaching and to help my students

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improve their learning. Regardless of the type of professional development experience, whether voluntary or mandatory, whether short or lengthy, whether related to content or pedagogy, I consistently tried to find the best way to integrate what I had learned into my classroom. More often than not, though, this proved difficult or impossible. In most cases, I had been taught a very prescriptive, systematic method for implementing a new strategy, or I had been given only a few minor suggestions for adaptation of a teaching model to meet students' needs.

When I began to implement new techniques, strategies, models, or ideas into my own classroom, I was confronted with a host of constraints that prevented me from using my new knowledge and skills in the best way. These constraints included, but were certainly not limited to, factors such as the following: a lack of materials or money to purchase materials, a lack of time to integrate new activities into an already crowded curriculum, a lack of assistance in modifying the model or developing a strategy for the learning needs of my current students, a lack of support from other members of my team who were unwilling to change their current habits, an overabundance of responsibilities related to high-stakes testing that quashed time for experimentation in teaching methods, or a lack of support from administration to change current methods. After a time, it became discouraging to attend professional development activities, because I knew how difficult it would be to implement what I learned into my own classroom.

When I came to graduate school to work on my doctoral degree, I left the K-12 classroom. While pursuing my degree, I was given the opportunity to act as a research assistant for a group of professors on campus. These women served as the leadership

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team for SRWP, a local site of the National Writing Project (NWP). This site, which is located in the southwestern United States at a large regional university, was founded in 2003 to bring NWP professional development activities to the teachers in the region where it is located. For the purposes of this study, this site is referred to as the Southwest Regional Writing project, or SRWP. My role in the group was to help them research the theoretical and philosophical frameworks that guided their creation of professional development experiences. I began to read a great deal about professional development and combined this new knowledge with my understanding of adult learning theories, which was also a part of my coursework. Thus, I began to see the connection between quality professional development and adult learning. I also began to realize that my interests beyond seeking a degree lay in providing meaningful professional development to teachers.

In furthering my need to understand the work of the NWP model with teachers, I conducted a pilot study in the spring of 2007 that would serve as a basis for this dissertation study. The main question I was seeking to answer had to do with what teachers learned in the SRWP Summer Institute experience and how they implemented this new knowledge in the classroom. I studied two teachers in depth over the course of a semester. I observed in their classrooms and interviewed them both at great length. At the conclusion of the pilot study, I saw that each teacher was indeed using her newly-learned knowledge and skills within the classrooms, but in different ways. Additionally, the experience of participating in the Summer Institute was very different for both participants, and I began to wonder about the individual characteristics and motivation of each teacher in formulating meaning from this experience. I completed the research

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study with more questions than I had started with. I began to realize that innumerable personal and environmental factors were at the heart of my interest in the teachers' professional development experiences concerning the NWP.

Within the larger framework of the effects of professional development on individual teachers, the pilot study also seemed to suggest that there are variables that affect not only *what* teachers learn in professional development, but *how* they learn, *why* they choose to participate in the first place, and *how much* of what they learned they are able to implement in their own classrooms due to outside forces. These variables, specifically participants' perceptions about the characteristics within professional development they viewed as most beneficial to their learning experiences and the factors that affected their implementation efforts, guided the present research study. By understanding the differences in adults as learners and teachers, and also closely examining what goes on in schools and classrooms to support teachers' continuing professional growth, perhaps we can plan more effective professional development, and create more effective school cultures, that meet the needs of many instead of a few.

Statement of the Problem

Professional development is viewed by teachers, administrators, and policy makers as the primary vehicle for improving classroom instruction and ultimately student achievement, yet teachers in their own classrooms never use much of what is delivered in the name of professional development (Guskey, 2002b; Zepeda, 1999). As the researcher, I believe that a disconnect exists between what research says is appropriate, including best practices for these types of learning opportunities for

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teachers, and what is actually being delivered in the name of professional development by schools, districts, and other education agencies. It is also believed that many teachers possess a desire to learn, grow, and change professionally yet are not adequately supported in their schools and classrooms to implement desired change.

It is therefore unclear if there are certain characteristics of the learning environment and environmental factors that are more likely to contribute to sustained implementation and engagement with acquired knowledge and skills as a result of professional development experiences. This research study investigated these characteristics as they relate to teacher transformation as a result of professional development. The purposes of this phenomenological study was to describe and explain the perceptions about effective professional development of teacher participants who completed the SRWP's Summer Institute during the past five years, as well as to identify the environmental factors that affect their ability to engage in and implement various behaviors and beliefs transferred from the professional development experience.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined below as they are used in the present research study. These definitions are grounded in the review of the literature, as seen in chapter 2. The definitions for the purposes of this research study are:

Environmental factors. Conditions or forces within a school and/or classroom that affect a teachers' daily decision-making. These can included, but are not limited to, administrative directives and support, parental forces, curricula changes, testing requirements, and availability of resources.

Experience. The process of personally observing, undergoing, or encountering something.

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Meaning. The end, purpose, or significance of an experience.

Phenomenology. The study of the lived experiences of several individuals related to a concept or phenomenon.

P*rofessional development*. Knowledge and skills obtained for the purposes of professional growth and/or career enhancement. Professional development opportunities can include: (a) participation in workshops and training sessions, either connected or unconnected to their school and/or district; (b) informal learning activities, such as visits to museums and places of interest; (c) graduate courses or continuing education courses at an institution of higher education; (d) participation in action research for the purposes of improving one's practice; or (e) any long-term research study group or collaborative effort designed to share knowledge and skills with others in the profession.

Reflective practice. A careful review of one's actions and a thoughtful consideration of future actions.

Social cognitive learning theory-A learning theory based on the premise that humans learn from their own experiences and also from observing the experiences and actions of others.

Social-constructivism. A theory of learning that postulates that meaning is constructed through social interactions and out of social constructs.

Socio-cultural theory-A theory of learning based on the premise that all higher-order cognitive functions develop out of social interactions.

Research Questions

The questions in this research study were the following:

(1) How do teachers perceive and describe their experiences of participating in professional development, such as the National Writing Project?

(2) How do teachers perceive and describe the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development?

Theoretical Base

The philosophical and theoretical frameworks that guided this research study all center on student learning, meaning making, and social context in the learning

environment. Social constructivism, both in the form of socio-cultural and social cognitive learning theories, inform this study to assist in understand the ways in which participants experience the act of learning and the implementation of that learning in new settings. These differences are discussed further in chapter 2. By allowing opportunities for teachers to incorporate new knowledge into existing schema, to learn from their peers, to critically reflect on their own learning, and to participate in discourse that extends their knowledge and belief systems, effective professional development can provide a basis for life-long learning and appreciable effects on teacher behavior upon return to the classroom. The networks and social practices of the NWP provide these opportunities. These principles will be addressed further in the review of the literature in chapter 2.

The pragmatist view of experiential learning is key to understanding the qualities of effective professional development. Teachers as learners must make meaning from their experiences within the learning environment, frame this new knowledge within the constructs of their own context, and be meaningfully involved in order for effective learning to occur. This philosophical framework, based on the work of Dewey (1938) and others in the pragmatist school of thought, also emphasizes that new ideas are to be judged by their consequences. This becomes an important framework for effective professional development, as teachers return to their own classrooms, implement what they have learned, then judge for themselves the outcomes of change in their practice. The NWP model includes the active participation of all teachers, not only in the writing process, but also in the education of others within the group. By becoming an active participant in the daily activities of the Summer Institute, teachers experience what their

students experience, reflect on their learning as it pertains to their context, and become involved in the learning of peers. The learning environment of the Summer Institute exemplifies many of the tenets of social-constructivist learning theories, which serve as the foundation for this research study.

The theory known today as social cognitive theory began with the work of Albert Bandura (1974; 1977b; 1986) during the 1950s and has continued to evolve, through his own work and the work of others, into one of the major learning theories of our time. Developed out of discontent with popular behaviorist theories, social cognitive theory recognizes the important role humans play in their own learning, as well as the learning of others. The foundation of the work of the NWP is teachers teaching teachers. A community of practice is thus formed as teachers learn about best practices from one another, receive support from colleagues, and are valued as contributors of experience to the group. This work is built upon the principles of social learning formulated by Albert Bandura (1977b; 1986; 1989b), Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1986; 1987), and other social learning theorists.

Vygotsky's view of social learning, known as socio-cultural learning, is also helpful to understanding how the learning that takes place during professional development is supported by the community of learners within the setting. This theory, which presupposes that "the social dimension of consciousness is primary in fact and time," while the "individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 30), moves beyond the social cognitive focus on conceptual processes to include the "individual-in-social-action" (Cobb, 1996, p. 36) aspect of

learning. These differences are discussed further in the review of literature and highlight important implications for professional learning, the context of this study.

Effective professional development, when planned and executed using various theories of adult learning, better informs instructional and content choices for the adult audience. Adult learning theories of andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning all emphasize critical reflection, coupled with opportunities for feedback and follow-through, as crucial to effective learning for any adult (Boyle, Lamprianou, & Boyle, 2005; Friedman & Phillips, 2004; Guskey, 2002b). These components, when included in planning and implementation of professional development, can lead to greater transfer of learning for participants and a greater change in foundational belief structures. These perspectives combine to provide a basis for the present research study, by focusing on meaning making for the teacher as learner in a social setting that promotes cognitive and affective development. The review of literature, found in chapter 2, and the additional literature discussed in chapter 5 which relates more relevantly to the findings of this research study, will reveal how these components combine in practice to enhance teacher effectiveness and ultimately student achievement.

General Methodology

A phenomenological approach to research methodology was employed for the purposes of answering the research questions posed. A phenomenological approach centers on the meanings that participants assign to their interactions, learned knowledge and skills, and experience within the learning context (LeCompte & Preissle, 1992). "From this perspective, the scientific observer deals with how the social world is

made meaningful. Her focus is on *how* members of the social world apprehend and act upon the objects of their experiences" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 485). Consequently, the goal for this research study was to understand the professional development learning experiences of teacher participants from their perspectives.

Overall, as a researcher, my interest continues to be the effects of professional development activity on teacher's beliefs and behaviors in their own classrooms. During my pilot study, I was an observer only, with limited knowledge about the social practices and activities of the Summer Institute. It became clear to me that I lacked the insider perspective on what the participants were talking about and doing in their classrooms, and this created barriers to my communication with them.

Therefore, during the summer of 2007, I participated in the SRWP's Summer Institute. My role as participant allowed me to view the work of the organization as an insider. I became a part of a cadre of 20 teachers from the area. My participation allowed me to see the work of the Summer Institute as a professional educator, consider my own learning experiences in light of my classroom goals, and become a part of the community of practice that formed among the participants. I was able to learn from and teach others by participating in the Summer Institute. The experience gave me a new understanding of this professional development model, one that informed this research study.

This research study focused on four teachers, a small number in relation to the total number of those within the profession across the state. It is not generalizable to the population as a whole, however, by studying each of these teachers' experiences and beliefs in depth, this research study can result in meaningful data about their

experiences that could then lead to improved practice for professional development creators.

Summary

This research study examined the lived experience of four teachers who participated in a research-based model of professional development. The researcher followed participants into their classrooms to observe teaching practices and to learn about their beliefs and experiences through interviews. It was anticipated that a better understanding about quality professional development and the supports and constraints to making changes within a classroom would become evident. The conclusions drawn from these research findings can contribute to the knowledge base about adult learning and professional development. The problem examined is significant because, only by utilizing best practices in learning environments can we expect to create change within the classroom. It is anticipated that the results from this research study will help program developers in the future to create professional development activities that are more meaningful and helpful to all teachers. Additionally, this research study can contribute to bridging the gap between adult learning theories and professional development by illustrating these theories in practice.

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, the reader will find a critical review of the literature that supports the constructs and theoretical foundations of the present research study. This review of the literature was what informed the research study's design and creation. Topics addressed include the social cognitive theory of learning, research on effective teaching, research on effective professional development, research on adult learning, and research on the NWP model of professional

development. This review will highlight areas salient to the present research study as well as illuminate areas of research that led to further questions. The research methodology used for this research study is discussed in detail in chapter 3. The principles of phenomenology are examined, and the specific data collection and analysis strategies used are explained. The research findings, organized by analytic theme, are presented in chapter 4. Finally, the reader will find the interpretations of the research findings, discussion of the relevant literature, and implications for the study as a whole in chapter 5. Within this chapter, a more in-depth examination of the literature and theory that informed the analysis process is offered as a supplement to the literature previously addressed in earlier chapters.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 2 will guide the reader through a review of the literature relevant to the formation of this research study. As with all qualitative studies, the understandings of the theoretical framework and connection to the research literature for this research study evolved over the course of the data collection and analysis. Therefore, the literature presented here represents my initial connections and understandings, as a novice researcher, and formed the basis for this research study's design and implementation. However, as additional searching was conducted throughout the course of this research study, necessary to ground the analytic work in a strong foundation that offered support for or alternate explanations to the findings, an additional review of the literature and theory base was conducted. The work of that search has been included in chapter 5 of this dissertation. As the researcher, I felt this was important for two reasons. First, I think the work presented here in chapter 2 was important to preserve as a record of my own theoretical and practical understandings of the constructs in question at the inception of the study. Secondly, the inclusion of additional research and theoretical foundations within chapter 5 lend assistance to situate the findings of this research into the broader scope in a more meaningful way, and thus are not repeated in this chapter.

Within this chapter, first is an examination of the social cognitive theory of learning and adult learning theories, as they form the basis for the theoretical framework of the research study. Second is an overview of the collaborative learning model of communities of practice, one type of social model within education. Next is a review the

literature on effective teaching, including a focus on the discussion of teacher characteristics. Next is a review of the literature on effective professional development practices. Finally, a review of the research conducted previously on the National Writing Project as a model for professional development is included.

Social Cognitive Theory

The Theory of Triadic Reciprocal Determinism

Albert Bandura's (1977b; 1989b) work in forming and refining the social cognitive theory moved educational theory beyond the behaviorist emphasis on stimulus and reward. Instead, the social cognitive theory recognizes the important role of human cognition and the interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences on human growth (Pajares, 2004). With the publication of *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (1986), Bandura "advanced a view of human functioning that accords a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in human adaptation and change" (Pajares, 2004, p. 1). Bandura's social cognitive theory recognizes that cognitive and personal factors, behavior, and the environment impact and interact with one another through a process he calls reciprocal determinism, shown in Figure 1 (Bandura, 1989b).
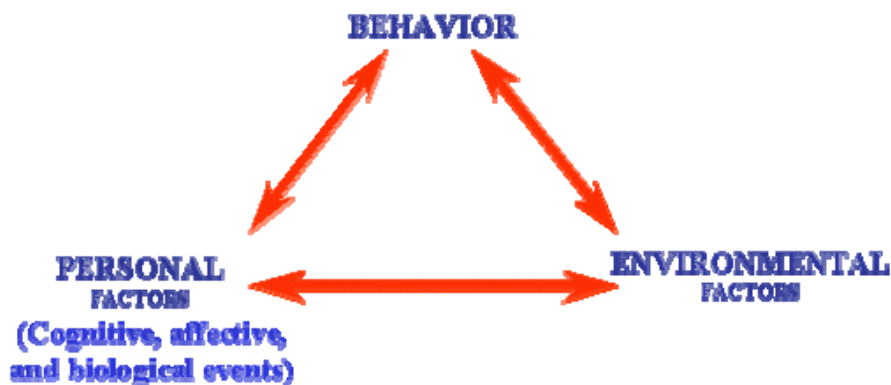
Figure 1. Reciprocal nature of triadic determinants. (Source: Pajares, 2004, p. 2)

These beliefs are affected by knowledge, experience, and interpersonal relationships over time. This causal model does not require nor imply that all sources are of equal strength, nor that they occur simultaneously.

Within the triadic model, personal and behavioral "causation reflects the interaction between thought, affect and action… What people think, believe and feel, affects how they behave" (Bandura, 1989b, p. 3). The personal factors identified by Bandura include physiological structures as well as emotional responses. The environmental and personal causation component examines emotions, beliefs, and cognitive abilities as they are influenced by environmental factors. "People activate different environmental reactions, apart from their behavior, by their physical characteristics (e.g., size, physiognomy, race, sex, attractiveness) and socially conferred attributes, roles, and status. The differential social treatment affects recipients' self-conceptions and actions" (Bandura, 1978b, p. 346). Finally, there is the interaction between behavior and environment. Throughout the processes of everyday life, our actions alter the environmental conditions, and the environment exerts influence on our actions. This bidirectional influence means "people are both products and producers of their environment. They affect the nature of their experienced environment through selection and creation of situations" (Bandura, 1989b, p. 4).

Bandura's theory of interacting and multidirectional influences breathed new life into the popular behavioral analyses of the time, as previous studies had looked mainly at unidirectional or single causation models. The theory's complexity was embraced by many within the field of psychology as a better way to examine human behavior and adaptation. By acknowledging that human behavior, and its influences and causes, are

complex, Bandura pushed the research study of behavior once again beyond simple explanations of learning and adaptation that were based on response to rewards (Phillips & Orton, 1983).

Social cognitive theory recognizes certain characteristics that are innately human, including the capacity to symbolize, give forethought to action, learn vicariously through others, self-regulate learning, and self-reflect, a capability that is most "distinctly human" (Bandura, 1986, p. 21). These factors comprise the foundation of the triadic reciprocation described here and depicted in Figure 1 as the basis for Bandura's theory. All of these forces are part of the three-sided system that is human cognition.

Symbolic representation is a uniquely human skill, which provides people with the means for understanding the environment (Bandura, 1989b). It is through the use of symbols as representations in cognitive processes that people form meaning from interactions with the world and others. "Symbols serves as the vehicle for thought" (Bandura, 1989b, p. 9). Without the ability to use symbols, humans would not be able to communicate with others; organize thoughts, experiences, or emotions into schema for making meaning; or test potential solutions to problems through thought rather than constant trial and error. Symbols therefore play a role in all aspects of social cognitive theory, including humans' ability to provide forethought to their actions.

Symbolization allows people to think about their future events and to engage in self-directedness. "People plan courses of action, anticipate the likely consequences of these actions, and set goals and challenges for themselves to motivate, guide, and regulate their actions" (Pajares, 2004, p. 2). This allows learners to think about their

courses of actions and actually learn from these plans rather than engaging in the behavior directly.

Self-regulation as a part of the self-system of Bandura's theory can be explained as either reactive or proactive in nature, depending upon the situation. Humans set goals for themselves, and then act accordingly to take steps toward reaching those goals. In this reactive mode, the action is produced by the goal. The act of setting the goal, though, is proactive, as the person evaluates past successes and determines a goal he or she is likely to achieve or for which he or she wishes to strive. In this cyclical pattern, self-regulation continues. Goals can be set for any number of purposes that affect the person's overall self-system. A contributing factor toward self-regulation is the act of self-reflection, or self-observation (Bandura & Schunk, 1981).

Humans have the capacity to think about their actions, or self-reflect, monitor their own performance, and learn from past mistakes and successes. While behaviorists would account for learned behavior such as this as response to a rewarded response in the past, the social cognitive theory takes into account the power of cognition, as well as experience, in human learning. In addition to learning from our own experiences, we can also learn from the experiences of others, either by social modeling or by vicarious experience, which will be discussed later. Regardless, the capability of humans to think about their own performance and to adjust their behavior accordingly is an important metacognitive part of the self-system. It requires recognizing one's own strengths and weaknesses, as well as making decisions about future goals based on this knowledge (Bandura, 1986; Evans, 1989).

Human agency is another key component to Bandura's evolving theory, as part

of the self-system. While his early research rarely mentioned agency, his more recent

works have included agency as a central factor in understanding the theory (Bandura,

1989a, 1991, 2001, 2006). Human agency is the belief one has regarding the power

one has to exercise control over the events that affect one's life (Bandura, 1989a).

Humans make causal contributions to this important aspect of self, as they exercise free

will, interact with the factors of the triadic model, and generate choices in life based on

cognitive processes. "The core features of agency enable people to play a part in their

self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times" (Bandura, 2001, p.

2). It is through agency that people develop forethought of action, self-regulation, and

self-efficacy, as previously examined.

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Self-Efficacy

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The concept of self-efficacy also finds its roots in the social cognitive theory of

Albert Bandura (1977a; 1978a; 1997a). Throughout his career, Bandura attempted to

define and develop the construct known today as self-efficacy, which is the belief "in

one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given

attainments" (Bandura, 1997b, p. 3). His works focused on the perceptions people have

of their own abilities to affect future change. Efficacy beliefs influence how resilient

people are when dealing with obstacles, how long a person will persist in the face of

failure or difficulty, and how much energy one will put forth on any given task (Bandura,

1977). It is important to note the distinction between self-efficacy, as defined here, and

self-esteem. Self-esteem is a measure or judgment of self-worth, while self-efficacy is a

measure or judgment of capability.

Bandura (1977a; 1986) believed that there were four sources of self-efficacy

information: (a) mastery experiences, (b) verbal persuasion, (c) vicarious experiences, and (d) emotional arousal (Figure 2).

Source	Mode of Induction
Performance Accomplishments	Participant modeling Performance Desensitization Performance Exposure Self-Instructed Performance
Vicarious Experience	Live Modeling Symbolic Modeling
Verbal Persuasion	Suggestion Exhortation Self-Instruction Interpretive Treatments
Emotional Arousal	Attribution Relaxation, Biofeedback Symbolic Desensitization Symbolic Exposure

Figure 2. Major sources of efficacy information. (Source: Bandura, 1977a, p. 195)

First, the most powerful sources of self-efficacy information are the mastery experiences of success, knowledge, and skills that build a sense of confidence. Conversely, encounters with obstacles and failure can lower one's confidence or efficacy level. Second, verbal persuasion, in the form of listening and talking with one's peers, colleagues, or friends, can assist in bolstering self-efficacy beliefs. This type of feedback, though limited, can help to boost confidence after a setback or provide the feedback necessary for reflection and future success. Third, observing others perform a task, what Bandura called vicarious experience, can assist in developing efficacious beliefs. Modeling of this nature conveys not only knowledge and skills, but attitudes as well. This factor is moderated by the degree to which the observer identifies with the

person modeling the behavior. Finally, self-efficacy can be affected by emotional factors like stress, fatigue, and depression, which can all lower self-efficacy beliefs. The level of emotional arousal, either by anxiety or excitement, can affect efficacious beliefs (Bandura, 1977a). There are multiple mediating processes that influence the development of efficacious beliefs, and these processes will be examined next.

Within the context of the current research study, the concept of self-efficacy becomes important as it relates to participants' decision-making and teacher characteristics. The review of research on effective teaching in a later section will illustrate the link between efficacious beliefs and teacher behaviors, as they relate to effective instruction. By examining the self-efficacy beliefs of participants of this dissertation research, I hoped to understand this connection better from the participants' point of view.

Cognitive Processes

"A major function of thought is to enable people to predict the occurrence of events and to create the means for exercising control over those that affect their daily lives" (Bandura, 1989a, p. 1176). When people have a high sense of self-efficacy, they are likely to set high goals for themselves and work hard to achieve these goals. When efficacy is low, goals are set at a much lower level, and the level of persistence towards meeting these goals can be reduced. People use their cognitive powers to make inferential judgments about a goal's difficulty, as well as to cognitively examine obstacles which might interfere with the attainment of a goal (Bandura, 1989a).

By drawing on their cognitive stores of knowledge, humans can make predictions about possible outcomes, weigh potential plans of action against each other, and apply

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past experiences to a present situation. All of these cognitive processes are important to goal setting and goal attainment. When action is put forth toward a goal, these experiences will further fuel one's efficacious beliefs. Accomplishment will tend to contribute to higher efficacious beliefs, while struggles and failure can serve to lower these beliefs (Bandura, 1989a).

When people possess a high sense of efficacy, they are more likely to "think soundly, set themselves difficult challenges, and commit themselves firmly to meeting those challenges" (Bandura, 1997a, p. 1). Low efficacy beliefs can lead a person to visualize outcomes of failure or dwell on personal deficiencies that could lead to failure. Cognitive processes alone, though, do not create beliefs of self-efficacy. Much like the triadic model for social cognitive development, efficacy is influenced by the interaction of cognitive processes with motivational, affective and selection processes (Bandura, 1997a).

Motivational Processes

A person's motivational beliefs also determine how much effort they will put forth towards reaching a goal, and a person's efficacy beliefs contribute to this motivation. "There is a growing body of evidence that human attainments and positive well-being require an optimistic sense of personal efficacy" (Bandura, 1989a, p. 1176), as life is full of difficulties. When a person has low efficacy beliefs, his or her self-doubts will impede him or her from overcoming such obstacles. Resilience is perhaps the best word to describe the ability to overcome self-doubt, a natural part of existence, and to persevere to overcome life's setbacks and adversities. Those with high self-efficacy are more resilient and therefore more likely to be successful in their actions.

It is important to note that, when setting goals, highly self-efficacious people will judge their abilities to be slightly higher than their actual abilities, thereby setting goals that are slightly out of reach. However, these people also learn more from reaching or attempting to reach these goals than by setting only easily attainable aspirations. Humans would perhaps rarely fail by setting less lofty goals, but they would also never grow in the process of reaching them (Bandura, 1989a). Much like Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), goals should not be set so high as to be unreachable, nor should they be set so low that a learner can reach them without effort. This is the key to continued growth and learning for humans.

It is therefore important for the present research study to examine the motivational factors present in the participants. Motivation to seek out continuing learning experiences, whether in the form of professional development or a graduate degree, seems to be a continuing characteristic of teachers in this program. By examining this factor in relation to the other data collected in this research study, I hoped to be able to understand how these motivational factors contribute to the participants' understanding of professional development as a tool of their profession.

Affective Processes

Affective or emotional factors, such as mood, anxiety, stress, and depression, can influence motivational processes. The threat to one's self-concept is essentially a match between one's perceived ability to cope with a situation and the reality of the situation itself. Matches provide low threat, whereas mismatches provide high threat. It is faith in the ability to overcome threat that drives the affective processes of self-efficacy. "Low self-efficacy causes the defeat of one's hopes, and the resulting low

mood further weakens self-efficacy, creating a vicious downward cycle" (Bandura, 1997a, p. 1). These affective factors can also affect the relationships of one's life, as negative emotional factors can decrease the likelihood of having the social relationships that assist in dealing with stress and negative emotions.

In addition, the relationship between the affective and cognitive processes is strong. Beliefs about one's ability to exercise control over these threats are dealt with on a cognitive level, in the form of planning and decision-making. If efficacious beliefs are low, people tend to focus mainly on their cognitive deficiencies, thinking only of the things they cannot do well, rather than focusing on those competencies they possess. People with high self-doubt "distress themselves and constrain their level of functioning" (Bandura, 1989a, p. 1177). Therefore, emotion and cognition are strongly linked.

Within this research study, affective factors were examined as they related to participants' learning experiences and also as a potential factor when examining the supports and constraints that affect participants' implementation of learned knowledge and skills into their own classrooms. By examining these affective factors in relationship to the participants' perceptions of effective professional development, as well as the environmental factors within the campus context that affected implementation, I hoped to better understand how these affective factors related to professional learning.

Selection Processes

Self-efficacy beliefs also affect the choices people make in their lives. Humans "can exert some influence over their life course by their selection of environments and construction of environments" (Bandura, 1989a, p. 1178). Overall, humans tend to avoid situations in which they think they will be unsuccessful yet they gravitate towards those

they think will bring success. These environmental factors, as we know from the triadic model, influence social interactions, which in turn support or constrain personal competencies. By placing oneself within a specific environment, the individual is not only making choices regarding his or her chosen task, but will also be influenced by those within the environment. Selection processes have a far more reaching impact on people than just task orientation.

Efficacy is formed through the interaction of a great deal of influences. Self-efficacy, it should be noted, is not just an individual construct. "Collective systems develop a sense of collective efficacy - a group's shared belief in its capability to attain goals and accomplish desired tasks" (Pajares, 2004, p. 5). A group with a strong sense of collective efficacy influences individuals within the group in powerful ways. Once again, then, selection processes are important in the formation of efficacious beliefs. Each person one chooses to associate with can be a source of efficacy beliefs.

Vicarious Reinforcement: Modeling and Observational Learning

During the time that Bandura was developing the social learning theory in the 1960's and 1970's, he began to conduct experiments related to the phenomenon of social modeling. He failed to accept the behaviorist notion of social learning as mere mimicry or imitation of modeled behavior, instead wishing to empirically test students' acquisition of rules and structures from models (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2002). Bandura conducted many studies to test his theory of social modeling, discovering that children did not merely imitate the rules modeled for them. "By inducing rules underlying modeling exemplars, observers could create novel but rule-consistent sequences that extended beyond what was seen and heard" (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2002, p. 441).

Bandura's experiments looked at modeling of moral judgments and linguistic rules, among other avenues of inquiry, and led to a completely new realm of thought in the field of psychology related to social learning. Many of his publications from this time focus on the importance of social modeling as related to human learning.

By learning through viewing others' experiences, and thereby learning vicariously, humans do not need to engage in time-consuming and frustrating trial and error in order to learn novel behavior. By using symbols to conceptualize the model's actions, cognitively analyze the consequences of the model's behavior, and self-reflect on one's own ability to complete the modeled action, humans use all of the processes of the social cognitive theory to learn from others (Pajares, 2004).

In addition to learning from the observation of others' behavior, humans also learn "a great deal of information about behavior patterns and the effects they have on the environment from models portrayed symbolically through verbal or pictorial means" (Bandura, 1989b, p. 21). This means that humans learn by doing, by watching others, by reading about others, and by viewing others in movies, on television, or over the Internet. Humans are now at a place in history where the source of social models is no longer limited by one's immediate environment.

There are four processes that govern observational learning. These are attention, retention, behavior production, and motivation. Each of these contributes to the strength and endurance of a social model's influence on the learner. Learners must first attend to the model and decide what information, if any, they will focus on. Then, the learner must also remember the observed events. This retention involves the transfer of what is observed into one's memory, in the form of symbolic representation. Next, the learner

must transform this knowledge into an appropriate course of action for himself or herself. The learner must consider his or her own present abilities and capacities when determining this (Bandura, 1989b).

Finally, the motivation process is dependent upon many factors. An observer may learn new information or skills, but may not perform what was learned. There are three incentive motivators that help to determine if the learner will indeed perform the newly learned behavior. These three motivators combine to form the basic principles for social learning: (a) People are more likely to perform if they believe it will have a rewarding outcome in some way; (b) People are more likely to perform the new behavior if they see the model as similar to themselves; (c) Personal standards will continue to regulate behavior, and performance is based upon whether the new behavior is deemed self-satisfying by the learner (Bandura, 1989b).

As described earlier, this theory base was used at the formation of this research study to guide this novice researcher toward understanding the effects of professional development on teachers' beliefs and practices. This theory, by definition, focuses on the cognitive development of learners, and through the process of data collection and analysis, it became clear to me that the cognitive domain was not the sole consideration in examining what teachers learned from professional development. The affective domain, as well as the interaction between learning and social interaction, was equally important for the participants, and because of this important finding, it was necessary to also consider alternate theories to support this study. Chapter 5 addresses this shift in understanding on my part more thoroughly, as I present the work of Vygotsky (1987)

and other social constructivists whose ideologies and theories supported the research findings, as well.

Next, I examine the theories of the literature on adult learning as another of the theoretical frameworks that guided this research study. The literature on adult learning, in many ways, supports the literature on effective professional development, which is reviewed in a later section, as both relate to educational opportunities for adults.

Adult Learning Theories

The question of how adults learn is one theorists, researchers, and educators have been trying to answer for many years. "Adult learning is probably the most studied topic in adult education" (Merriam, 2001b, p. 1). Adults, for the purposes herein, are defined as anyone engaged in formal or informal educational pursuits after graduation from high school, and this applies to the teacher participants of the present research study. This broad range creates inherent problems, as age, maturity, and experience provide differing characteristics for adult learners. Nonetheless, this broad overview attempts to examine adult learners in a varied array of contexts.

The art of educating adults, while sharing similarities with the art of educating children, is unique in many ways. Adults have different motivating factors, learning styles, life experiences, contexts for learning, and purposes for seeking educational experiences. Therefore, educators must use somewhat different techniques to accomplish learners' goals. By examining the literature in adult learning, this review will examine the different theories about how adults learn.

Andragogy: The Foundational Theory of Adult Learning

In 1968, Malcolm Knowles proposed to the United States a European theory of adult learning that differentiated andragogy, "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43), from pedagogy. During this time, when adult educators were trying to define themselves as a field of study, Knowles' theory became an important first step in developing the theoretical framework for this area of education. Knowles based his theory of andragogy upon five assumptions that describe the adult learner. These included: (a) an independent spirit to direct his or her own learning, (b) the use of life experiences as a resource for learning, (c) a connection of learning needs to changing social roles, (d) a desire to apply new learning to relevant situations, and (e) intrinsic motivational factors that drive learning (Merriam, 2001a). Andragogy emphasized the need for a learning environment in which the teacher was also a participant, where learner needs determined learning goals, and in which adults felt comfortable to use reflection and discourse to further their learning in a collaborative, social way. These principles, as will be discussed shortly, relate directly to professional development as well as classroom learning situations.

Since its introduction, andragogy has not been without its skeptics and detractors. Many have questioned whether andragogy is really a theory of adult learning or more of a model for best practices that apply to the teaching of adults as well as children (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Hartree, 1984; Merriam, 2001b). Even Knowles himself revised his theory from andragogy versus pedagogy to recognize that they each lay on the same continuum, "ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed learning" (Merriam, 2001a, p. 6). More recent critiques of andragogy center around criticism that

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the original theory ignored the context in which learners live, work, and learn (Pratt, 2002). Andragogical principles assume an autonomous learner who is free of social and contextual constraints. Modern versions of andragogy and other adult learning theories have begun to address the importance of context and culture on adult learning.

Andragogy formed the basis of most current theories of adult learning but focused mainly on learner needs and characteristics. More recent theorists have taken Knowles' (1980) view of adult education and altered it to include such aspects as cognitive processes, environment, context, culture, physiological processes, emotion, and other factors that impact learning, creating a richer field of theory that guides our understanding of how adults learn. One of those theories is transformational learning.

Transformational Learning: A Theory in Progress

Transformational learning, also known as transformative learning, became important to adult education research with the work of Jack Mezirow (1990, 1997, 2000). While admittedly a theory in progress (Mezirow, 2000), the core concepts of transformational learning center on prior notions of andragogy, self-directed learning, and social cognitive development theories. The key to learning that is transformational in nature are experiences that cause the learner to become "critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4). By grounding new learning in the context of prior beliefs and experiences, as well as challenging prior assumptions to enhance interpretation, transformative learning experiences engage the learner in a more meaningful way and are more likely to cause a fundamental change in beliefs, and therefore in action (Mezirow, 1990).

By focusing on different dimensions, transformational learning can be viewed in various ways. Transformation can be viewed as emancipatory education, as learners "come to see the world and their place in it differently" (Baumgartner, 2001). Once consciousness has been raised, they are empowered and may choose to take action to transform the world around them. Mezirow's (2000) theory supported a cognitive-rational approach to transformation. Learners construct meaning through their experiences and interpretations, using rational thought and critical reflection to promote learning. The developmental approach to transformative learning emphasizes the importance of education in a learner's maturation. A final approach to transformative learning focuses on the connection between spirituality and learning (Baumgartner, 2001).

Paramount to the success of transformative learning are the key components of critical self-reflection and reflective discourse. Both tenets have been recognized as important to creating change in participant beliefs and attitudes, which leads to higher levels of implementation of new learning in the work setting (Mezirow, 1997). Once participants see that the results of their actions are effective, and more importantly, once they have had an opportunity to reflect upon this change themselves and share with others, the transformation is complete and transformative learning has occurred (King & Lawler, 2003; Merriam, 2001a; Mezirow, 1998, 1990; Ross-Gordon, 2002). Both of these components are also recognized as important parts of self-directed learning, as well as andragogy. Regardless of the method or theoretical basis, the consensus is that adults require reflection and discourse to enhance learning and therefore affect change

in behavior. These components will also be discussed in light of professional development practices in a later section.

Cognitive and Affective Development Theories: Ways of Knowing and Learning Styles

This study is ultimately about the ways in which adults learn, in this case through professional development activities aimed at improving the instructional practices of teachers. It is therefore important to consider the different needs of participants in professional development, as adult learners, related to their cognitive and affective development. The concept of different ways of knowing and the impact of learning styles has been examined by many researchers in the past 40 years. Theories on cognitive development have been proposed to explain the importance of tacit knowledge, the use of multiple intelligences, the role of emotional intelligence, field dependence v. interdependence in cognitive development, and various other aspects of cognitive, social, and emotional development to inform educators of adults (Gardner, 1983; Magolda, 1992; Perry, 1970; Silverman & Casazza, 2000). Additionally, much research has been conducted on the impact of societal roles and human characteristics, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, on development. This review is too brief to do justice to all of these various theories, however. Instead, I will focus on the work of Magolda (1992) as it relates to these theories because it offers a comprehensive summary of the ways of knowing identified in adult learners. This research into ways of knowing among college students, while limited in scope, can inform readers about many of the theories previously mentioned.

Students in college settings undergo a transition in their ways of knowing, changing because of developmental and environmental factors. Over time, students

shift from viewing knowledge as absolute and coming from outside sources to viewing themselves as a part of the knowledge-creation process. There are four stages through which learners progress, with varying degrees of autonomy and relational needs (Magolda, 1992). This process can be lengthy, but it can be assisted by facilitators and outside forces.

Magolda's research is supported by the earlier work of William Perry (1970), who also studied the development of college students. Perry's work suggested that learners "progressed through four major levels of knowing: 1.) absolute or dualist…, 2.) multiplicity or problematic…, 3.) relativism…, and 4.) commitment" (Silverman & Casazza, 2000, p. 39). Again, the progression of students through the various stages is embedded within context and must be supported by the environment.

While the labels for various levels of development are different among researchers, the themes contained within these theories are often common and parallel. Students change as they learn, are affected by their relationships with others, and view knowledge in different ways over time. Students move in their comfort level from accepting knowledge as set and waiting to be discovered to understanding that knowledge is amorphous and waiting to be constructed by the learner. This process must be understood, recognized, and supported by those who educate adults.

Other Factors in Adult Learning: Self, Identity, and Self-Regulation

Theorists have also examined the impact of learner identity, motivation, and self-regulation on how adults learner. The literature in this area, like other concepts of adult learning, is vast and varied. These factors, like others previously mentioned, are important in the formation of a comprehensive theory of adult learning.

"Learners' views of themselves and the educational settings they experience are often closely connected to learning outcomes" (Silverman & Casazza, 2000, p. 73). This observation points to the power of self-belief for students. Feelings of self-perception, self-esteem, and self-efficacy all influence how a student views an educational environment, individual assignments, the instructor, and classmates. As previously noted, since learning is tied to emotion, a positive sense of self is important to success in learning. Students who feel confident in their ability to learn will be more apt to participate and succeed in the classroom, whereas students with a low sense of self will encounter greater problems.

Many outside factors influence a person's sense of self, including parental involvement, cultural factors, opportunities for success, social factors, and personality characteristics. Educators of adults have a unique opportunity to structure the classroom and educational experiences in ways that promote a positive sense of self for students, helping students to overcome some of these outside influences. "Successful experiences… lead to enhanced self-esteem" (Silverman & Casazza, 2000, p. 75). Educators who set their students up for success, who value students as people, who value students' contributions to the classroom, and who allow students to have influence over their educational experiences can enhance this sense of self. One important aspect to the overall sense of self is the concept of self-efficacy, as previously discussed.

As we mature and develop, our sense of identity is also formed, influenced by our culture and social constraints. Identity formation, like cognitive and affective development, occurs in stages throughout early and mid-adulthood. As we are forced to

make important and sometimes difficult decisions in our lives about education, careers, relationships, and family, our identity is formed and changed. People who have been a part of traditionally repressed cultural groups may form identity at a slower rate, but everyone seems to go through the same general phases of identity formation, which lead each person to identity achievement (Silverman & Casazza, 2000).

Finally, a person's ability to monitor and respond to his or her own learning is important for success. This idea of self-regulation, a metacognitive strategy, develops over time and is important to the adult learner. According to Garner, as cited in Silverman and Cassava (2000), there are three components to self-regulation: "knowing about oneself, knowing about the task, and using one's own repertoire of learning strategies" (p. 48). The ability to self-regulate or critically reflect on one's learning allows students to assist in their own learning, becoming an equal partner in the education process. Educators can assist students in formulating their own learning goals, then providing consistent and positive feedback on the attainment of those goals. By acting as facilitators for students' development of self-regulatory behaviors, educators have the capacity to assist students in this area.

All of this directly relates to the social cognitive theory previously outlined, particularly to the construct of self-efficacy in many ways. The self-system, including self-efficacy, agency, and identity, it is argued, contribute to the processes of self-regulation and motivation brought out in the research into adult learning. These constructs, intertwined within each of us as human beings, are responsible for our cognitive and affective needs, as well as the actions we put forth in accomplishing our perceived goals.

These theories are examined here because of their relevance to professional development as a learning opportunity for teachers as adult learners. The research and theoretical base adult learning provides can inform creators of professional development in ways to better educate their targeted audience. As the reader will see in the later section on the research into effective professional development, perhaps one reason professional development, as a whole, is ineffective in changing teachers' behaviors is that it simply does not meet their needs as learners. Within the context of this research study, I sought to gain a better understanding of the types of professional development the teacher participants' perceive as effective and ineffective, thereby possibly revealing the connection between the above referenced theories of adult learning and the practices of professional development opportunities. One aim of this research study is to better inform the professional development community and base of literature about effective practices that teachers deem beneficial to them in accomplishing their roles as professionals. The examination of effective professional development practices as identified by these participants was therefore critical to this goal.

The next section examines the literature on one type of adult learning community, known as a community of practice. This social network is one model that utilizes the types of social practices described by social constructivists and adult learning theorists as important to the overall learning process.

<center>Communities of Practice</center>

<center>*Definitions and Theoretical Foundations*</center>

Perhaps the best known name within the literature on communities of practice is

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that of Etienne Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2006; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Wenger and Jean Lave (1991), in their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation,* discussed learning and research in human sciences that included the concept of social context. "[Situated learning] takes as its focus the relationship between learning and the social situations in which it occurs. Rather than defining it as the acquisition of propositional knowledge, Lave and Wenger situate learning in certain forms of social co-participation" (Hanks, 1991, p. 14). Lave and Wenger's initial work on situated learning became the springboard for Wenger's later work on the theory of communities of practice. Wenger's 1998 publication of *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity* is considered by many to be the seminal work on the theory of communities of practice, or CoP, within organizations.

Communities of practice are defined by Wenger (1998) as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). These knowledge-based social structures are not a new idea in learning theory, as the presence of communities of practice can be seen as far back as the ancient Roman corporations of tradesmen such as metalworkers and masons. The inclusion of research on communities of practice, though, is a more recent phenomenon and has been influenced by social cognitive and other social learning theorists.

Bandura's (1986; 1989b; 2001) social cognitive theory emphasizes the important role of human cognition and the interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences on human growth (Pajares, 2004). Bandura's social cognitive theory

recognizes that cognitive and personal factors, behavior, and the environment impact and interact with one another, and that learning and human adaptation occur within a social context. Other social constructivists, such as Vygotsky (1987), Dewey (1934), and Wertsch (1981) have also advanced the understanding of the important role humans play in the learning of one another. This move toward an acceptance of social learning opened the door for Wenger and other social learning theorists to extend thinking about learning environments. Wenger and Lave ask readers to consider learning, not as something that is merely a result of teaching, but instead is a product of the experiences and social interactions of our everyday lives (as cited in Smith, 2007). Their work conceived learning in terms of social practice rather than just the traditional teaching-learning process.

All communities of practice are characterized by the domain of knowledge they share, a community of people who care about the domain, and the shared practice they are developing to be used effectively within the domain (Wenger et al., 2002). The domain is the common ground or common identity of the group, whether it is related to education, healthcare, or computer imaging. The domain is the guiding force, providing structure to the CoP. By understanding the domain, the members can not only work within the boundaries of common knowledge and understanding, but also work to push the limits of the domain. The domain guides the learning of the group with a common purpose (Wenger et al., 2002).

The community is the social network of learning. Within the community is where ideas are shared, relationships form, and the social nature of learning is explored. Inquiry should be a guiding force for the community, as members seek to develop and

extend their domain and practice through social interaction. Finally, the practice is the action put forth by the community to further the domain. Whereas the domain is the "topic the community focuses on, the practice is the specific knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 29). All of these factors combine to form the community of practice concept. Table 1 below illustrates the community of practice model using questions to address issues relevant to each component.

Table 1

Questions to Ponder when Considering Each Aspect of CoP Development

Domain	Community	Practice
What topics and issues do we really care about?	What roles are people going to play?	What knowledge is to be shared, developed, and documented?
How is this domain connected to the organization's strategy?	How often will the community meet, and how will members connect on an ongoing basis?	What kinds of learning activities will be organized?
What is in it for us?	What kinds of activities will generate energy and develop trust?	How should the knowledge repository be organized to reflect the practice of members and be easily accessible?
What are the open questions and the leading edge of our domain?	How can the community balance the needs of various segments of members?	
Are we ready to take some leadership in promoting and developing our domain?		What development projects should the community undertake?
What kind of influence do we want to have?	How will members deal with conflict?	Where are the sources of knowledge and benchmarks outside the community?

Adapted from *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge* (pp 45-46), by E. Wenger, R. McDermott, and W. M. Snyder, 2002, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

The theory of CoP differentiates communities of practice from other organizations by associating the constructs of practice and community together. Praxis, or the

practical application of theory, is situated within a social organization, where knowledge and perspectives are shared, resources are created and used, and relationships develop over time. The characteristics of this shared association, as defined by Wenger (1998), are: (a) mutual engagement, (b) a joint enterprise, and (c) a shared repertoire. All of these components must be present in order for a group to be considered a true community of practice. These three characteristics are necessary and interdependent within all communities of practice.

Mutual engagement requires that all members work toward the same goal, use a shared knowledge base, or are otherwise engaged in the same activity. Engagement requires negotiation of the meaning of the work to be accomplished, as well as the abilities and resources necessary to engage in social interaction. All members of the community must be included and valued in order for the group to be successful. Through mutual engagement, the community develops relationships of trust and understanding (Smith, 2007). Mutual engagement is at its best when diverse perspectives, strengths, and relationships are present within the CoP (Wenger, 1998).

The second characteristic of all communities of practice is the negotiation of a joint enterprise as "understood and continually negotiated by its members" (Smith, 2007, p. 3). Wenger (1998) explains that the activities that keeps communities of practice together are:

(1) A result of a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement.

(2) Defined by participants in the very process of pursuing it. It is their negotiated response to their situation and this belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all the forces and influences beyond their control.

(3) Not just a stated goal, but creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice. (pp. 77-78)

In any CoP, the enterprise is jointly negotiated, not so that everyone is doing the same work or that all members believe that same thing, but that the group shares an understanding about the purpose for the work. Whether the enterprise is insurance claims-processing or teaching math to sixth graders, there is a commitment from all in the community to the complex nature of the work at hand.

The final characteristic of communities of practice is shared repertoire. Over time, as the community creates mutual engagement and a joint enterprise, it also develops common "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83) which become part of the shared practice and carry the accumulated knowledge of the community (Smith, 2007). Among this shared repertoire is also the discourse by which members discuss their work, as well as the various other forms of communication needed to engage in the enterprise. This repertoire is both shared and dynamic in nature, as it changes based on the needs of the community and the work.

While Wenger's work has been mainly with all types of organizations, including corporate work groups and health-care workers, his theories can be applied to the education environment in many ways. The next section will investigate the application of communities of practice to education, particularly to higher education and the continuing education of teachers.

Communities of Practice as Applied to Adult Learning

In reviewing the literature on communities of practice, it was easy to see that there has been a great deal written over the past 20 years related to this topic. The

concept of CoP has taken off among organizational researchers, particularly as it applies to business models. There is evidence that the concept of communities of practice is gaining popularity or acceptance within higher education. This section reviews the literature on communities of practice related to adult learning.

Many authors have discussed the use of communities of practice related to instructional design (Au, 2002; Barton & Tusting, 2005; Jawitz, 2007; Keppell, 2007; T. H. McLaughlin, 2003; Sim, 2006). These sources investigate CoP in various different aspects of adult learning, including online learning, post-graduate instruction, and teacher preparation. The case studies and research conducted mainly utilize communities of practice as an instructional model for adult learners. Sim's (2006) *Preparing for professional experiences: Incorporating pre-service teachers as 'communities of practice'* discusses her research on teacher education and the findings of this study were particularly salient to the application of communities of practice in professional development, which I will discuss in a later section.

One interesting perspective found in the literature brought to light a consequence of the use of communities of practice that this researcher had not fully considered. Keating (2005) brings up the notion of communities of practice contributing to the formation of one's self-system. Her ideas focus on the importance of discourse and language to communities of practice. This brought to mind the importance of assisting teachers, within the boundaries of professional development, with how to engage in self-reflection to increase efficacious beliefs. While the development of self is not perhaps the ultimate or primary goal of using communities of practice in professional

development or other adult learning environments, it is an important secondary goal to keep in mind and deserves further investigation by researchers.

Lea (2005), in the same volume, discusses an alternate use of Wenger and Lave's original conception of communities of practice in higher education. First, she reviews the current status of higher education. She explains that there has been a shift within higher education towards new ways of thinking about learning. A broader social structure that focuses on context has taken the place of the behaviorist views of the 1960s and the cognitive psychologist views of the 1970s and 80s. Learning is no longer being viewed solely as a transmission model within most institutions of higher learning. Rather, social and contextual factors are seen as influences on learning within higher education. This is consistent with the notions of social constructivism, as well as the views of situated learning made prominent by Wenger and Lave (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). The move towards more collaborative instructional practices within higher education also lends authority to social learning theories.

Within the context of this research study, the social practices of professional development, particularly those of the NWP, and the emphasis on changing participants' practices and beliefs required critical examination of this type of learning environment. While not all professional development is conducted as a part of the work of a community of practice, the benefits of this type of work in schools seems relevant to the purposes herein.

The use of communities of practice can be seen, in some form or another, throughout the literature on adult education, and clearly there is room for more investigation in this area. The literature on communities of practice related to

professional development is another area that has developed just recently. The next section reviews this literature, with an emphasis on professional development for PK-12 educators.

Communities of Practice as Applied to Professional Development

Communities of practice are a natural vehicle to promote learning with those involved in professional development, particularly educators. These groups present opportunities to share knowledge, offer advice to colleagues who are struggling, build a shared repertoire of tools that make instruction more effective for learners, and most importantly, offer a place for critical discourse and reflection about instructional choices (Corley & Thorne, 2005; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Hinson, Laprairie, & Cundiff, 2005; Meyer, 2005). The professional development literature indicates that there are certain criteria which must be included within these activities in order to increase the level at which teachers modify their underlying beliefs about educational practices and consequently transfer their learning to implement change within their own classrooms (Dearman & Alber, 2005; Firth, 1977; Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003; Hill, 2005; King & Lawler, 2003; Trotter, 2006). Utilizing communities of practice within the context of professional development may offer teachers the time and opportunity for discourse needed to transfer what they have learned in professional development to classroom practice. Within this research study, one example of a community of practice, the work of the NWP, is examined as a model of professional development that influenced participants' teaching and learning.

Classroom teachers are the first and primary source of change for our nation's classrooms, and it is through professional learning experiences and continuing

education that they continue to refine and improve their practice (Kent, 2004). There is a great deal of evidence that supports the claim that traditionally, professional development has shown only moderate impact on teacher practice and student outcomes (Abrami, Poulsen, & Chambers, 2004; Guskey, 1986; McBride et al., 1994; Richardson, 1990). This leads to larger questions regarding the type of professional learning experiences currently being offered to teachers. Research on effective teaching, designed to assist teachers in creating more successful learning experiences for their students, is often viewed by those in the classroom as outside of their context or not connected to the work they do each day (Brandt & al., 1994; Guskey, 1986; Kent, 2004; McBride et al., 1994). By situating professional learning within the local campus and classroom, creating meaningful experiences that will assist teachers and ultimately students in reaching new levels of success, the creation of campus environments that support the emergence of communities of practice within faculties might offer one way of meeting these needs for teachers.

Within the context of the present study, communities of practice play an important role in two ways. First, the community of practice that emerges, or can potentially emerge, during the learning process of professional development activities can provide participants with the necessary support to enhance the learning process. Second, communities of practices often emerge within the school context, as teachers reach out to one another to solve problems related to their classroom or school practice and formulate a common repertoire of resources for engaging in their shared work. The participants of this study can all be described a belonging to multiple communities of

practices, such as these, that impact their professional learning and implementation efforts.

Adult educators today, including providers of teacher professional development, recognize the importance of valuing the adult learner's previous experience and knowledge, motivational factors, and need for relevant instruction when planning quality programs. Social learning theory recognizes that learners must learn from one another as well as the instructor, have an opportunity to place their new knowledge and skills within existing schema through reflective activities, and discuss ideas, learning, and beliefs with peers in a non-threatening setting. Again, communities of practice can provide this necessary outlet for reflective practice.

Mezirow (1997), as previously discussed, included the components of critical self-reflection and reflective discourse as important to the success of transformative learning for adults. These types of learning opportunities have been recognized as important to change teacher beliefs and attitudes, which leads to higher levels of implementation (Mezirow, 1997). Once teachers see that the results of their actions are effective, and more importantly, once they have had an opportunity to reflect upon this change themselves and share with others, the transformation is complete and transformative learning has occurred (Guskey, 2002b; King & Lawler, 2003; McKeown & Beck, 2004; Merriam, 2001a; Mezirow, 1998, 1990; Ross-Gordon, 2002; Wlodkowski, 2003). The consensus from the literature on adult learning, which applies to professional development as well, is that adults require reflection and discourse to enhance learning and therefore affect change in behavior.

Focusing on preservice education, Sim (2006) used the CoP model to facilitate

teacher candidate reflection and discourse during field experiences and student teaching. The use of communities of practice during small group tutoring sessions allowed participants to connect their classroom experiences with theoretical readings. The authors note that "few opportunities existed to build a 'community' for these students in this challenging area of their professional learning" (Sim, 2006, p. 78), and communities of practice seemed an ideal way to develop this unmet need. This framework was designed to facilitate learning within the university curriculum, but it was also anticipated that participants would continue to use such a model within their own professional endeavors, such as teaching. Additionally, this model was created to provide preservice teachers with an opportunity to develop and practice reflection in their professional actions. An evaluation of the program shows success and promise for its continued use in preservice education, as well as other applied professional areas.

Sim (2006) also noted that teaching as a profession requires constant "situational judgment based on complex combinations" (p. 79) on the part of the teacher, and reflective practice is one way to hone the decision-making skills of practitioners. Additionally, a community of practice within a school will offer teachers opportunities to learn from others, thereby developing more effective skills using vicarious experience. This discussion is relevant in many ways to professional development as a whole. By using the small-group model of the study, professional development coordinators or building administrators could offer teachers an opportunity to engage in communities of practice within their campuses, for the purposes of promoting professional learning and increasing reflective discourse among faculty members. This type of learning

environment could be viewed as a model for professional development and was examined within the context of this research study.

Just as it is important to understand models of professional learning, it is also important to understand the goals of these experiences for educators. We must always remember that professional development, in any form, must have as its aim the improvement of student learning and achievement. Effective teaching equates to effective learning. Therefore, the next section will examine the practices of effective teaching, as supported by the literature.

Research on Effective Teaching

The present study focuses on the effects of professional development on classroom teacher's practices. When considering the purposes for professional development, then, it is necessary to examine the purposes for teaching. This study presupposes that effective professional development leads to more effective teaching, and it is therefore necessary to examine and define the construct of effective teaching. This section examines the research on effective teaching in order to inform the reader more fully about the purposes for effective professional development.

Educational journals abound with studies designed to measure effective teaching behaviors. This focus for research began in the 1960s, during a movement toward research on effective practices, and continues today in an environment concerned with accountability and standards-based teaching. Traits of effective teachers remain an elusive construct to define, however, because effective traits are situational and contextual. Still, there are some behaviors and techniques among teachers which emerge in the context of master teacher evaluation that assist in the development of an

overall image of effective teaching practices in modern schools (Polk, 2006). For a more

comprehensive review of the literature highlighted here, one should consult Harris

(1998) for a list of sources on effective teaching. The main areas used as indicators for

effective teaching that will be the focus at this time include a varied repertoire of

effective teaching behaviors and styles, knowledge of content and pedagogy, teaching

for transfer, and life-long learning goals.

Because effective teaching is not defined by one type of teaching style or one set

of behaviors, good teaching differs by situation and student need. Rather, an effective

teacher is most often qualified as such by his or her vast repertoire of strategies,

models, and styles that, when used at appropriate times, best fit the situational needs of

the classroom. An effective teacher, then, possesses knowledge about various models

and styles, but also possesses the skill to recognize when such approaches are

appropriate and necessary for student success (Ding & Sherman, 2006; Harris, 1998;

Polk, 2006). The art of teaching is just that, a creative mix of various mediums, which,

when combined, create a unique result that satisfies the artist and consumer or student.

Education and training of teachers must therefore include experience with and

knowledge about many different approaches to instruction, as well as practice in

utilizing them in many different settings, in order to create the necessary repertoire of an

effective teacher.

Knowledge of content and pedagogy, also important components of effective

teaching, relate directly to this repertoire. Knowledge of content has long been

recognized as tantamount to effectiveness, regardless of content area or grade level.

An effective teacher must know and understand his or her field. This knowledge base is

also important to Haskell's theory of transfer. Rich stores of knowledge distinguish experts from novices, and without such a knowledge base, the effective use of transfer strategies would not be possible (Haskell, 2001). Knowledge of diverse pedagogical practices, including necessary adjustments in classroom management styles, organization of knowledge, and assessment strategies, become important to effective teaching (Fishman et al., 2003). Taken in the context of current federal mandates, as well, "subject matter knowledge and student achievement gains are the currency of the realm in which we must operate" (Imig & Imig, 2006, p. 168).

"The aim of all education… is to apply what we learn in different contexts, and to recognize and extend that learning to completely new situations" (Haskell, 2001, p. 3). Teaching for transfer then becomes a large component of effective teaching. By assisting students in making the necessary connections among their knowledge base, the world outside the classroom, their own personal experiences, and novel situations, teachers can assist students in developing the necessary skills to transfer knowledge learned in school to new situations (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). This transfer, according to Haskell, is the most fundamental issue of education and must be addressed accordingly within our classrooms. Only by becoming aware of transfer methods and understanding the framework of the theory of transfer can teachers hope to conquer this formidable task.

An effective teacher must also be an effective learner in today's diverse and ever-changing school environment. Teachers must commit to being engaged in sustained learning throughout their careers in order to be truly effective across time. This learning, whether as a part of higher education courses or inservice activities,

should include opportunities for reflection and discourse among participants and give regular feedback to participants on their success towards learning goals, and must be a sustained effort over time to engage in change of beliefs and practice (Guskey, 2002b; Kennedy, 2006; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). As part of a dynamic field that requires change in practice based on new research and methodologies, educators must be learners as well as teachers.

In addition to the above-referenced tenets of effective teaching, certainly a multitude of others could be added to the list, including sense of humor, communication skills, high self-efficacy, flexibility, resourcefulness, use of assessment to guide instruction, and a strong philosophical and theoretical base that guides instructional decisions. All of these tenets, combined with those discussed within this review and others not mentioned, form an elusive yet powerful construct known as effective teaching. By encouraging growth and learning within the area of effective teaching, we hope to create success in the area of student learning by consequence.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

While it is important to examine the behaviors of effective teachers, as previously discussed, it is also important to consider the personal characteristics of effective teachers. As Kottler and Zehm (2000) noted,

> … so much of teacher preparation continues to be focused on methods courses and in areas of content specialty. The assumption behind this training for elementary and secondary teachers is that when you study a subject in depth and learn the proper methods of instruction, presumably you then become a more competent and outstanding teacher. Not included in this simplistic process are a number of other variables that make up the essence of all great educators and infuse them with power- their distinctly human dimensions, including personality traits, attributes, and relationship skills (p. 2).

The discussion of personality traits by these authors goes on to suggest a few

traits that are of utmost importance when discussing teacher effectiveness. These include: (a) charisma, or the ability to inspire others; (b) compassion, or people who are caring toward others; (c) egalitarianism, or the ability to recognize that children need limits and have a sense of fairness and consistency; and (d) a sense of humor, or conveying the idea that learning is enjoyable (Kottler & Zehm, 2000). Other researchers have also identified the traits of smarts, creativity, honesty, emotional stability, patience, ability to challenge and motivate, and novelty as important to effective teaching (Schiedecker & Freeman, 1999).

Stronge (2002) added to the list of teacher characteristics, or dispositions, with the traits of listening, understanding, knowing students, social interactions with students, promotion of enthusiasm and motivation for learning, attitude toward the teaching profession, and the role of reflective practice. "Through examination of several sources of evidence, a dual commitment to student learning and to personal learning has been found repeatedly in effective teachers" (Stronge, 2002, p. 19). It is this motivation to continue learning as a professional educator that was of interest within the present research study.

This commitment to learning means working collaboratively with other staff members, sharing ideas and assisting other teachers, being on the leading edge of improvement efforts, and taking risks. Perhaps most importantly, though, this characteristic is important because these teachers then serve as a model for their own students about the importance of continued learning and the value of education as a lifelong commitment. "Effective teachers learn and grow as they expect their students to

learn and grow. They serve as powerful examples of lifelong learners as they find ways to develop professionally" (Stronge, 2002, p. 20).

It is recognized that teachers must balance personality and professional traits in order to be truly effective. A strong content and pedagogical base means nothing without the ability to communicate effectively with students. However, only a strong personality which engages and enlivens students without the content or pedagogy to accompany it will not be effective either (Kottler & Zehm, 2000). There must be a balance between these components. Indeed, "a teacher's influence is far-reaching, so it is challenging to define what outcomes might show effectiveness and how those outcomes should be measured. In addition, many variables outside the teacher's control also affect each of the potential measures of effectiveness" (Stronge, 2002, p. viii).

The importance of reflective practice, as an aspect of lifelong learning, is not overlooked within the literature, either. *Reflective practice* is defined here as a careful review of one's actions, and a thoughtful consideration of future actions. A review of the literature on effective teaching shows many different methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and observations, all of which support the importance of reflection in teaching and learning (Corley & Thorne, 2005; Cranton, 1997; Dearman & Alber, 2005; Hill, 2005; Stronge, 2002). Stronge (2002) points out that effective teachers continuously practice self-evaluations and self-critique, they portray themselves as students of learning, they are introspective and not afraid of feedback, and they readily accept constructive criticism. This reflection then translates into enhanced self-efficacy, which is important to the research questions addressed here. "Belief in one's efficacy

and maintaining high expectations for students are common among teachers who reflect" (Stronge, 2002, p. 21).

The teacher characteristics component, then, is not one that should be ignored when considering teacher effectiveness. While difficult to measure and even more difficult to quantify in the accountability-driven policies of today, these traits are nonetheless important to the overall effectiveness of the nation's teachers. By examining these traits in the context of teacher behavior, I hoped to gain insight into the teacher as educator and learner.

The review of the literature on effective teaching serves as an important aspect of this research study. It focuses attention on the beliefs and behaviors of the participants as classroom teachers, their characteristics as learners and educators, and their implementation of what they have learned in professional development in their respective classrooms. However, it is also necessary to examine the research on effective professional development practices to further understand how continuing education can influence teachers' instructional choices. Therefore, the next section provides a background for understanding the role of professional development in the present research study.

<p align="center">Effective Practices of Professional Development</p>

This section of the literature review examines the current research related to the effective practices of professional development. Since this study examines participant perceptions related to effective professional development practices, as review of this literature was necessary to ground the analytic process and provide a working definition for the researcher and the reader. This review provides insight into what is known about

effective professional development, and when compared to the perceptions of the participants revealed in chapter 4, provides evidence for creating effective learning opportunities for participants.

The purposes for seeking out professional development among teachers vary greatly by context, teacher need, and situation. Teaching as a profession is not unlike other practitioner enterprises, in that it requires constant maintenance and upgrading of knowledge and skills in order to meet the changing demands of the marketplace, in this case, the classroom. Overall, though, "[T]he purpose of staff development is to bring about change in the beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practices of teachers, and ultimately to bring about changes in student learning outcomes" (McBride et al., 1994, p. 36). With the passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation and other modern proposals for improving education, the need for effective professional development has moved to the forefront of the educational agenda as a means to prepare and support teachers in order that they may provide effective educational experiences for all students.

The primary agent for educational change continues to be the classroom teacher (Kent, 2004), and by providing effective opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy, as well as change their beliefs and attitudes towards instructional practices, strategies, and resources, professional development is in a position to be a powerful tool for increasing student achievement. However, much of the literature on professional development shows that these types of activities have only enjoyed moderate success at achieving measurable change in

teaching practices and student outcomes (Abrami et al., 2004; Guskey, 1986; McBride et al., 1994; Richardson, 1990).

Change within education has not come easily. Educational research that is conducted by university faculty and government agencies often appears to miss the mark of affecting its audience, perceived by teachers as only tangentially connected to their everyday concerns (Brandt & al., 1994; Guskey, 1986; Kent, 2004; McBride et al., 1994). This disconnect creates a chasm between quality research-driven initiatives and those they are designed to assist. The goal of professional development must first be, then, to create an atmosphere of continuing learning for teachers, contextually situated and promoting involvement in professional development as meaningful experiences that will assist teachers and ultimately students in reaching new levels of success. Providers of professional development, who utilize adult learning theory when planning educational opportunities, can better meet the needs of their target audience, teachers as adult learners.

In order to bridge the gap between research and practice, professional development must encompass not only the needs of the delivery agency, but it must also meet the needs of participants (Hargreaves, 1995). This can be accomplished in a multitude of ways, through various forms of content, structure, and mode that are consistent with the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of the particular reform initiative. The professional development literature indicates that there are certain criteria, though, which must be included within these activities in order to increase the level at which teachers modify their underlying beliefs about educational practices and consequently transfer their learning to implement change within their own classrooms.

These criteria can be seen throughout the literature of not only professional development, but also research into adult learning and effective teaching practices as well, as seen in previous sections of this literature review.

Adult educators today, including providers of professional development, following the principles of andragogy to create a learner-centered environment, recognize the importance of valuing the adult learner's previous experience and knowledge, motivational factors, and need for relevant instruction when planning quality programs. Like Bandura's (1986) observations regarding social cognitive development, andragogy recognizes that learners must learn from one another as well as the instructor, have an opportunity to place their new knowledge and skills within existing schema through reflective activities, and discuss ideas, learning, and beliefs with peers in a non-threatening setting.

Effective professional development, when well planned and executed, using various theories of adult learning, better informs the adult audience regarding instructional and content choices. Adult learning theories of self-directed learning, andragogy, and transformative learning all emphasize a component of critical reflection, coupled with opportunities for feedback and follow-through, as crucial to effective learning for any adult. These theories emphasize the human need to strive to full potential throughout adulthood. Andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning theories all emphasize the human desire for learning and change and how this desire comes from different motivational needs in adulthood, yet nonetheless guides adult learning.

Guskey and Huberman (1995) reviewed the literature on effective professional

development and found a wide variety of reasons which explain why teachers reject or resist the knowledge- and skills-based teacher development programs that are most common. These reasons, as listed on page 13 of the text, include:

- They are imposed. As McLaughlin (1990) notes, "we cannot mandate what matters to effective practice" (p. 15).

- They are encountered in the context of multiple, contradictory, and overwhelming innovations (Werner, 1988).

- Most teachers, other than those selected for design teams, have been excluded from their development (Fullan, 1991).

- They are packaged in off-site courses or one-shot workshops that are alien to the purposes and contexts of teachers' work (J. W. Little, 1993).

- Teachers experience them alone and are afraid of being criticized by colleagues or of being seen as elevating themselves on pedestals above them (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998).

These barriers can be seen within the education profession even today. Guskey and Huberman's 1995 synthesis on the literature goes on to hypothesize that professional development "… does not acknowledge or address the personal identities and moral purposes of teachers, nor the cultures and contexts in which they work" (p. 14). Their belief that professional development must extend beyond knowledge and skill development aligns with the purposes and questions addressed within this research study.

Teachers as participants in professional development are often seeking more than information and proficiency, and the NWP model offers teachers an avenue for career enhancement that goes beyond these conventional purposes. The next section, then, contains a review of the National Writing Project as a model of effective professional development.

Research on the National Writing Project

The National Writing Project began as the direct result of one teacher's dissatisfaction with a top-down model of curriculum development. In 1974, James Gray created a public school/university partnership, known as the Bay Area Writing Project, to allow an avenue for teacher collaboration in the formation of effective writing practices. The network has grown to include 199 sites located in 50 states, Washington, D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico (NWP, 2008a). The NWP has served over two million teachers through Summer Institutes and inservice activities (National Writing Project, 2000). Gray's vision was to create a community of teacher-learners that would "improve the teaching of writing in schools, …provide professional development opportunities for classroom teachers, and ….expand the professional roles of teachers" (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 8). A set of exemplary principles guides the work of each network site's Summer Institute. These guiding principles are:

- Universities and schools are better able to improve students' learning if they work in partnership

- Teachers are key to educational reform.

- Teachers are the best teachers of other teachers.

- Writing deserves constant attention from kindergarten to the university.

- Exemplary teachers of writing are themselves writers. (Lieberman & Wood, 2003)

While giving each site a framework to build upon, this simple set of principles also allows for a great deal of adaptation and flexibility in implementation for ways appropriate to each locale.

The basis of the NWP model is the invitational Summer Institute. Experienced teachers from all grade levels and content areas apply for admission. Site leadership

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teams, comprised of site directors, former participants, and university faculty, select

applicants for participation in the institute. During the five-week institute, teachers "share

the successful writing strategies they have developed, … university faculty share

current research and theory on writing" (Bratcher & Stroble, 1994, p. 67), and teachers

participate in all aspects of the writing process. This process includes learners selecting

their own purposes for writing, prewriting, participation in peer critique, revision and

editing, and a public sharing of finished work. This process, modeled by all participants

and staff, then becomes a part of the effective teaching behaviors of the NWP that will

ideally transfer to each participants' repertoire (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). Each of the

participants in this dissertation research has completed an invitational Summer Institute

with the Southwest Regional Writing Project, a National Writing Project site located in

southwestern United States and serving a large metropolitan area.

The NWP does not tout any single approach or strategy for the effective

teaching of writing. Instead, participants share what they know about effective practices,

as well as learn from research and peers. Sharing occurs through the use of teaching

demonstrations by peers and university faculty, as well as guest consultant

presentations. Assigned and selected readings on current theory and research are also

a part of the work of NWP institutes. Throughout the entire process, participants write

daily for multiple purposes, including reflection on presentations and readings,

engagement in the writing process to share with peers, reflection on their own practices

and beliefs, and first-hand experience of activities they could use in their own

classrooms (Braswell & Berman, 1993; Bratcher & Stroble, 1994).

The work of NWP does not end with the closure of the Summer Institute. Teacher

Consultants (TCs), as participants are known upon completion, remain connected throughout the school year by a community of practice through monthly meetings, newsletters, online chat rooms, book clubs, and other formal and informal gatherings, to support one another, share writing, garner new ideas and information, and share research. Many TCs go on to complete action research projects of their own, become leaders of professional development in their own schools, pursue post-graduate degrees, and become active in their local site's NWP leadership team. This networking allows for the on-going support, feedback, and reflection necessary for sustained change in behavior.

Ann Lieberman and Diane Wood (1999; 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2000) have studied the NWP in depth for a number of years. Their research has identified recurring themes in participant evaluations of the model. Many participants feel that the NWP 'transformed' them in some way, changing their beliefs about writing instruction and ultimately changing their behavior in the classroom. The authors consistently utilize data collection methods consistent with the qualitative tradition, including classroom observations, interviews and teacher narratives. Lieberman and Friedrich's (2007) study utilized this last type of data to explore teacher leadership and the impact of the NWP social practices on participants. Their results are consistent with the adult learning and professional development practices previously described.

This feeling is echoed in studies that show enthusiastic support for the model format (Stahlecker, 1979; Stander, 1985). White et al. (2007), Nagin (2002), and Dickey et al. (2004; 2005) utilized survey data to report participant satisfaction with the NWP Summer Institute as well as measure teacher self-reported implementation efforts. In all,

participants reported overwhelming support for their experiences with NWP, citing satisfaction with the model as a means for professional learning. These surveys did not attempt to investigate supports or barriers to implementation.

Gomez's (1988) early investigation of participants' satisfaction with the NWP model has led to the formation of the current inquiry-based model of professional development used today. Her use of participant interviews, as well as interviews with NWP officials, including NWP founder James Gray, to inform her study was laudable, but the voices of these teachers were not present in her report. While her conclusions show participants' satisfaction with the involvement in a community of learners, the validation of their own knowledge and experience, and the enhancement of their own agency toward becoming teacher leaders, the voices of these participants are absent from the findings.

Pritchard and Marshall (2002) utilized observational, interview, and document data in their study of NWP teachers as professional development leaders within schools. These teachers, after completing a Summer Institute and becoming NWP Teacher Consultants, then became professional development providers to their own colleagues, using the NWP model as a basis for their own learning environments. The results of this study indicated barriers to implementation that included the amount of time needed to enact change on a large scale and the support of district and campus administration. However, when the TCs experienced support from administration, client satisfaction increased and overall implementation of new teaching methods was seen to improve student achievement (Pritchard & Marshall, 2002).

Other researchers have noted a more limited impact of the NWP on participants'

behaviors, including limited implementation of teaching models and the writing process (Bratcher & Stroble, 1994; Wilson, 1988). Bratcher and Stroble's (1994) study, which utilized mixed methods, found that teachers needed approximately three years to implement new methods of teaching writing with competence. Their study relied on teacher self-reports in the form of written surveys, observations of participant teaching, and quantitative data from a questionnaire related to stages of concerns. Their study also focused mainly on teachers' instructional choices after a Summer Institute experience, and did not account for their perceptions of the learning environment during the professional development activity.

These findings provide an opening for further examination of the transfer of learning in the NWP and other effective professional development experiences to classroom behaviors, which this research study attempted to address from the participants' perspective. After careful investigation of studies conducted relevant to the NWP model, as well as those conducted to evaluate teacher characteristics, there were no studies that sought to answer the same or similar questions to the ones asked here. Previous studies have utilized a large array of methodologies, as previously discussed, but none found in this search made use of phenomenological methods to describe participants' learning and implementation experiences. This research study, then, is unlike others previously conducted in many ways, and seeks to address multiple avenues of inquiry.

Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the research related to social cognitive learning, adult learning theories, communities of practices, effective teaching, effective

professional development, and the National Writing Project model for professional development. Throughout the literature review process, then, several questions emerged that led to the implementation of the present study.

The review of the literature indicates that, according to adult learning theories, the needs of adult learners are different and the same as those of children. For the purpose of this study, then, I began to wonder how adult learning practices could be used to improve the quality of professional development. I was also interested in exploring participants' perceptions of effective learning experiences as they related to the constructs identified by these theories.

Research into the effective practices and organizational structures of professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1998a; Hargreaves, 1994; M. W. McLaughlin, 1998) have led to the understanding that "the old workshop delivery model for teachers must give way to vibrant and ongoing professional learning communities" (Lieberman & Wood, 2002, p. 40). The review of the literature indicates that there are known standards for effective teaching. For the purposes of this study, then, I wondered how teachers strive to learn more about being effective teachers through participation in effective professional development and how they report being supported in these efforts.

According to the review of the literature, the standards for effective practices in professional development are also widely known. What, then, are teacher's perceptions of effective professional development? To date, the research literature lacks studies that provide rich descriptions of the experiences of teachers who engage in professional development. There is a need to understand these perceptions held by teachers if

researchers are to more fully explain the factors that influence teachers' instructional decision-making.

There is a plethora of evaluative studies that illustrate what constitutes quality or effective professional development based on immediate participant feedback and how teachers implement learning into their classrooms (Abrami et al., 2004; Boyle et al., 2005; Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001; Donnelly et al., 2005; Firth, 1977; Florio-Ruane, 2002; Guskey, 2002b; Johnson, 2006; Supovitz & Turner, 2000; Willinsky, 2005). However, an in-depth look at what teachers' lived experience with professional development is like and the supports and constraints of their environmental conditions on implementation of what they learn in professional development has received little attention in the published research. It is therefore important for this research study to address an unmet need in the literature, and by choosing a phenomenological approach with rich data, a description of participants' understanding of these issues can be provided.

The review of the literature indicates that the National Writing Project model has experienced great success in helping teachers to improve their practices related to writing instruction. For the purposes of this study, I wondered what about the NWP experience was important for participants' to developing their capacity as educators. Were the reported positive experiences of participants' with other models of professional development similar to or different than those they reported related to their NWP experience, and what does this say about effective professional development in general?

Most of the previous studies of the NWP contain limited observational data or

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participant interviews that might shed light on the implementation levels among classroom teachers (Lieberman & Wood, 2002b; Lieberman & Wood, 2003; McDonald & Klein, 2003; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998; Wood & Lieberman, 2000). None of these studies focused specifically on the teacher's perceptions of the learning experiences or the environmental factors investigated here. Therefore, this research study was an in-depth phenomenological investigation that combined multiple sources of data previously untapped in similar research. Data collected included qualitative data collected to reveal participants' perspectives and perceptions. By carefully and thoroughly collecting data from a small number of participants, it was anticipated that information regarding teacher perceptions of effective professional development and environmental factors that impact implementation would assist in illuminating the transfer of learning from professional development to classroom practices.

Certainly, teacher effectiveness and professional development are multi-faceted topics. Their relationship to the theoretical foundations of social and adult learning theories is also pertinent for this discussion. Further inclusion of research and theory relevant to this research study can be found in chapter 5. The next chapter explains the methodology used to investigate these phenomena, as well as a rationale for the use of phenomenology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative tradition has gained slow but deliberate acceptance in the research community over the past 30 years, particularly in applied fields such as health care, education, and sociology over the past 20 years. Qualitative data "are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). The data captured through phenomenological methods allow for an understanding of processes and perceptions from the point of view of the participant, which serve to answer the questions of the present research study.

This chapter begins with a description of the evolution of the ideas for the current research study, beginning with the pilot study conducted in the spring of 2007, illustrating how the research questions evolved from data collected at that time. Next is a description of the participants, including selection methods. Next, the reader will be given a brief overview of study's assumptions and the tradition of qualitative research methods, followed by the specific data collection and analysis methods used for this research study. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the subjectivity and application of the findings, particularly as they relate to my own researcher biases.

Pilot Study

The pilot study served as a catalyst into my own indoctrination as a researcher in many ways. First, it allowed me to interact closely with two teachers who had participated in the 2006 SRWP Summer Institute, thereby giving me a first-hand view of the effects of this professional development experience on their teacher behaviors and beliefs. Secondly, the pilot study forced me to examine my own beliefs and behaviors as

a researcher in many ways. Most importantly, this experience brought to light many questions that I had about the differences in how teachers implement learned knowledge and skills, why they were motivated to seek professional development opportunities, and what supports and constraints they encountered that affected their level of implementation.

Within the pilot study, there seemed to be interplay of teacher characteristics that led to varying levels of teacher implementation of knowledge and skills acquired during their SRWP experience. It was this discovery, or lingering question, that led to the formation of the present research study. Initially, I was interested only in whether teachers used what they had learned in professional development in their classrooms. However, after spending time with each of the pilot study participants, watching them teach, and interviewing them, I realized this question alone was very complex and difficult to answer. There are curriculum, administrative, and organizational issues at play in all classrooms, as well as teacher decision-making, that affect how, when, and why learned strategies or methods are implemented. Additionally, the pilot study revealed to me that differences in teacher personality, teaching philosophy, and overall self-efficacy were factors in their implementation.

After the completion of the pilot study, I was most interested in examining the characteristics of teachers who engaged in professional development activities, such as those offered by the NWP. The original questions for the research study, as it was proposed, were:

(1) What patterns of classroom engagement or implementation correspond to teacher characteristics?

(2) What supports or constraints are found in teachers' buildings and classrooms that affect their patterns of implementation and engagement in writing project work?

(3) What motivational factors led teachers to participate in writing project professional development?

In formulating the research design, it was anticipated that data collected from the participants would help answer these questions. However, after data collection began, what emerged from the interviews and classroom observations was more focused on understanding each participants experience with professional development. Each person had different perceptions about the characteristics of effective professional development, and it was these perceptions that became the guide for subsequent interviews. While I still considered all of the questions above to be important, the purpose for this research study evolved into one that focused mainly on understanding the participants' perceptions and experiences with professional development and the factors that affected their implementation of newly learned knowledge and skills.

The construct of teacher characteristics became difficult to describe and elucidate through the types of data sources I was utilizing for this study. Because of the small number of participants within this study, and because these four participants were very similar in many ways with regards to their beliefs, experiences, training, and motivation toward learning, these factors seemed less important to understanding the larger issues related to effective professional development experiences. I hope to be able to return to the issue of teacher characteristics in future research, when time, resources, and a larger participant base make it possible to truly investigate the impact of these important factors on teachers' motivation toward professional learning and implementation strategies.

Finally, the pilot study and continued data collection and analysis for the purposes of the present study also led to a broadening of the focus related to the type of professional development activities examined. Participants were chosen because they shared a common professional development experience, the SRWP Summer Institute, yet this experience was not the only professional development that had impacted the participants' growth. Throughout the interview process, descriptions of effective professional development offered by the participants included other models of professional development, other learning experiences that they perceived as effective and important to their overall professional growth. By widening the focus of this study to include all of the reported experiences of participants related to professional development, while still focusing on the common element of the work of the NWP, I sought to gain a wider understanding of the phenomena of professional development and add depth to the data used to answer the research questions. This research study then evolved over time into one that focused on teachers' perceptions of effective professional learning opportunities in general, including but not limited to the SRWP Summer Institute, and the barriers and supports the participants perceived as important to their overall implementation of improvement efforts in their own classrooms. It is these questions, then, that guided this research study in its final form:

(1) How do teachers perceive and describe their experiences of participating in professional development, such as the National Writing Project?

(2) How do teachers perceive and describe the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development?

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this research study.
The phenomenon under investigation in this research study was participation in
professional development, specifically a NWP site's Summer Institute. Participants were
selected from all previous Southwest Regional Writing Project Summer Institute
participants, a group which numbers just over 100 people. All teachers in the SRWP
population were contacted and asked to volunteer for participation. Seven volunteers
were secured from this group. This group of seven was then narrowed to five using the
filtering methods described below.

The selection of participants from the population group is important to consider.
The National Writing Project is a unique model of professional development in many
ways. I chose this model because it represents so many of the standards for effective
practice that are espoused by the National Staff Development Council and supported by
the research literature. It is the only professional development program named in and
funded by the legislation for the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S.Congress, 2002). Year
after year, its participants resoundingly report great satisfaction with their learning
experiences connected to NWP (NWP, 2008c). Therefore, it seemed a natural starting
point for examining teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of and experiences
connected to effective professional development. By selecting participants who share a
common lived experience of effective professional development, it was anticipated that
this would allow for more better understanding of the phenomenon of professional
development.

The National Writing Project model is considered, then, by this researcher as one

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model of effective professional development. This was determined by a review of participant satisfaction reports, personal experiences with the NWP model, the close alignment of NWP practices with nationally recognized standards for effective professional development, and pilot-study participants' reports of their perceptions and experiences of the NWP model. For these reasons, I chose the participant population for the purposes of this study. Once the population was selected, I also felt I needed to consider all of the other professional development experiences of the participants. I wanted test my own assumptions about the effectiveness of the NWP model by examining not only participants' perceptions related to their NWP experiences but also those related to other professional development activities they deemed effective. By examining all of the participants' experiences, not just those related to NWP, I hoped to gain a broader understanding of effective professional development and thereby assist in strengthening the knowledge base of not only the NWP but also of effective professional development in general.

Filtering Methods

The seven volunteers were given four survey instruments. The surveys were (a) the researcher-created Teacher Information Survey to gain basic information related to educational and teaching experiences, (b) the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) to gain information about each teachers' self-reported efficacy beliefs, (c) the researcher-created Motivation Toward Professional Development Scale to gain background about teachers' experiences with professional development opportunities, and (d) the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2001b) to gain information about each teacher's beliefs about teaching. The two

researcher-created instruments, the Teacher Information Survey and the Motivation Toward Professional Development Scale, can be found in the appendix to this dissertation.

These survey tasks were used to provide more descriptive data regarding teachers' perspectives on teaching, self-efficacy, and motivational factors. Since the original research questions focused on describing teacher characteristics, it was anticipated that gaining this information prior to participant selection would allow me to select participants with a wide ranges of teaching beliefs, experiences related to teaching and professional development, and thereby give variety to the perspectives shared when answering the research questions.

The first survey used during the filtering process was the researcher-created Teacher Information Survey. This survey asked teachers basic questions related to their educational credentials, the number of years they had been teaching, their current and past teaching position, their most and least preferred content-area focus, and their most influential experiences with professional development. The results of this survey data was used to select participants with a wide range of backgrounds related to teaching and learning.

The second survey used for during the filtering process was the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (Long Form) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001). The characteristic of self-efficacy, particularly as it relates to teacher effectiveness, has been studied at great length (Bandura, 1995; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Harrison, Rainer Jr, Hochwarter, & Thompson, 1997; Newman, Lenhart, Moss, & Newman, 2000; Richard, Diefendorff, & Martin, 2006; Wingfield & Nath, 2000;

Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Self-efficacy beliefs can help or hinder teachers' progress towards making and meeting personal and professional goals. In the original design of the study, when the intent was to examine more closely the individual characteristics of each participant, this survey was chosen as important for helping to uncover self-efficacy beliefs. As the study's focus and methodology evolved, however, the use of this instrument became unnecessary and was therefore not utilized beyond the participant selection phase of the study.

The third survey used during the filtering process, the Motivation Toward Professional Development Scale, was a survey designed to illustrate participants' motivation towards and evaluation of various professional development experiences in which they have participated. In reviewing studies on the effectiveness of professional development, I found McBride's (1994) research study to include a questionnaire that I modified for the purposes of this research study. While the original research study focused solely on inservice activities provided by the school itself, the items on the survey were easily adaptable for all forms of professional development as defined in this research study. I therefore modified the twenty items on the survey to change references to inservice activities to read professional development activities. I also included a few additional statements at the end that were specific to participation in the National Writing Project and also differentiated participants' motivation for activities in and out of their schools. The results of this survey were used during the filtering process to select participants who reported a wide range of professional development experiences and who also held strong beliefs about effective learning experiences. It was anticipated that, by selecting participants with a strong motivation to improve their

practice, the researcher would also gain understanding related to the research questions from those most motivated to improve the quality of professional development experiences. These participants, it seemed, had a great deal at stake related to professional development effectiveness, and were therefore excellent candidates for this purposeful sample.

The final survey, the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2001b), was used during the filtering process to select participants with a wide-range of beliefs about teaching. Participants took the survey, and an online tool developed by the survey creators was utilized by the researcher to yield a summary report that showed each respondent's most dominant perspective in five separate categories. It was utilized during the filtering process, as with the other instruments, to select participants with a wide range of perspective related to the art and science of teaching.

While it was anticipated that these various survey instruments would yield differences among the potential participants, this proved to be more difficult than expected. While the first survey did reveal a wide array of experience levels, current teaching assignments, and professional development activities, the second and third instruments provided less variation. In reviewing participant responses to the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), it was determined that all respondents had an overall high sense of both personal and general teacher self-efficacy, with mean scores ranging from 8.83 to 6.67 on a nine-point scale. Therefore, it was determined that self-efficacy alone could not be used as a diverging factor in selection. I therefore looked next to the Motivation Toward Professional Development Scale for areas of divergence. Again, all respondents indicated a high

motivation towards professional development and continuing education, which is not surprising given the nature of the population under investigation. This survey did not yield much divergence, either. Therefore, I determined that the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2001b) would be the best way to select a diverse participant group from among the respondents.

This inventory yields a summary report after participants have answered the 45-item survey. The report and accompanying chart tell participants about their overall dominant and recessive teaching perspectives. The use of the perspectives was intended to represent what each respondent believed to be good teaching, and the summary sheet divides participants' responses into categories of transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing, and social reform, which are defined below.

Transmission- Effective teaching requires substantial commitment to the content or subject matter.

Apprenticeship- Effective teaching is a process of socializing students into new behavioral norms and ways of working.

Developmental- Effective teaching must be planned and conducted from the learner's point of view.

Nurturing- Effective teaching assumes that long-term, hard, persistent effort to achieve comes from the heart, not the head.

Social Reform- Effective teaching seeks to change society in substantive ways. (Pratt & Collins, 2001a)

Summary reports also supplied sub-scores within each perspective that corresponded to the respondents' Beliefs (B), Intention (I), and Actions (A) within each perspective. The summary report tells respondents that these sub-scores "will further help to identify your philosophy of teaching by highlighting whether your views within a perspective are grounded (differentially or equally) in what you believe, what you intend

to accomplish, or what educational actions you undertake in your teaching settings"
(Pratt & Collins, 2001a, para 1).

Table 2 summarizes the results for the seven respondents related to their
dominant teaching perspectives. For each respondent, the overall score for each
category are listed as well as the sub-scores for each category. Each respondent's
survey results were examined for both dominant perspectives as well as source sub-
scores. Five of the seven respondents' responses resulted in a dominant perspective of
"nurturing", one was equally dominant in "nurturing" and "developmental," and one was
most dominant in "apprenticeship." However, they all exhibited a wide range in their
next-most dominant perspective and their sub-scores for all categories were quite
varied.

Table 2

Respondent Results for Teaching Perspectives Inventory

Respondent Initials	Transmission	Apprenticeship	Developmental	Nurturing	Social Reform
D.M.	29△	39 *	37	34	29△
L.D.	34	37	38	*43	29△
M.N.	35△	40	38	* 43	35△
A.P.	32	31	33	*42	26△
B.S.	39	39	*42	*42	36△
A.W.	26△	36	37	*42	28
T.T.	35	38	37	*44	36△

*= most dominant perspective, △= most recessive perspective

This information was used to select the final participant group. These participants, introduced and more fully described in chapter 4, are the first five listed in Table 2. They represented the most varied teaching perspectives and source subscores. After the data collection period began, however, participant B.S. was removed from the study after it was not possible to gain administrator approval to observe in her classroom. The final participant group, then, consisted of four teachers.

Assumptions

This research study began with the assumption that professional development is the primary vehicle for improving classroom instruction and ultimately student achievement. It was also assumed that the majority of teachers are not using much of what they learn in professional development activities in their own classrooms for many different reasons. As the researcher, I believe that much of what we know about learning theory, both for children and adults, is not considered or applied when designing learning experiences for teachers. Professional development, as previously stated, is the main vehicle for improving teacher decision-making and ultimately student achievement (Guskey, 2002b; Zepeda, 1999). Additionally, I believe that adult learners, such as teachers participating in professional development, can offer perspectives that can enhance the delivery of learning opportunities and can inform the professional development community about what types of models are most effective in meeting teacher needs.

The Qualitative Tradition of Research Methodology

Qualitative research is used to describe and answer questions about contexts, experiences, and the participants. All qualitative methods "strive to capture the human

meanings of social life as it is lived, experienced, and understood by the research participants" (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 163). There are many different approaches to qualitative studies, and each approach is dependent upon the types of questions to be answered. These approaches, including case research study, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and action research, try to understand the human experience for different purposes.

Miles and Huberman, in *An Expanded Sourcebook: Qualitative Data Analysis* (1994), stratify the various qualitative research traditions based on the research interest under investigation. The focus of the present research study on participants' comprehension of the meaning of their experiences and actions led to the choice of phenomenology as the research method. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe and understand the experiences of teacher participants who have completed the SRWP's Summer Institute sometime during the past five years, as well as to identify the supports and constraints that affect their implementation of various behaviors and beliefs transferred from the professional development experience.

<center>Data Collection Methods</center>

The research questions themselves required multiple data sources in order to be able to draw conclusions. The issues under examination are complex, centering on human behavior, cognition, beliefs, and motivation. Only by using multiple data sources could I hope to truly understand the phenomena under investigation from the participants' perspective, and only by using rich data sources could I gain the necessary information to answer the research questions. Below, each data source is addressed,

with a discussion of how each assisted in understanding the perceptions and experiences of the participants related to the research questions.

Data collection was conducted throughout the 2007-2008 school year and included multiple sources and types. I visited each participant's classroom on at least four occasions, twice in the fall semester and twice in the spring semester. Each observation period lasted from 45-80 minutes in length. In addition, I interviewed each participant at least four times throughout the course of the school year. Interviews were conducted and audio recordings were made of each of these encounters. These recordings were later transcribed for analysis.

Interviews

In conducting a phenomenological research study, the ultimate goal is always the understanding of the participants' experience or conception of a phenomenon. In order to obtain this perspective, it becomes imperative to allow the participant to talk about his or her experiences. Interviews are the vehicle that allows for such communication. Open-ended and unstructured interviews, the type used in this research study, are conducted "so that the participant can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the research or past research findings" (Creswell, 2002, p. 204). By focusing on the participants' own words to describe their experience, the qualitative researcher gains invaluable insider information.

The interview process was therefore vital in identifying the perceptions and descriptions of participants related to professional development and implementation efforts, to illustrate the decision-making processes of the teachers, to illustrate changes in teacher behaviors and/or beliefs as a result of professional development, and to

review teachers' decision-making processes as they are affected by environmental factors. The interview guide, found in the appendix, was used to begin the interview process, but interview questions emerged through analysis of all data sources as the research study proceeded. The questions listed are general in nature and provided a starting place only for the conversational, open-ended interviews. Each participant was interviewed at least four times throughout the course of the data collection period. Interviews lasted from 45-90 minutes in length.

Interviews focused on understanding participants' descriptions and perceptions of the two research questions, related to experiences with professional development. Early interviews focused primarily on the experiences and perceptions related to SRWP, but over time, the focus broadened to include questions related to other professional development experiences that had influenced participants' teaching. Interview questions also prompted participants to describe the influence of campus administration, colleagues and support staff members, districts policies and curriculum, and any policies, mandates, or other factors that affected their instructional choices.

Observation

Classroom observations showed teachers' behaviors within the classroom, and scripted, narrative-style field notes were used to document these classroom actions and decisions. Like interviews, observations allow the qualitative researcher the opportunity to view each participant in his or her own context, behaving in authentic situations. Observations allow the researcher to record relevant behaviors, lists of events, and descriptive drawings and notes about the setting. By engaging in observation, I was able to formulate interview questions grounded in the daily work of each participant, and

these observations provided a great deal of context for the interview questions utilized

throughout the course of the data collection period, particularly as they related to

participants' instructional decision-making as it was influenced by professional

development and environment factors.

Survey Data

The survey instruments were administered prior to the collection of classroom

data. In addition to being used for participant selection, as previously described, some

of the survey data were used to formulate interview questions. In particular, the

Teaching Perspective Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2001b) and the Motivation Toward

Professional Development Survey were used to promote conversation related to

participants' beliefs about teaching, classroom actions and intentions, and sources of

motivation related to personal and professional learning. The responses to the

motivation survey, particularly the open-ended comments many participants added after

each question, related to both positive and negative perceptions of professional

development experiences, and I utilized these comments as a starting point for

clarifying questions for each participant. When analyzing data, I also returned to the

responses from this survey to examine how each participant's teaching practices were

impacted by the various professional development activities described by the

participants.

While these data were only used as a source for further investigation, they

served as a useful tool for me in probing deeper into participants' descriptions during

interviews. While survey instruments have traditionally been used as a part of

quantitative or mixed-methods studies, their presence here is warranted. These survey

instruments were not analyzed using traditional quantitative techniques that seek

correlational or cause-and-effect relationships. Instead, I used the survey instruments to

select participants, to lend descriptive information to the other data-collection methods,

and to inform the overall data-gathering process.

Summer Institute Archival Data

Finally, during data analysis, it became necessary to describe and more fully

understand the Summer Institute experiences that participants were sharing. As I

sought to elucidate the broader themes and patterns of the data, and as I needed a

context in which to ground participants' experiences, this archival data became

necessary. Examples of archival data used are: the syllabus and weekly schedules

used during the planning of the Institute, handouts from various teaching and

technology demonstrations provided to participants, lesson plans and work samples of

various community building activities, critical response sheets used by groups during

the Summer Institute to critique teaching demonstrations, and other artifacts that

described and represented the everyday events of the Summer Institute. While I had

not anticipated using artifacts from the work of the Summer Institutes, I quickly saw that

these types of artifacts could help to illustrate the work of one NWP site and the types of

activities participants engaged in during their experiences. I was granted access to

these data by one of the SRWP Summer Institute co-directors.

Data Analysis Strategies

Data analysis was constant-comparative in nature throughout the process

(Creswell, 1998). Analysis began during data collection with data reduction and analysis

techniques. "Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying,

abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). In addition to these analysis techniques, I also wrote research summaries and memos regarding emerging patterns, as described by Glesne (2006) and others (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These written narratives assisted me in understanding the essence of the emerging themes, look for patterns within the data, and further solidify the coding structure as it pertained to the research questions.

The qualitative analysis software NVivo 7 was utilized for data storage, search and retrieval, coding, content analysis, and data display. I began reviewing, coding, and categorizing the themes and patterns after the first interview and observation sessions. The patterns and themes revealed in this set of data helped guide my decisions for observation and interview focus in subsequent rounds of data collection. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe data analysis of this type as consisting of four concurrent activities: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (p. 10). These activities, which were ongoing and iterative in nature, were used to guide me toward an understanding of each participants' meaning and experience as related to the phenomena under investigation.

In the literature related to phenomenological methodology, there is no consensus on data analysis techniques to be used. However, the constructs suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) are certainly a natural first step towards reduction and analysis. Further review of the literature suggests that most qualitative researchers using phenomenological methods follow adapted versions of Colaizzi (1978) or Moustakas (1994) as guides for data analysis. These guides led me as the researcher to construct

scripted field notes and verbatim transcripts of interviews, which were then used to extract significant statements, devise meanings, and offer descriptions of significant attributes. These methods are also endorsed by Creswell (1998) and served to guide the data analysis of this research study.

Denzin (1989) describes the necessary process of bracketing, which has been a part of the phenomenological tradition since its formation by Husserl (1913). During this process, the researcher dissects the phenomenon as described by those who experienced it. The preconceptions given to the words by the existing literature, or even the researcher, are bracketed, or set aside, and instead are confronted on different terms. Bracketing, which is the process of data analysis most closely followed for this research study, involves the following steps:

(1) Locate within the personal experience, or self-story, key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon under investigation.

(2) Interpret the meanings of these phrases, as an informed reader.

(3) Obtain the subject's interpretations of these phrases, if possible.

(4) Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied.

(5) Offer a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features identified in step 4. (Denzin, 1989, pp. 55-56)

After each round of data collection, the data were transcribed into documents, and these documents were dissected, as suggested above, for key phrases and statements, referred to herein as meaning units. I then assigned these meaning units initial interpretations in the form of analytic codes. During subsequent interviews and communications with participants, I shared these initial coding structures with the participants to determine if my interpretations accurately reflected their perceptions.

When discrepancies arose, further questions were asked to more fully illustrate the essence of these differences. Thus, early coding and analysis of data were used to develop emerging themes and patterns for later interviews. By the end of data collection, the data set contained a large number of these meaning units that were then analyzed further through the processes of analysis and reduction.

Further data reduction involved the formation of a coding structure. Early on, codes were not categorized, but over time, a natural categorization evolved, as themes were revealed by the data as related to or hinging upon similar experiences or centered on similar phenomena. The final categories, represented in the themes that are discussed in chapter 4, were also shared with the participants to gain further insight.

Each transcript and set of field notes was read multiple times to extract meaning units. During each reading, analytic thoughts were noted in the margins of the text, and questions that came to mind were also added to these notes. In utilizing NVivo for data retrieval, I searched for similar words, phrases, and codes to compare participant data and extract further clarity as to the overall meaning of each code. I also developed data displays that allowed me to visualize connections and discrepancies within and across the data. In all, this analytic process, which began during data collection, lasted for several months after data collection was complete. When a preliminary draft of the findings was complete, I shared this draft with each participant. I asked each participant to share their final thoughts on the themes, as well, and found that I had indeed told their stories accurately and revealed patterns and themes that were consistent with their experiences. These themes and patterns were then compared to the theoretical

constructs revealed in the literature, as well as research into similar areas of

investigation.

<p align="center">Subjectivity and Application of the Results</p>

When choosing qualitative methods for any research study, issues of

generalizability and researcher bias must be addressed. In this section, I discuss

generalizability of qualitative research findings, as well as comment upon my own

researcher biases, to make these clear at the outset of the research study. By

examining these constructs, it is hoped that the reader can then judge for him or herself

as to the application of the results.

Creswell (1998) describes eight strategies used by the qualitative researcher to

increase the validity of the results obtained. These strategies, when employed within

qualitative methods, allow the reader to discern the validity of the conclusions drawn

from the research study. The eight techniques, as summarized by Glesne (2006) are

listed below:

(1) Prolonged engagement and persistent observation- extended time in the field so that you are able to develop trust, learn the culture, and check out your hunches,

(2) Triangulation- use of multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources, multiple investigators, and/or multiple theoretical perspectives,

(3) Peer review and debriefing- external reflection and input on your work,

(4) Negative case analysis- conscious search for negative cases and unconfirming evidence so that you can refine your working hypotheses,

(5) Clarification of researcher bias- reflection upon your own subjectivity and how you will use and monitor it in your research,

(6) Member checking- sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately,

(7) Rich, thick description- writing that allows the reader to enter the research context,

(8) External audit- an outside person examines the research process and product through "auditing" your field notes, research journal, analytic coding scheme, etc. (pp. 37-38)

For this research study, I employed prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation using multiple data-collection methods and data sources, clarification of researcher bias, member checking, and rich, thick description to increase the trustworthiness of my findings. By including this information, my hope is to give the reader enough information to decide if the results of this research study are valid and reliable enough to be applied to other populations of interest.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation allowed me as the researcher to establish rapport with my participants and collect the relevant data relating to each participants' beliefs, practices, and perceptions. Spending time with each participant assisted in creating a trusting relationship, and interviews were, I believe, richer and more forthcoming because of this rapport. Also, spending more time observing participants' in their classrooms allowed for greater variety in the types of lessons taught, giving greater insight into participants' instructional choices and beliefs about teaching. These observations also helped to illustrate the school context for each participant, which is necessary to fully understand the reported perceptions and experiences related to implementation efforts. Context cannot be understood in a few short visits, and prolonged time in the field was necessary.

The use of multiple sources of data and data-collection methods was invaluable in the data analysis procedures. First, the use of multiple data sources, in the form of multiple participants, allowed me to understand the perceptions of not just one teacher

but of many. This allowed for comparison and cross-examination of the findings. Second, I relied not only on my own observational field notes and the transcripts of the interviews, but I also gained understanding of each teacher's beliefs, practices, and environment through photos of each classroom, artifacts from the SRWP Summer Institutes, and classroom artifacts, such as lesson plans, student work, and instructional materials. When formulating the themes presented in chapter 4, these artifacts were invaluable to me as a source of corroboration for the findings and to illustrate the context in which each participant works and learns.

Member checking was also utilized in establishing application of these results. Participants were asked throughout the data collection process to verify, confirm, or disagree with the emergent themes and patterns found during data analysis, and these conversations become an integral part of the data analysis procedures throughout the course of the study. By returning to each participant with emergent patterns and coding structures, I was able to gain more articulated and illustrative examples of their perceptions regarding professional learning and the supports and constraints that impact their work. The use of thick data, as the reader will find in chapter 4, was used to give each participant a voice within the context of this study, and their words form the basis for the research findings presented shortly. Finally, the section that follows, titled *Epochè*, relates to revealing researcher bias.

<div align="center">*Epochè*</div>

Phenomenological analysis, as it is described by Moustakas (1994), Katz (1987), and Patton (1990) begins with a process known as *Epochè*.

> *Epochè* is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. *Epochè* helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view point without prejudgment or imposing meaning too soon. This suspension of judgment is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires the setting aside of the researcher's personal viewpoint in order to see the experience for itself (Katz, 1987, pp. 36-37).

This section, therefore, is offered to the reader to share my own presuppositions about the phenomenon under investigation, and this on-going analytic process was used throughout the data analysis procedures previously described to assist me in looking beyond my own personal experiences to the meanings and perceptions shared in the participant data for this research study.

Within my studies as a graduate student, as well as my work as a teacher for ten years and as a researcher at the university level, I come to this research study with some preconceived notions about the ability of professional development to truly change a teacher's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in their own classroom, and they are examined below. As a researcher using qualitative methods, it is important to reveal my own background and understanding, so that the reader may make their own generalizations about the significance of the research study to his or her own setting. For me as a teacher, professional development produces mixed emotions and thoughts.

As a beginning teacher, I enjoyed nearly all types of professional development activities, as they invariably taught me knowledge and skills I had not yet learned in my preservice training or in my own classroom experience. As I gained practical experience, though, I began to see professional development as a means of remediation for my colleagues and myself. Most professional development opportunities offered by my school and district were focused on issues related to classroom

management, technology integration, and curriculum reforms, but they focused mainly on teaching procedural or factual knowledge. There was never time given for discussion related to implementation or differentiation. I had little opportunity to provide feedback on my progress toward implementing what I learned in my classroom. In addition, most professional development experiences were filled with the same types of strategies and hints over and over again. I began to feel that I was not really learning anything new during these experiences.

When I began work on my master's degree, while I was still teaching, I saw a difference between the level of thought expected from me as a student compared to that expected of me as a consumer of professional development. Within my course work, I was encouraged to discuss ideas and issues with my classmates, share my own experiences and knowledge with my peers and instructors, and engage in thoughtful discourse. This led me to seek out more opportunities with my own colleagues on my campus to engage in like conversations and learn from one another. For me, the difference between the course work and professional development experiences I was participating in was mainly time. Time for discourse, time for reflection, time to implement what I had learned in my practice and then discuss with peers, time for my own reflection, and time to learn all of the complex components topics associated with teaching and learning.

I grew to be dissatisfied with professional development workshops and seminars, because they clung to the traditional, "one-shot" model of education that does not really seem to work for anyone. I wanted to experience professional development that was continuous and on-going and that gave me an opportunity to try what I had learned,

then return to the learning environment for feedback and follow-through. In addition, I longed for the necessary support structure that would allow me to implement what I had learned in my own classroom, enabling me and my students to be successful. None of this seems to have found a place in PK-12 professional development, for the most part.

When I began work on my doctorate, I left the K-12 teaching profession. I wanted to pursue this degree full-time and devote my time and energy to this important educational venture. I became interested in the National Writing Project, not because I was interested in becoming a better teacher of writing, but because I saw this model of professional development as different from the other models I had experienced. It was intense, lasting five weeks. It allowed participants to learn about topics that were of interest to them. Moreover, it encouraged teachers to share their knowledge and skills with one another. Finally, when I began to work with the Southwest Regional Writing Project, I also found a component of continuity built into their model that allowed teachers to return to the group periodically and reflect on what they had done in their classrooms. The time was finally there, built into an effective model of professional development. I felt like I had found my long-lost relatives at last. My interest in NWP, then, really is as a professional developer. In the future, I would like to find ways to extend this model into other areas of the curriculum, including math and science.

After working with this group for nearly a year, I had many questions about what teachers learned from their experiences with the SRWP Summer Institute and whether they really were using what they had learned in their classrooms. During the spring semester of that school year, 2006—2007, I conducted the pilot study previously described. The conclusions I was able to draw from the pilot study suggested to me that

this model was indeed effective in changing *how* teachers taught, including their foundational beliefs about teaching. The teachers in my case studies were using their newly formed knowledge and skills in their classrooms, on a daily basis, and they were engaged in reflective practice, both on their own and as a part of the cohort group. Once I saw that this model was indeed effective, the questions asked here were raised in my mind. In addition, though, I also wanted to know what it was like, as an insider, to experience the Summer Institute. I therefore applied for and was accepted to be a part of the 2007 Summer Institute cohort.

My experience as a SRWP Teaching Fellow during the Summer Institute, and later as a Teacher Consultant, as participants are known after they have complete the Summer Institute experience, offered a great deal of insight into myself as a teacher and into the experiences I had observed during the pilot study. During the Summer Institute, I wanted to experience the learning environment like any other teacher, so I tried to "pack away" my research interests, focus on how what I learned each day could be used in my own teaching, and forget that I might soon be investigating some of my fellow colleagues' experiences and classrooms. I came to the Summer Institute each day with great expectations for learning new teaching strategies, working on my own personal and professional writing, and sharing my own experiences with others. In short, I tried my best to experience the Summer Institute like any other classroom teacher, and I think, for the most part, I was very successful in meeting this goal.

Throughout the Summer Institute, I was confronted with and had to learn to deal with many of my own insecurities about writing and sharing my writing with others. While I have always felt proficient as a professional or scholarly writer, I felt my personal

writing, in whatever form it took, was still very emergent and developing. I did not really think that I had much to share with others, that my writing was any good, or that people would like what I had written. As a teacher, teacher leader, and professional developer, I have no qualms about standing in front of a group of strangers and talking about teaching, learning, or any other topic I am interested in. I have no issues with presenting my research to peers, professors, or even strangers. But, the minute I had to share a piece of personal writing with the others in the Summer Institute, I was immediately petrified and my hands shook the entire time I was reading my seven line poem. I have never been so nervous in my life, and this fear did not dissipate easily. Throughout the Summer Institute, whether sharing with my writing response group, reading aloud during morning Author's Chair, or sharing my piece with the whole group during the weekly Read-Around, I was terrified.

By the end of the Summer Institute, I had learned to control the outward signs of this terror a little better, but on the inside, I was still shaking like a leaf each time I read. This certainly was a hard thing to face about myself and one that greatly impacted the way I think about my own students' experiences with writing in my classroom. I was put in the same position that I have put students in countless times over the years, asking them to share personal writing that was very meaningful, sometimes painful, to them. I think I always worked very hard to create a supportive, non-threatening classroom where my students felt safe, just as the SRWP directors did for me. However, even within the confines of this supportive environment, I still did not feel safe, and I have a better insight into my own students' experiences because of this. The reasons I did not feel safe had more to do with me and my own previous experiences, but it nonetheless

colored my perceptions of the Summer Institute.

Beyond the scope of sharing personal writing, though, my Summer Institute experience was very positive. I met nineteen other people who were just as passionate as, if not more than, me about teaching. These men and women came from different backgrounds, experiences, schools and districts, and yet we all shared a small set of common beliefs about learning and teaching. We all wanted to be there to improve our own practice, and we all believed that every child in our rooms could learn. This commonality was important for me. I am not sure I would have been able to work with and learn from the others within the community if we had fundamentally different beliefs about teaching. This is a question I have often pondered since this experience.

Within this community, as it certainly came to be for my cohort almost within the first day, I met many people whom I consider to be my friends, people I continue to ask questions of, seek support from, and talk with on a regular basis. There was not anyone within the community that I did not feel connected to on some level, whether large or small, and I continue to enjoy seeing each of them at local writing project meetings, NWP events, and other professional development activities within our community. When I see them each time, I know that they are, in some ways, kindred spirits, people who "get" what I am about and understand me on some basic level that not all of my peers have over the years. This, perhaps, was the most powerful lesson of the Summer Institute for me, the one I think most regularly about even 18 months after my experience as a Teaching Fellow.

I learned many things about good teaching during that summer experience. Many of the strategies and models that I have learned have been implemented within the

undergraduate courses I have taught at the university. Some of the strategies have

been mentally filed away for later, when I return to working in the K-12 environment and

can work once again with children. In short, I learned something new each and every

day that I was there. I learned not only content and pedagogy, but I learned how to

become a more reflective practitioner, I developed as a writer, I now have empathy for

my own students' writing experiences, and I believe more than ever in the power of

professional learning as a way to improve our nation's schools.

From this examination of my own experiences and assumptions, I formulated

several insights that were used in the formulation, implementation, and analysis of the

present research study. These are:

- Over time, my learning needs have evolved, and I learn best from experiences that are closely connected to by needs as a learner and a professional educator.

- I learn most effectively when I am connected with and interact with others, and the learning of others motivates my own learning.

- For me, learning experiences must be extended over time, and I learn most effectively when I am forced out of my "comfort zone."

- I want to learn more about what makes professional development effective for teachers and how teachers can be better supported in their efforts to implement new practices in their classrooms.

- I believe that the NWP model is an effective model of professional development.

Summary

This phenomenological research study sought to illustrate and understand the

perceptions of four classroom teachers engaged in professional learning. Data collected

from observations, interviews, surveys, and archival data sources were analyzed for the

meaning participants gave to their experiences in professional development and the

factors that affect implementation efforts to improve instructional practice. The next

chapter presents the findings of this research study as they relate to the research

questions.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

> I never understood why good staff development didn't model what good teachers are supposed to be doing…I think good staff development uses a lot of different learning styles because that's how we learn, we're adults.
> - Laura Downs, interview

The experiences of teachers who participate in professional development vary widely as to the participants' satisfaction with the learning experience and their implementation of knowledge and skills learned through these experiences. The present research study was conducted to understand how participants in the Southwest Regional Writing Project (SRWP) perceive and describe their experiences with professional development activities, both as related to their experiences with the SRWP Summer Institute and to other professional development experiences, as well as how they perceive and describe those forces that affect their implementation of learned knowledge and skills in their own classrooms. This chapter opens with a brief explanation of the SRWP Summer Institute. This contextual description serves as introduction only, as further reading in this chapter will reveal a more in-depth explanation of the people, places, and events related to this professional development model. Second, the reader is given a brief introduction of each participant, followed by vignettes that illustrate the lived experiences of these participants related to professional development and implementation efforts. Finally, this chapter includes the analytic themes revealed in the analysis of the participants' descriptions and experiences as they relate to the research questions. The themes are grouped into broad categories related to the two research questions that provide structure to the essence of the participants' voices.

A Brief Description of the SRWP Summer Institute

Following the NWP principles outlined in chapter 2, the SRWP's Summer

Institute provides opportunities for teachers to improve their own writing skills, to

witness and share effective teaching practices, and to participate in a community of

learners engaged in critical reflection. Summer Institute activities in the SRWP include

technology training related to writing instruction, teaching demonstrations aimed at

literacy improvement, lessons and discussion about children's literature, and time for

participants to engage in their own action research, personal writing, and sharing. All of

these activities are planned and executed to meet the goals of the SRWP, which are:

- To provide support for the development of teacher leadership related to literacy instruction.

- To develop a vibrant learning community among literacy teachers and teacher researchers.

- To support the expanded use of theoretically sound, research-based writing instruction in K-16 classrooms in [the southwest region].

- To expand the use of writing across multiple disciplines in K-16 classrooms.

- To promote the use of writing and writing instruction to address issues of equity and diversity in [southwest regional] schools. (SRWP internal documents, 2008)

The Summer Institutes in which the four research study participants were

enrolled were held on a middle school campus in a large school district in a

southwestern metropolitan area. The campus' media center served as the main

classroom for the Institute, and participants also used an adjoining computer lab and

work area. During the four-week Institute, participants were engaged in professional

development from 8:30 am until 4:00 pm each week day. Each week's activities and

teaching demonstrations were organized around a theme, and each week's theme built

upon previous themes. Reading, teaching demonstrations, community activities, and learning experiences focused on the development of these themes over time. The weekly instructional themes were:

Week 1- Understanding Ourselves in Order to Change

Week 2- Helping our Students Understand Themselves

Week 3- Helping our Students Understand the World

Week 4- Helping our Students Change the World (SRWP Summer Institute documents, 2007)

At the conclusion of the Institute, everyone was required to show evidence of their learning in a variety of ways. Each person contributed at least three pieces of writing to a group anthology to showcase personal writing efforts during the Institute. Each person also completed and submitted an action research proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a plan of action on a topic of his or her own choosing related to a current classroom need. This topic was also developed into a teaching demonstration, which was presented to fellow Writing Project participants at one of the monthly meetings during the school year following the Summer Institute.

Throughout the discussion of analytic themes in a later section, I also include additional descriptions of the daily events and processes of the Summer Institute as they relate to the emergent themes and patterns. Thus, the reader will continue to develop an understanding of the work of the Writing Project throughout the remainder of this chapter. I hope to provide context to the participants' words and shed light on the complexities of each of the constructs discussed.

A Brief Introduction to the Research Participants

Andrea Porter (all names used herein are pseudonyms) is a literacy specialist in a large, suburban city in the southwest. She works with at-risk and struggling students at one elementary campus, focusing her instruction on the improvement of literacy skills. She participated in the SRWP Summer Institute in 2007. Andrea's self-reported teaching philosophy includes the following:

> Ideally, education is fueled by a child's interest. Ideally, as a teacher, you kind of artfully capitalize on their interests, and then you channel that interest and their effort toward that interest to help them know more than they originally did or intended to know. You translate into learning about this here and this there. Ideally, you make things to be learned and skills to be practiced valuable to the child.

Melissa Newton teaches tenth-grade English and reading in a rural community north of a large, southwestern city. She is also the current head of her English department. She participated in the SRWP Summer Institute in 2007. When asked to define her teaching philosophy, Melissa said,

> I guess I would define it as I am constantly striving to give my students what they need as individuals. Not what the scope and sequence tells me they need, not even really what the other classes are doing, but just where they are at and what they need. What they need to enhance their strengths and what they need to improve their weaknesses.

Laura Downs teaches second grade in an elementary school in a large, southwestern suburb. She serves as her grade-level's team leader. She participated in the SRWP Summer Institute in 2006. Laura reports,

> My teaching philosophy is very learner centered. I believe the students need to be guiding their own instructions, within the parameters of the expectations set by your state. I highly believe in working with the student's instructional [zone]. I really don't do whole group instruction that much anymore. Whole group instruction has given way to centers, guided reading, guided writing, writing workshop. So, I think differentiated instruction is really something that, not only do I know is a big push right now, but something that I use a lot.

Debbie Mullins teaches sixth-grade language arts and social studies in a suburban community north of a large, southwestern city. She currently serves as the chair of her grade-level department. She participated in the SRWP Summer Institute in 2007. When asked to describe her teaching philosophy, Debbie said,

> I believe that learning is need-based. And that when we have a need, we have an opportunity to seek out learning. If we don't feel the need for it, we are probably not going to internalize the learning. It has no meaningfulness for us. I also think that learning is a social activity. That we learn better in the support of people that are more knowledgeable than we are, as almost a mentorship. And that it's not necessarily about me being a teacher, it's about me being the most knowledgeable person in the room, not from innate ability but from experience.

Additional background information about each of these teachers is provided in Table 3 in order to illustrate their teaching lives, educational experiences, and other important information relevant to the present study. Included in this overview are participants' answers to the following question, "What are the professional development experiences you have had that have impacted your teaching habits the most?" In addition to this background information about each participant, the following section contains vignettes about these four teachers. These short stories are offered to tell each participant's story related to the SRWP experience, their experiences related to professional development activities they have found to be effective, and the factors that affect their instructional decision-making in their classrooms. Each story is told, as much as possible, in the words of the participant. Following these stories is a discussion of the analytic themes that emerged from data collection, as they relate to the research questions. These themes are a synthesis of all four participants' stories related to the phenomenon under investigation.

Table 3

Research Participant Information

Andrea Porter	Melissa Newton
Years of Experience: 15	Years of Experience: 3
Campus Type: Elementary (K-5)	*Campus Type:* High School (9-12)
Degrees Held: BA in Anthropology (1992)	*Degrees Held:* BA in English Literature (2005) currently working towards a Masters in Reading degree
Previous positions: 1st grade- 4 years, reading recovery and reading specialist- 7 years (Both positions in same district but not where she currently teaches)	*Previous positions:* 8th and 9th grade English Language Arts in a different district
Professional Development Experiences: • SRWP Summer Institute • Reading Recovery training • Learning network training • District writing academy	Professional Development Experiences: • SRWP Summer Institute • Write for the Future
Laura Downs	Debbie Mullins
Years of Experience: 4	Years of Experience: 6
Campus Type: Elementary (K-5)	*Campus Type:* Intermediate (5-6)
Degrees Held: BS in Interdisciplinary Studies (2003)	*Degrees Held:* BS in Interdisciplinary Studies (2002), currently working towards a Masters in Reading degree
Previous positions: none	*Previous positions:* 6th grade at a different campus
Professional Development Experiences: • SRWP Summer Institute • School district's gifted and talented training • Reading with Meaning book study • School-based workshop on the Big 5, writing workshop, and classroom community building	*Other:* Teaching is Debbie's second career. She was previously an accountant for 15 years. Professional Development Experiences: • SRWP Summer Institute • Mosaic of Thought book study • guided reading strategies workshop

Participant Vignettes

Andrea

Like the other participants, Andrea chose to participate in the SRWP Summer

Institute because it she wanted to improve her practices related to writing instruction. As

a literacy specialist, she worked with students who struggle in reading and writing, and

she applied to be a part of the Summer Institute because, "It had writing in the title. And,

it seemed to me that it was a way to do more of what I wanted to do, which is write."

Andrea had a strong identity as a writer prior to her SRWP experiences, but she shared

that this learning opportunity enhanced that identity further. "I think it also gave me

confidence in my writing that I don't think I had before."

When describing her experiences with the Summer Institute, Andrea often talked

about the roles others played in her experiences. "I think it was really good for me to get

connected to a group outside of my school." When discussing this community, she

included the institute leaders in her description, emphasizing the important role they

contributed to her sense of community. "It was really neat to see models of academic,

accomplished women who were also intelligent and kind and supportive and humble

and things like that." When talking more about the impact of the community on her

experience, she added,

> It was a treat to get to become a family and develop relationships with people
> and become connected over time. I really like that. It creates that atmosphere in
> which you can risk, invest yourself in something else, try something out, get
> different perspectives on your writing. When I think back on the institute, the gifts
> that I take from it are the people I met, as well as having been a part of this living
> community. And I think that it was really great to experience a really living,
> workable community. It gives me a model for what I can try to create in another
> place.

Andrea also felt that she learned how to conduct inquiry about her own teaching methods and use these types of research methods to improve her practice. As she admits, "in the past, I've done a lot of things based on intuition or a gut sense" related to her instructional choices, but by participating in the work of the SRWP, she understood the importance of grounding her practice in sound educational theory and research. "It taught me that I could research, and it was Ok. I could do that, I could do it successfully. Bottom line, it was something that I could do."

For Andrea, the activities that allowed her to critically examine and discuss the teaching demonstrations were a powerful component to her learning experience. Because of her position as a literacy specialist, one who often coaches and provides professional development for other teachers, this activity was meaningful and relevant to her teaching role. "I think it just really helped to focus my eyesight, so to speak, my lens that I look through." This modeling was something she has continued to use in her own practice beyond the work of the SRWP.

Andrea has experienced less success in implementing other knowledge and skills she learned during her Summer Institute experience than the other participants. She described her position as a support teacher as one reason her implementation efforts had stalled. "In interaction with the classrooms, I'm still very much not in control," she said when describing her interactions with other teachers with whom she works. Her work with the students she supports centers on other teachers' lesson plans, instructional activities, and teaching strategies, and many of the teachers on her campus have not been open to collaboration efforts. She was unsuccessful in putting her action research plan into place because of lack of support from teachers on her

campus, and this was frustrating for her. "It's such a delicate thing. I can suggest and I

can really indicate that I'd like to be in a room, but I can only be in there as much as [the

classroom teacher] really wants me to be in there."

Andrea has taught much longer than the other participants, and many of our

conversations focused on other learning experiences she felt had impacted her teaching

over the years. While she felt her experiences with the Writing Project had been

effective and successful, she also described her experiences with Reading Recovery

training ("Reading recovery: Basic facts," 2008) as extremely influential to her teaching

and a very positive learning experience.

> If before, I could be compared to broad beam laser or flashlight, Reading
> Recovery just totally focused me and made my efforts so much more specific and
> I think powerful and targeted. It trained me to observe, which is something I think
> teachers sometimes don't do. Not that they don't want to, they just don't know
> what to look for.

When I asked her to describe the components of the Reading Recovery model that

were most effective, Andrea discussed the model lessons each participant presented

during the year-long training. She also connected this to her experiences with SRWP. In

Reading Recovery training, she said,

> Someone is teaching on the other side of the glass, and we're standing there,
> and the teacher leader is conducting this rigorous conversation about what we're
> seeing, and she calls on you, and it's this very dynamic learning thing. And, since
> everybody does it, everybody goes behind the class, and since we were aware of
> who our trainers were and everything, it's a very safe environment. You get to
> see live teaching, and talk about it, and take it apart, kind of like what we did for
> our teaching presentations. And then, we go back to the whole group thing and
> talk about a particular component of the lesson or a particular challenge that lots
> of us were facing. It was very relevant. It was very pertinent, and it was very
> rigorous.

Andrea articulated on several occasions such as this that she needed to have

opportunities to dialogue with others about effective teaching practices during

professional development she labeled as effective. She added, "Giving me time in which I can talk about what I have read or heard" makes the learning experience more meaningful.

When I asked Andrea to describe the characteristics of ineffective professional development, she illustrated her own learning style and need for high expectations in her answer.

> Generally, it's been dumbed-down. The expectation is not there that you will be prepared and ready to learn. Professional development does not always come with it an expectation that you will give it your all, and some teachers fulfill this line of thinking. I think I like to pretend that I am strong enough to bring my A-game all the time, but I don't always. No one is perfect.

She added, "I love it when there is a sense of high expectations from me. I respond to that and I expect that from professional development. When expectations are low, I tend to tune out." For Andrea, her experiences in the Summer Institute were an example of high expectations coupled with relevant activities that helped to improve her understanding of effective writing instruction.

Andrea's perceptions of her abilities to successfully implement new ideas into practice were deeply colored by her current teaching assignment. In her capacity as a literacy specialist, she worked with students at four different grade levels, providing various types and levels of support, depending on students' needs. She also provided literacy support to all of the teachers at these grade levels, again using many different levels and types of support. Each grade-level team had a different dynamic, each teacher held different expectations for Andrea's work with both the teacher and the students, and each classroom had different procedures and community structures that Andrea had to understand and work in throughout the day. Because of all of this, she

often felt she was not in control of her choices, not able to do what she often knew was best to meet the needs of her students. She discussed how she often feels conflicted about her own goals for a student versus the classroom teacher's goals.

> Sometimes I will just stop the madness and pull [the student] over to the computer and say, 'you know, let me show you this that.' But sometimes I end up being this weird kind of accomplice to this mismatched instruction.

Andrea went on to describe the demands of her position as wearing a number of hats. "One of the hats I wear is individual student coach, or small group coach, and then I also wear an in-class student support hat, and then I wear a teacher support hat, and then I wear a pilot-new-instructional-models hat." These varied and sometimes competing demands taxed her time, energy, and emotions greatly and left her feeling that, "there's this idea that I'm always late and I'm not doing enough. I'm behind and there's stuff I should be doing." Her Andrea, the lack of time to effectively accomplish all of the goals necessary for her teaching position was a major factor that influenced her daily decision-making processes.

Melissa

Melissa was in her third year of teaching during the research study. When asked what motivated her to participate in the Summer Institute, she said,

> Honestly, because I think teaching writing is such a delicate thing, I think you cannot attend enough staff development where you are looking at teaching writing, and the whole idea of writer's workshop and the kids having choice, it appeals to me so much.

For Melissa, the most important lesson she learned during the Summer Institute was what it felt like to "sit" in the writer's chair. The experience gave her an awareness of "just what it was like for my students to sit and write, to realize that is what it is like when we ask them to put themselves out there." This experience left her with more empathy

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for the students in her class who were more reluctant to share their writing or speak out in class, and she mentioned on several occasions that this was a lasting impression of her experiences.

Melissa also described the components of participant dialogue and critical reflection as important to her experiences with the SRWP. She valued the time given to talk with other members of the learning community, to share and critique writing and teaching demonstrations, and to talk about best practices for writing instruction.

> This is just my third year of teaching, and I feel like I've gained so much information, and one thing I've struggled with is, I don't know what to do with all of it. I've got bits and pieces of stuff all over, and it's just trying to make those connections and put it all together.

The discussion groups and talk time woven into the Summer Institute experience was important for her in being able to process all that she was learning and consider ways to implement these new ideas into her own classroom.

Melissa also noted that the Summer Institute's model had more time than other professional development activities in which she had participated, and this component of time was also meaningful to her learning experiences. Time to share, to consider new knowledge, and to think critically about her classroom plans were all part of her descriptions of this experience. "I think it was… we were together all day. There was opportunity to share things as they came up. I don't think [the Summer Institute] was an instance where I walked away saying, 'there's so much information,'" like she shared feeling after other professional development experiences that were more focused on transmission of knowledge. When describing other, less effective models of professional development, Melissa noted that a lack of time was part of this ineffectiveness.

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It's always so rushed. A lot of times, you will walk into a professional development, and they will say, we are supposed to be there until three, but we're going to try and get you out of here by one today. There is a part of you that's like, that's good because I have 8,000 things to do, but when you leave, you're like, what just happened there?

Melissa shared that the community of practice that emerged among the Summer Institute participants was an important component to the effectiveness of the experience. "It was good to be with a group of people that I felt like I could say what I wanted, read what I wrote. I think it was just more of a support system than it was anything else." Melissa shared that there were moments during the Summer Institute, though, that she felt less of a connection to the community of practice, moments of vulnerability. When I asked her if she thought there were changes that could be made to the Writing Project model that would have helped her feel more a part of the community, she said,

It's hard to describe. It was great, it was a great experience, don't get me wrong. I kind of felt like, from a personal standpoint, it was me looking in, not really feeling a part of things necessarily. Just feeling a little bit like an outsider. I don't know if that was just me, but I typically don't feel that way in situations. Like I said, it was just moments, not all the way throughout.

For Melissa, the community was an important aspect of her experience in both supportive and constraining ways.

Melissa's experiences with professional development stem from her desire to continually gain more content and pedagogical knowledge. She valued the professional development opportunities offered by both her district and campus administrators and reported that she felt she had something to learn from all professional development opportunities. When she attended mandatory ELL training for her district, she found ways to connect the practices being shared to the needs of her struggling readers, and

valued that learning opportunity. For Melissa, her definition of effective professional development includes many of the components she experienced from the Summer Institute. She described effective professional development as having,

> …modeling, because so much, you go to these professional development sessions and it sounds really good, but you have had time seeing it in your head how this should look in the classroom. So, I think modeling, kind of like what we did in the Summer Institute, doing what you would expect your kids to do every day yourself.

She also added that professional development had to include a rationale for the methods and practices being used. She wanted to know *why* practices were good for her students, not just how to use them.

Melissa has struggled to implement much of what she learned from her SRWP experiences into her classroom. She describes the most confounding factor to her implementation efforts as a lack of support from other people but also admits that she left the Summer Institute with big questions about how to implement writing workshop into a high school classroom. "The only thing that [the Summer Institute's practices] conflicted with was just the issue of time. How I do this at the secondary level, how do I have writer's workshop but still implement everything I need to implement?" She noted that, if she had more collegial support from her departmental peers to help her work through some of these curricular issues, she might be able to find a solution that would allow for greater implementation. "They don't get it, they don't understand it," she said when discussing her colleagues. For Melissa, then, this lack of support served to deter her implementation efforts as a whole.

Laura

Laura's motivations for the attending the Summer Institute were two-fold. She

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admitted, "The first thing that pulled me in was the six-hour credit." Once she applied, though,

> … the interview process really seemed to show me how important it was. The other people who were there seemed to really get something out of it. So, I thought, if they got something out of it, then I will get something out of it.

Laura also shared in nearly every interview that the needs of her students fueled her choices in professional learning opportunities. "I was feeling kind of in a plateau. I needed to get some ideas and get some things to help fix this area, fix that area. And reflection was what drove me to really analyze writing workshop," she reported when discussing how she spends time each spring asking herself, "What do I want to spend time learning about this summer so that I am more prepared for this next year?"

For Laura, her perceptions of the writing project as an effective model for professional development related first to the teaching methods used and modeled throughout the Institute. "Not only were the practices modeled, but we were thinking about how to take it to our class, we were working on ourselves as a learner, not only as a teacher but as a learner and a writer." Over the course our interviews, she consistently described her perceptions of the Summer Institute as an active learning environment, one that met her need for movement, choice, and self-direction. For Laura, she was aware of her own personal learning style and required variety of presentation methods to sustain her interest and attention. "We were constantly moved, you know we didn't sit at the same space the whole time, we were moving from here to here," she said.

> I think the way the [the day] was sectioned was really good too, because you didn't have long enough to get bored with anything. You would do something, then do something else, then do something else. You would then have an hour to

work on your research. It wasn't everyone telling you what to do. It was self-driven, too.

Laura also described the community within the Summer Institute as important for her experiences, and this theme was seen throughout all of our interviews. "I just felt constantly supported, given help, assistance," she said. "We were in a community and even our leaders were a part of the community. They were doing everything with us."

> If I felt that I didn't have anything or I needed something, there was always someone there ready to do it with you. I made a lot of friends, we had a good time, we had fun. [The community] was extremely important because, not only was I feeling supported and helped through all of the activities, all of the tasks, all of the research, which I was terribly nervous about, but also I never was around anyone to bring that negative aspect of it. That community was very positive.

For Laura, her SRWP experiences have greatly influenced how she teaches, and this influence has continued even two year beyond her participation in the Summer Institute. She came to the Institute with a desire to better understand how to implement writer's workshop, and she embraced all that she learned from her fellow Institute participants and leaders. "Next year, I'll probably think of even more ways to be using writing workshop even more than I am now," and her efforts to improve writing have led to increased focus on reading instruction, as well. She now utilizes a reader's workshop model similar to the writer's workshop model and feels her experiences with SRWP gave her much of the knowledge and skills she needed to make this work in her classroom.

Laura's perceptions of effective professional development overall were echoed in her descriptions of the SRWP Summer Institute, it was difficult to determine when she was describing her SRWP experiences specifically or speaking more generally about effective professional development. For Laura, effective professional development is

"definitely interactive," allowing time for participants to talk with one another and experience the teaching strategy as a learner.

> If it's not modeling good teaching practices, if they are standing up there and lecturing to you, and they are telling you all of the things that you are supposed to be doing with your students and you're not actually seeing those things… then how are you supposed to take it back to your class?

Laura described herself as "lucky. I'm able to use what I've learned," she said, and she feels this is in large part due to the support she has received from her grade-level colleagues and administrator. When describing her principal, Laura said, "She believes that better teachers are teachers who are learning." For Laura this support and encouragement has motivated her to continue to pursue professional development opportunities and has allowed her to feel supported in making changes to improve her instructional choices. Laura's colleagues are also a source of support. "Now that I've had a team where we work so cohesively together, it's so important." Her descriptions of her experiences with her teammates were present in every interview and obviously an important component to Laura's implementation efforts.

Debbie

Debbie participated in the SRWP Summer Institute out of motivation to improve her practices related to writer's workshop. As she related, after many professional development experiences about the writing process and the use of writer's workshop, "I still have never felt that I got the writing the way that I got the reading. I knew that, for all the training that I had had, I wasn't writing enough with my kids."

Debbie's perceptions and experiences with the work of the SRWP were based in large part on her own identity as a writer. "When I went through the writing project, one of the best things they did for me was make me feel like I could be a writer. Or not that I

could be, but that I already was one." Throughout our interviews, she said several times that she had always seen herself as a reader but not as a writer. She understood the process of reading more clearly, and this allowed her to be able to articulate this to her students more effectively. Because she did not consider herself a writer, she felt her writing instruction needed improvement. She reported that her own identity as a writer was greatly bolstered due to her experiences in the Summer Institute.

It is also worth noting that, after her experiences with the Summer Institute, Debbie began writing an online column, or blog, for a publication aimed at reading teachers. After several months of positive reader support and comments, she was approached by two different publishing companies about writing a book for teachers recounting her teaching methods. She has since written the book and it will be published next year. Her transformation from someone who said, "writing was something that was still outside of me," to someone who has, through writing, turned her practice into professional assistance for other teachers is an important note to her story. When discussing what she had learned from the experience of writing a book, she said,

> I have probably learned more about myself as a teacher, because first off I had all of these ideas about why I did things from all of the things that I read, but I couldn't really verbalize to you sometimes why I felt them, why they worked. How to explain to someone else what you do, you have to have understanding of it yourself. It's probably the most reflective process I've ever had, because you can't just say, 'read with your kids.' You've got to say why that works and how it works, and what it looks like when you do it. I just feel more aware.

Debbie's perceptions of the SRWP as an effective model of professional development were also connected to her need for a different model of professional development that would allow her to experience writing and the learning of writing as her students experienced it. "Having long periods of time to talk, to write, to read, and

the idea that I don't think I give my kids enough time to do that in writer's workshop."

Her experiences within the Summer Institute allowed her to become a writer, to feel

more comfortable as a writer, and to learn more about the writing process as a student.

> So, the idea that the Institute was a place that we went and actually lived it every day. And I thought, 'I'm going to see it. I'm going to get it this time.' Because, I have background knowledge, but I just wasn't implementing it to the degree that I thought I should.

> For her, the transactional learning that took place in the Institute, along with the

focus on participant writing, was beneficial to her overall learning experience. She

elaborated on this point when she said, "I got a better understanding of what it was that

kids were going through during that process. And also, what I needed to offer [my

students]."

> Debbie also discussed the people in the learning community and their influence

on her experiences during the Summer Institute. She continually shared perceptions

and experiences of colleagues, administrators, and Writing Project peers who were both

supportive and constraining to her efforts to learn professionally and improve her

practice.

> I think the writing project saves teachers because we feel isolated in our own little worlds, where we are struggling for various reasons, lack of collegial support or lack of knowledge, lack of resolve in our practices. The project either teaches you about methods that you don't know or they validate the ones that you do know and let you know that you are not alone.

When discussing the community of practice that evolved during her experience, as well

as her motivations for attending the Summer Institute, she said, "National Writing

Project gave me an avenue into people that could be a network, of colleagues that were

like-minded and that were enthusiastic about some of the same things that I was." She

added,

I think I needed a group that was at the same level. In a way, they were all in the same place in their teaching, in that they were looking for something. And at a high level of self-exploration and work on their own part to improve their own teaching, which I think is not that common. It's like, well what feeds you when you are at that level if maybe the people at your campus aren't necessarily there?

Her appreciation for this community of support was not limited to the time spent together during the Summer Institute. "I love to go to those meetings, still, because it's almost like a reunion of other like-minded people. I am very attached to a lot of people there still, because they are my peer group," she said when talking about other Teaching Fellows.

The SRWP's use of follow-up meetings during the school year was also described as important to her experiences. Her perceptions surrounding the continuation of learning after the Summer Institute were very positive and seemed to be very important to her overall experience, "because that continuity, that follow-up… where people are coming back together and continuing to have conversations," helped her to continue her learning experience throughout the school year.

For Debbie, the SRWP was influential in changing her teaching practices. While she admitted that much of the work of the SRWP simply reaffirmed her own beliefs about good teaching, she was able to learn new models and methods that were consistent with her beliefs, and because she also experienced these as a learner, she understood how to implement them in the classroom. She revealed that, because of her experiences with the SRWP, she now gives her students more time to talk about their writing, more time to write, more experiences with writing across the curriculum, and more opportunities to share their writing with one another and her. Prior to her Summer Institute experiences, she said, "I also think I spent too much time assigning writing, like

it was all about getting a product done, and it wasn't as much about the process as it

should have been." She illustrated this point with an example that occurred while I was

observing in her class.

> Like today, when I was telling [student] that she could just drop those pieces that she wasn't ready to publish yet, I would have never done that before. Because, it would have been like, 'well, you better get them done,' or 'what can I do to help you?' But now, I recognize that she might never publish those. It's not a waste of time to let them write something that never gets published. It's more about the process than it is about the product. I grade it differently now, because that's how I see it.

Throughout our conversations, it became apparent that, while the SRWP had

indeed been an effective professional development experience for Debbie, there were

other learning experiences that had shaped her philosophy and practice. She described

herself as a self-directed learner and always eager to learn something new that would

benefit her teaching and her students' learning. She discussed how, for her,

professional development opportunities often served only as a catalyst for her own

independent learning.

> I don't know if I was just very highly motivated, and then I also went back and read [the presenters] books on a topic. It wasn't like I just let it end with the staff development presentation. I had to do more with it, and try things in my classroom before I was able to internalize that learning.

For Debbie, reading the works of experts in reading and writing instruction,

implementing new ideas for herself, and adapting those ideas to meet her own teaching

philosophy and the needs of her students was the basis for her professional learning

style. When describing these presentations and how she connects with the experience,

she said it was "not just going to the staff development presentation, but taking what

they've said and using it to pique my interest enough in a topic that I would seek out

additional learning for myself."

Debbie also described book studies, organized by her campus principal, and other professional learning community activities on her campus that have been influential in improving her practice. When discussing these campus-wide activities, she named her principal as important to the process as a whole. "[Principal] is really big on unpacking your teaching practices, and looking at them, and making decisions that are focused on learning." This meshed well with Debbie's ideas about professional learning and matched her own learning needs.

Debbie is currently working on a master's degree in reading education, and she also described the courses related to her degree as important learning experiences for her.

> [Professor] helped me see that you really need to have pedagogical legs to stand on. You are allowed to have whatever belief system you have, but do you have a research basis to back it up? When, you know this as a teacher, when you encounter struggle with specific kids, if you don't have a philosophy to hold on to that is constant, then you change.

Finally, Debbie related to me that one important factor in her professional growth was her decision to change campuses the year prior to data collection. "I was a big fish in a small pond at my old school, and I could have gotten very mediocre. The environment did not feed me to grow." She mentioned this move as influential in her professional growth on more than one occasion, and while it was a difficult decision for her to leave that campus, "because I had a family there, and I had legacy kids, where I had taught their brothers and sisters," she nonetheless made this important move. She went on to add, "I made myself leave there because I could have been half the teacher that I am right now, and it would have been good enough." This indication of her own self-motivation to improve her practice, as well as her awareness of the influence others

have on her teaching, is an important factor in understanding Debbie's story of professional growth.

As a teacher who obviously embraces professional learning in all forms, and a teacher who continually strives to improve her practice, I wanted to know, what did she believe were the characteristics of effective professional development?

> I think it can't be sit and get. I think people actually need to live, they need to do it, they need to make something, they need to try and figure it out for themselves. If you're trying to teach reading, maybe they need to spend some of the time reading, some of the time writing, some of the time actually engaged in some of these activities, not just sitting there flipping through PowerPoint handouts.

She felt her experiences with the SRWP were a good example of this type of active learning environment. When I asked her about the other factors she considered to be important to effective professional development, she described the need for follow-up or continuity to sustain her implementation efforts and reinforce her commitment to change efforts. Again, the SRWP experience was an effective example for her to use to illustrate this.

> I think those meetings and the follow-up with the Teaching Fellows; I think that's been vital. I'm still getting back with those colleagues, we're still reflecting, we're still talking. And professional learning communities, that's what they tell you to do, is to continue to come back and reflect and discuss. Because sit and get professional development, where it's a one-shot deal, nobody's ever asked to come back and actually reflect on what they've learned and how they are applying it doesn't work. It doesn't work. People will look for the worksheets that they can copy, or the cute activity, and the rest of it goes in a binder or a file folder.

Debbie was able to identify and describe many factors that influenced her own instructional choices, and just like her perceptions of the learning experience, many of these factors centered on the people with whom she interacts in her role as a teacher. This included her administrators, grade-level colleagues, and other peers on her

campus. Peers were her first source of professional growth and motivational influence. "Only ever thinking about your own teaching and your own ideas, I don't think that's healthy for a teacher," she said, when discussing her desire to learn from and work collaboratively with her campus peers. She admitted that her relationships with others on her campus have not always been positive but also went on to say that this was a good thing for her in some ways. "We learn when there's struggle, we learn when there is dissonance, we learn when there is disequilibrium. We don't learn when it's all going great and wonderful."

Debbie felt that meeting the demands of her district's curriculum was often a challenge in light of the needs of her students. She expressed concern that too little time was devoted in the curriculum documents to the necessary knowledge and skills her students needed to be successful, and she therefore spent a great deal of energy on finding the best fit between her own classroom goals and the aims of the curriculum. "I think that there is a lack of knowledge of best practices in reading and writing reflected in those documents," she said when referring to her grade-level curriculum. "How can I still teach my class the way that I want to within the constraints of that?" she added. This struggle for balance was a consistent for Debbie when discussing the factors that affected her instructional decision-making.

These four vignettes offer insight into the lived experiences of the four participants related to their professional development experiences and implementation efforts. The next section will focus on describing and elucidating the larger analytic themes that emerged from the data related to the research questions.

Discussion of the Analytic Themes

Data analysis pointed to three themes related to the research questions used in this

research study:

(1) How do teachers perceive and describe their experiences of participating in professional development, such as the National Writing Project?

(2) How do teachers perceive and describe the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development?

The first two themes, which address the first research question, have to do with the

teachers' perceptions of their professional development experiences. These teachers

emphasize that:

- Effective professional development must have a supportive context and meaningful purpose to support professional learning.

- Learning experiences are greatly affected by interpersonal relationships and opportunities for social learning.

The final theme, which addresses the second research question, illustrates that these

teachers understand that:

- Implementation efforts are influenced by multiple sources, including those beyond the direct control of the teacher.

The three themes, more thoroughly defined and illustrated below, are

represented as they relate to participants' reported experiences and perceptions of

professional development and implementation efforts. For the purposes of this

discussion, descriptions and perceptions of activities related to SRWP serve as an

example of professional development.

The emphasis in the following discussion of these results is on allowing the

participants' descriptions and perceptions to speak for themselves by way of "thick

description" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Geertz, 1983). While the analytic themes are discussed and defined, quotations from interviews are used to illustrate the complexity and power of each theme and are meant to provide the reader with a complete narrative of the subject matter. When relevant, observational data regarding the practices of the Summer Institute, as well as the practices of the teachers in their own classrooms, are included to strengthen the analytic structure and to provide a complete narrative of the phenomena under investigation. In some instances, quotations from participants interviews included in the vignettes are also used in this section as they illustrate or provide necessary clarity to the broader analytic themes of the study.

The research study of participants' experiences with professional development, both on a common level, the SRWP Summer Institute, and an independent level serves to document a broad range of experiences with the phenomenon of professional development activities. Table 4 summarizes these major themes as well as the sub-themes for each that will be discussed below.

Table 4

Map of analytic themes

Question 1: How do teachers perceive and describe their experiences of participating in professional development, such as the National Writing Project?	
Theme 1: Effective professional development must have a supportive context and meaningful purpose.	• Meeting the Physical and Cognitive Needs of Participants • Improved Practice and Continued Learning • Improved Content Knowledge and Pedagogy • Choice • Time and Ownership • Sustained Learning • Accountability

(table continues)

Table 4 (*continued*).

Question 1 (*continued*)	
Theme 2: Learning experiences are greatly affected by interpersonal relationships and opportunities for social learning.	• Taking risks in the learning environment • Shared Beliefs in the Community of Practice • Support Structures in the Community of Practice • The Involvement of the Leaders in the Community of Practice • Dialogue as a tool for learning • Sharing of Best Practices
Question 2: How do teachers perceive and describe the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development?	
Theme 3: Implementation efforts are influenced by multiple sources, including those beyond the direct control of the teacher.	• Collegial Support • Administrator Support • Curriculum and Standardized Testing • Time

Meaningful Context and Purpose

Theme 1: Effective professional development must have a supportive context and meaningful purpose to support professional learning and sustained implementation efforts.

In order for professional development to be perceived as effective, it must meet the learning needs of the participants. Learner needs included factors related to meeting the participants' physical needs. The content and presentation methods must be relevant to the participants' current learning style, the needs of their students, and their goals as professional educators. As learners, or consumers of knowledge, participants were able to identify their own learning styles as well as the factors of professional development that assisted them most as learners. In meeting the needs of the

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participants as learners, the effective practices of professional development were able to enhance the learning experience and affect participants' satisfaction.

Context: Meeting the Physical and Cognitive Needs of Participants

First, learner needs included not only content and pedagogical factors, but also included factors related to meeting the participants' physical needs. This created a context in which learning could more easily occur. In having their physical needs met, participants felt valued and were given permission, as Andrea stated, to "make yourself at home." The SRWP's attention to these needs was viewed by all as effective. Andrea went on to discuss how the Summer Institute encouraged participants to bring blankets, water bottles, and other personal items to the learning environment, and this simple act, "creates that sense of permission for physical comfort that helps people relax and connect." Laura echoed this sentiment, adding that, in the Summer Institute, "All of our needs were being met; we knew when we were eating, all of those little bitty things that good teachers are supposed to be doing," and that made her feel comfortable. While creating this physical context for learning, SRWP directors also created an environment in which learners felt they could focus on meeting needs other than the simple, physical needs all humans have.

Second, as learners, or consumers of knowledge, participants were able to identify their own learning styles as well as the components of professional development that assisted them most as learners. In meeting the needs of the participants as learners, the effective practices of professional development were able to enhance the learning experience and affect participants' satisfaction. Laura's style for learning was very kinesthetic, and she was able to learn effectively during the Summer

Institute because, "We were constantly moved, you know we didn't sit at the same space the whole time." This ability to move throughout her day was important to the learning experience. Other participants reported that the Summer Institute matched their own learning styles. "I respond to professional development that is well-paced and is challenging," stated Andrea when asked what makes professional development effective. For her, the Summer Institute challenged her and met her own learning style. She went on to describe her frustration with other professional development experiences that were not effective in meeting her learning style.

> I think that sometimes, for me, they go over stuff I already know and I want it to move faster. I appreciate someone who really asks me to show up, to bring my A-game, who challenges me and asks me to apply and think and work.- Andrea

As learners in professional development, participants felt they also benefited from active participation in learning experiences rather than experiences based on the passive transmission of knowledge and skills. Those learning experiences they described as effective, including the Summer Institute, were defined by a component of active involvement as a learner and teacher. Laura described this when she said, "Just having the opportunity to practice what you are learning, having the opportunity to see the results of, if I am doing this in my classroom, this is what I am more than likely going to get." She later described her overall impression of participatory learning in professional development.

> I can't tell you the difference that it's made when I've tried to do something that I learned in a workshop and I didn't really get a chance to interactively do it and follow along with it. When I am trying to do it with my students, I've got to get my notes back out, I've got to go through things.- Laura

Other participants reported that the SRWP experience allowed them to be interactive participants in their own learning, formulating their own learning goals and

working independently throughout the Institute to meet those goals in different ways. The Summer Institute's daily activities allowed time, on a regular basis, for participants to investigate educational research and theory related to action research questions, which were formulated by each participant to help solve problems they see in their own classrooms. The time given by the Institute's directors was used by participants in many ways to help them formulate possible solutions and plans for action for their own classrooms. When discussing this part of the Institute experience, Laura said, "We were given the information but we had time to talk about it; we had time to research on our own and look things up." This allowed participants to feel that their time within the learning experience was meaningful to their classroom context and provided a match to their own purposes for learning. Rather than relying on professional development designers to externally impose the purposes for learning, these participants were able to internally formulate a rationale for the learning environment, and they were given the necessary time to investigate these needs on a deeper level.

Finally, the SRWP Summer Institute provided time for participants to experience learning as a student as well as a teacher. Debbie described this aspect of the Summer Institute when she talked about her motivation for participating. "The idea that the Institute was a place that we went and actually lived it every day, and, I thought, 'I'm going to see it. I'm going to get it this time.'" Melissa agreed, adding that her most positive memories of the Institute included,

> Just having the opportunity to sit there in that writer's chair, so to speak. I think it was good for me to feel vulnerable, because that kind of helped me get in touch with kids who maybe don't speak out as much, maybe they feel the same way a little bit.- Melissa

Purpose: Improved Practice and Continued Learning

One of the qualities all participants reported as important to effective teaching was the need for teachers to also be life-long learners. Melissa articulated this idea well. "Some things work better than others, and that's just part of education. We are constantly learning and having to change." In order for teachers to continue to learn, therefore, they must find educational opportunities, such as the SRWP, that allow them to continue to grow and improve their practice. The participants described the need for professional development to match their own classroom goals and be relevant to the needs of their students.

First, effective learning environments must help them to develop knowledge and skills they could apply in their own classrooms. "I am always excited if I feel like I'm going to learn something that is going to help my classroom," said Melissa when discussing her motivation for participating in professional development. This sentiment was echoed by all of the participants as the number one reason they seek out professional development opportunities. This motivation to continue to learn to improve teaching practice was discussed by Debbie when she related her experiences with the other people who participated in the Summer Institute. "They were all in the same place in their teaching, in that they were looking for something, and also willing to be at a high level of self-exploration and work on their own part to improve their own teaching," she reported about the other Teaching Fellows. Debbie went on to further illustrate her own learning motivations by describing her own fears about teaching. "I fear getting mediocre. That's one of the reasons I went to the Writing Institute. That sucking pool of mediocrity exists at every school, and it's alluring," she admitted.

Andrea's experience with the Summer Institute was affected by the context of her job as a literacy specialist, someone who coaches other teachers and acts as an agent for instructional improvement on her campus, bringing best practices to multiple classrooms. Throughout the Summer Institute, participants watch teaching demonstrations, led by Teacher Consultants for the NWP, university faculty, and teachers from the surrounding area. After each demonstration, participants discuss the overall effectiveness of these demonstrations with a response group of other Teaching Fellows and critique each demonstration on specific criteria. For Andrea, it was not only the content of these demonstrations, but the critical reflection process after each demonstration that was applicable to her teaching position.

> I really liked the teaching demonstrations, being exposed to the different ideas was good, but perhaps equally, I really enjoyed being repeatedly exposed to teaching and being asked to look at it critically. I think it just really helped to focus my eyesight, so to speak, my lens that I look through. It gave me more of a language to use around evaluating. That was really great.- Andrea

Purpose: Improved Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Because the SRWP's main emphasis is on the teaching of writing, one main learning goal, identified by all participants, was to improve their own writing skills in addition to improving their ability to teach writing. This change in their own identities as writers, as consumers of knowledge, was seen as significant to how they viewed the SRWP as an effective model of professional development. It is therefore important that learning experiences aimed at improving practices in a content area should have as one of its goals the improvement of participants' knowledge and skills in that specific area. Debbie reported that the Summer Institute did not so much change her beliefs about writing but instead helped bolster her identity as a writer.

So, when I went through the writing project, one of the best things they did for me was make me feel like I could be a writer. Or not that I could be, but that I already was one, but that there were a lot of hang ups I had about it and if I could just peel those away, I was already a writer. - Debbie

Other participants reported the importance of the Summer Institute in increasing their knowledge about best writing practices, how to be better writers themselves, and how to better engage their students in effective writing instruction. Andrea reported that her experience with the Summer Institute "gave me an expanded sense that writing doesn't have to look one way. The writing institute was great for helping me see that mentor texts are really okay to use." She went on to add, "Well, one of the things that the writing project really did for me was to stretch my means of expression in writing," thus communicating how she was able to not only grow as a teacher of writing but also as a writer herself. Laura also described the changes she experienced in herself as a writer. When talking about herself as a writer before the Summer Institute, she reported, "I was an academic writer. I was a writer for a purpose. If I had a purpose, I would write." After this experience, she reported, "Now, I've got ideas for [writing]. I'm trying to journal more. On top of that, I'm still working on the professional writing."

The need for these participants to find learning opportunities that were meaningful in context and purpose often served as their motivation for applying to the Summer Institute. Laura notes that each year she reflects on her successes and failures in the classroom and asks herself, "What do I want to do differently next year? What do I want to spend time learning about this summer so that I am more prepared for this next year?" This type of reflection led her to apply to and attend the SRWP Summer Institute three years ago. Debbie's motivation was dissatisfaction with previous learning experiences that did not help her to effectively implement writer's workshop in her

classroom. She reported, "I thought, I need a different learning opportunity, because sit and get of [learning about] writer's workshop, even reading all of the books and everything" was not enough to change her teaching practices. In this way, her reference to more traditional models of professional development adds another dimension to the importance of meaningful context and purpose. Finally, Andrea's reflection on why she chose to apply to the Summer Institute further illustrates this theme. "It seemed to promise a more collaborative experience. And it promised meaningful writing, or writing within a meaningful context," she stated.

Illustrations of Effective Professional Development Practices Related to Theme 1

The above descriptions discuss the reported perceptions and experiences of participants related to the first analytic theme, effective professional development must have a supportive context and meaningful purpose to support professional learning and sustained implementation efforts. Next, the participants' descriptions and experiences are used to illustrate the practices of effective professional development that embody this theme.

Choice

Professional development was viewed by the participants as needing a certain amount of flexibility, or choice, in order to be effective. Participants felt that being given choice in their learning goals enabled them to determine for themselves what they needed to know and how they wanted to learn. As Melissa stated, "Teachers tend to know, this is what I need, this is what I don't need." When discussing the NWP's model for professional development, and the types of choice that are given to teachers who participate, Debbie summarized her experience by saying,

I feel like that, if I went down a road that I wasn't enjoying, well then I could just get off of it. That was my choice. It wasn't something outside of me. Considering the level of choice that we had, I think that if you take away less from the experience than what you did, it may be because of your choices, not because of the program design. – Debbie

All participants expressed a belief that student choice was important to their own teaching philosophies, and this is mirrored in the way each of them characterized effective professional development as offering choice and flexibility. This choice allowed for learning to become meaningful to the learner because each learner's needs were met on many levels and could be customized for each person.

Time and Ownership

Time was also revealed as a factor that was important to professional learning. Participants reported that the length of the Summer Institute, and other effective professional development activities in which they had participated, was an essential criterion for its overall effectiveness in helping them achieve transformational learning. Within this pattern, though, time is viewed as a vehicle for meaning-making and placing learning in context, allowing participants the opportunity to connect their learning to previous knowledge, skills, and beliefs as well as to consider how to implement new knowledge, skills, and beliefs in their classrooms. When learning opportunities are lengthy and in-depth, Melissa noted, "then you have more of an opportunity to really engage in it and really reflect on it," and time acts as a learning tool for processing new learning. Each participant, on multiple occasions, referred to and described the "traditional" model of professional development with words such as *one-shot*, *sit and get*, *workshop*, and *training*. These singular events, often disconnected to their current classroom needs or learning goals, were often ineffective in transforming their

classroom practices, and they were seen as single events rather than a process in which teachers should engage.

Time and the earlier construct of choice can also be viewed as important in allowing participants to take ownership of or investment in new knowledge and skills. This ownership can potentially lead to greater implementation in the classroom if teachers have been given the necessary time to process learning, integrate it into existing schema, and experience a shift in beliefs that must accompany true improvement efforts. When discussing why other teachers on her campus have not implemented writer's workshop in their classrooms, despite extensive professional development from her district, Debbie theorized, "they don't feel strongly enough about it, it's not a part of their paradigm, and so the first time they try it and have a problem, it's out the window." This statement sheds light on the importance of participant ownership in professional development goals as a necessary component to transforming beliefs and actions in teaching.

Sustained Learning

Participants acknowledged that part of the effectiveness of the NWP model were the monthly meetings, where the community of learners gathered regularly after the Summer Institute to share ideas about best practices and talk about their own experiences. These activities were important to the participants' overall satisfaction with and perception of the NWP professional development model. This reconnection with their peers was described by most as invigorating and rejuvenating. Debbie's words describe this sentiment best.

> I think those meetings and the follow-up with the Teaching Fellows- I think that's been vital. All year long, I've continued to be fed by the Writing Project. They've

still been impacting my growth as a teacher almost a year after I left, because I'm still getting back with those colleagues, we're still reflecting, we're still talking.-Debbie

The need for this type of continuity, where teachers are asked to revisit what they learned, examine how their practices have changed based on their new learning, and most importantly, to evaluate the impact of these changes on their students' performance, is a component of reflective practice and informed instructional decision-making that is important in meeting the short- and long-term goals of these teachers. Therefore, professional development that is lengthy and sustained over time provides an opportunity for meaningful context and purpose to emerge and for teachers to engage in thought about their own practices and beliefs. This type of sustained learning effort was viewed by participants as important in their overall ability to implement change in their classrooms. Andrea noted, "You cannot ask someone to sustain a change without the support and the feedback and the scaffolding. It's impossible."

Participants described professional development experiences that viewed learning as an event, not a process, and offered little or no follow-through. During these experiences, participants did not feel supported in their efforts to improve their teaching nor did they have the necessary supports to maintain change in light of barriers and constraints. Therefore, consistent follow-through was seen as an important component to effective learning. As Melissa noted, when discussing ineffective methods for professional learning, "Most other professional developments, you leave it and, you may mention it to somebody, but I never get an email that says, 'How is this going for you?' There's not ever that follow-up."

Accountability

The NWP model, with the Summer Institute as its core learning experience and monthly meetings to provide feedback and scaffolding to participants, can also help teachers feel accountable for their own instructional improvement efforts on their campuses. By asking participants to "come back and actually reflect on what they've learned and how they are applying it," said Debbie, is an important component in holding participants accountable to themselves and one another. The opportunity for regular discussion, for Andrea, "provides the structure and it provides the accountability that I think you have to have in order to have that sustained dialogue and sustained growth. Those check points." While there is an assumption that all participants will implement changes based on what they learn in professional development, that action is not always a given.

Within the first identified theme of meaningful context and purpose, the participants experienced and described multiple dimensions of the learning experience and factors that affect learning that contribute to meaning and purpose. These include context and purpose that meets their needs as learners, their roles as teachers, and their content-area needs. They were also able to describe those factors that were most beneficial in creating a meaningful learning environment. The second theme, discussed in the next section, is connected to this meaningful environment and, in particular, how the people involved in the learning experience impact professional learning.

Interpersonal Relationships

Theme 2: Learning experiences and implementation efforts are greatly affected by interpersonal relationships and opportunities for social learning.

The second theme, which focuses on the importance of interpersonal relationships within the professional learning, cannot be separated from the theme previously discussed related to meaningful context and purpose. Indeed, the interpersonal relationships these teachers consider valuable and necessary are another, much deeper learning tool for assisting the participants in their professional learning. To put it simply, these relationships are not separate from the learning and working experience but are a large component of them. However, this theme is discussed separately at this point because, I believe, the construct of interpersonal relationships has, in itself, multiple dimensions and characteristics that are important to consider when discussing professional development and how teachers implement new knowledge and skills within their classrooms.

Within the context of the learning experience, interpersonal relationships were viewed as a necessary component to participants' overall satisfaction with professional development activities. Much like a community of practice discussed in the review of the literature, participants described the group dynamics and relationships present during their SRWP experience an integral part of their growth as educators. Participants described the influence of the community of practice in many ways, all of which were positive and reinforced their learning and satisfaction with their SRWP experience.

Taking risks in the learning environment

When discussing the community of practice present during the Summer Institute, participants often mentioned words such as *family*, *relationships*, *risk*, and *safety* when describing the people with whom they participated. The community of practice was a network of relationships that created an "atmosphere in which you can risk, invest

yourself in something else, try something out, get different perspectives on your writing,"

according to Andrea. All of the participants agreed that this community building was

important and that feeling connected to other participants was not something they

regularly experienced in professional development. Andrea went on to say,

> It was a treat to get to become a family and develop relationships with people and become connected over time. When I think back on the institute, the gifts that I take from it are the people I met, as well as having been a part of this living community. It gives me a model for what I can try to create in another place.

Most of the participants reported the community as a safe and nurturing

environment. As Laura described her experience, "I never was around anyone to bring

that negative aspect" to the learning experience, adding "that community was very

positive. This positive atmosphere was beneficial to her learning. Not all participants,

though, felt completely safe within the community during the Summer Institute. These

feelings were described by only one participant but are important when thinking about

the impact of a community of practice on participants' perceptions of the experience.

Melissa said,

> I had moments where I felt safe and moments where I did not. I don't know if that was just me, I don't want that to reflect on anybody else. But I just had moments where I felt extremely vulnerable. That I didn't expect to feel, but then I had moments where I felt very safe. It just fluctuated.

The feeling of vulnerability Melissa described is important to her overall

satisfaction with her experience because it provided her with a concrete experience for

helping to understand her students' experiences. She related her own experiences to

how her own students feel in the classroom, saying the experience helped her develop

an "awareness of just what it is like for my students to sit and write. To realize that is

what it is like when [teachers] ask them to put themselves out there." She reported that

her vulnerability as a learner gave her empathy as a teacher.

Shared Beliefs in the Community of Practice

Within the context of this community of practice, it was important to participants

that the other members of the community understood them and shared common beliefs

about teaching, an important aspect of a shared culture. It was not as important that the

other members of the community held exactly the same beliefs, or that there was

agreement about all issues. As Andrea stated, "It wasn't different beliefs, but maybe the

evolution of beliefs. Different places on the continuum." More importantly, it was noted

that it was each person's desire to improve her practice and learn from one another that

defined the community. "I think, if you are not in an environment where you have

colleagues that are going to feed you, then you have to find some," Debbie said, when

discussing her own motivations for attending the Summer Institute. She needed a

different peer group to support her, and in the SRWP she was able to find such a group.

Support Structures in the Community of Practice

The purpose of the relationships within the context of the learning environment

were varied but often described as *supports* or *a network* that assisted participants in

their growth. Debbie described the network of "colleagues that were like-minded and

that were enthusiastic about some of the same things that I was" as one reason she

chose to participate in the Summer Institute. Many participants in professional

development, including the SRWP, seek out professional development that will connect

them with people outside of their own schools who share similar interests or goals, or

because, as Debbie added, "We feel isolated in our own little worlds, where we are

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struggling for various reasons- lack of collegial support or lack of knowledge, lack of

resolve in our practices. [The community] lets you know that you are not alone."

The daily activities of the Summer Institute are designed to allow participants to

share their writing and get to know one another over time. One such activity, Author's

Chair, invites participants to share their personal writing with the group. Participants can

volunteer as often or infrequently as they like to share any type of writing with the whole

group. This practice begins on the first day of the Institute and continues each day

throughout the experience. All participants are also placed into small Writing Response

Groups, meeting several times per week to allow members to share works-in-progress

with one another and offer suggestions for revision. These works are often cultivated by

the writer into finished pieces, to be shared with the whole community through such

events as the weekly Read-Around, when each person in the community is expected to

share one piece of writing with the whole group. Thus, participants are asked to share

their personal writing in many ways and at many levels of comfort and to develop trust

in one another as they share a very personal process. These activities, then, become a

part of the cultural norms for the group as a whole.

The idea that Writing Project participants are part of a community of practice can

be further illustrated by participants' common need for or satisfaction with the

community of practice as a support group or network that helped them to accomplish

their learning goals. Various types of support were described, including cognitive and

emotional. Rather than just being a model of learning focused on knowledge or skills,

the NWP model creates a community that can assist participants in the affective

domain, or as Melissa said, "It was good to be with a group of people that I felt like I

could say what I wanted, read what I wrote. I think it was just more of a support system than it was anything else." Laura echoes these perceptions, and elaborates on her understanding of how the community supported her learning by providing, "Just constant support. I had never been in an environment where no one was judging me, I never felt unintelligent, or I'm just a second-grade teacher, or anything to make me feel down on myself."

Just as the interpersonal relationships can help to meet affective needs, they can also meet cognitive needs. The levels of support available from peers within the learning environment varied by need, but all participants felt they could rely on others within the community to assist them. When Laura described the moments when she felt unsure or needed help, she recalled, "there was always someone there ready to do it with me. I was feeling supported and helped through all of the activities, all of the tasks, all of the research, which I was terribly nervous about."

The Involvement of the Leaders in the Community of Practice

Another important aspect to the community of practice created during the SRWP was the involvement of the leaders in the community. Adult learners view themselves and facilitators as part of the same learning community, and the research participants elaborated on this theme in several ways. Adult learners, and teachers in particular, are often in need of guidance rather than instruction and require help in creating their own learning activities rather than simply following the learning activities designed by others. Participants' perceptions of effective professional development activities supported this claim from the review of the research.

The leaders of the SRWP Summer Institute are all university professors and

doctoral students, and they are all former classroom teachers. All of the participants

mentioned this group of leaders as important members of their community of practice.

Andrea described the leaders important to her as, "models of academic, accomplished

women who were also intelligent and kind and supportive and humble." Laura also

acknowledged the role of the leaders in the community as she thought about her

relationship with one of the leaders, a professor she had in an earlier class. "I had to

drop the 'Dr.' part of it, because we were in a community and even our leaders were a

part of the community," she said. Therefore, participants viewed the knowledge and

skills of participants and leaders as mutually beneficial.

As shown in the above sections, the function of the community within the learning

experience was described as important to all participants. Participating in learning with

others supported learners at many levels. Among these, as described next, was the role

of critical discourse as a tool for learning, a process that must, by definition, occur within

a community. Thus, the interpersonal relationships of professional development serve

as a learning tool for meeting participants' needs.

Dialogue as a tool for learning

Participation in dialogue with peers and instructors was described by all

participants as important to the overall effectiveness of professional development.

Critical dialogue, *reflective conversations*, and simple *talk time* were consistent patterns

in every participant's experience with effective professional development, including the

Summer Institute. Talk was described as being used in different ways and for different

purposes, including using talk as a cognitive tool that assisted the learners in making

connections and inspecting and formulating their own schema. Andrea described her

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need to talk as, "talking something out leads me to things I didn't know that I believed or didn't know that I knew or didn't know that I thought." This idea of talking as a metacognitive tool, in much the same way that writing can be viewed as a learning process and not a product, was revealed by the participants. Debbie added,

> You are able to process and retain more of what you are learning in a professional development training if you're actually getting to shape your understanding of it during the presentation, during the learning event, not something you are trying to unpack for yourself later, going, 'Is this what she meant?'

Effective learning environments, as Melissa noted, include "opportunities to talk in groups and offer feedback" for one another. Dialogue with others requires a learner to articulate his or her own thinking, formulate a cohesive understanding in order to articulate it to someone else, and be able to contrast his or her own views with others. Andrea agreed, adding, "For people to just talk it through and inspect the mental model they have about it, and spar, and understand their assumptions they have about it, I think it's critical." Therefore, participating in discourse during professional development can assist teachers in processing their learning and making deeper connections to their own prior understandings and experiences, as well as connecting to others' ideas.

Debbie further solidified this construct when talking about her own teaching methods. "It's like with students. Is your expectation that they sit quietly, pay attention to you, hang on your every word, and applaud politely at the end? Or, are you actually expecting some sort of conversation?" she said. Talk as a necessary tool for learning was viewed as important by all participants. Therefore, the combination of the community of practice and the opportunities for discourse created by professional development providers combine to meet the learning needs of the participants. "Giving

me time in which I can talk about what I have read or heard. I have to filter it through the whole brain-body-speech thing in order to learn," said Andrea.

Sharing of Best Practices

One of the central tenets of the Writing Project model is that of the importance of teachers teaching other teachers. Therefore, members of the community can assist one another by sharing best practices, offering suggestions to problems or questions, or sharing helpful resources and advice. Dialogue is seen as a tool for bringing teachers together to help one another, an important component for effective professional development, and one that cannot be accomplished in social isolation. Andrea, when discussing the need for teachers on her own campus to be involved in problem-solving discussions with administrators, noted, "I really think that, a lot of times [teachers] have their own answers, and time's not given to them to talk about it, and they aren't listened to. Maybe it's that the time and space need to be created for it." This insight can be extended to professional development as well, during which time and resources should be offered to allow teachers to work toward solving the problems that are most meaningful to themselves.

The theme of reflection and critical discourse can be examined as important in isolation, but when viewed in connection to the earlier themes of a community of practice and creating meaningful context and purpose, this factor gains more significance and complexity. As the participants have shared in this section, the engagement in discourse for multiple purposes and with many different people can assist teachers in getting more satisfaction and learning from professional development opportunities.

The perceptions and experiences of the participants revealed significant importance to the relationships each teacher experienced within the professional learning context. These relationships served as mediators for effective learning and, as is discussed in the next section, also as forces that affected participants' efforts at implementation. The final theme reveals the factors that participants reported as influential in their implementation efforts, factors that acted as supports and constraints to their efforts to implement their new learning in the classroom.

Forces that Impact Implementation

Theme 3: Implementation efforts are influenced by multiple sources, including those beyond the direct control of the teacher.

Once teachers have completed their participation in professional development, they must return to their own individual classrooms in order to implement what they have learned. As indicated in the earlier discussion of the first two themes, there are many factors that affect participants' efforts to implement the knowledge and skills acquired through professional development. Some of these include lack of sufficient time for learning and meaning-making during professional development experiences and lack of follow-up by professional development providers to provide the necessary support to participants, as revealed in the first two themes. In addition to these factors that impact participants' implementation efforts, there are also other factors that contributed to participants' perceptions and descriptions related to the third research question, how do teachers perceive and describe the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development? Participants' experiences revealed multiple sources of influence on each teacher's implementation efforts, including relationships with others

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on their campuses, the support of administrative personnel, curriculum and standardized testing, and time. These factors are outside of participants' control, in most cases, and are most likely to impact implementation efforts in the classroom.

Interpersonal Relationships on Participants' Campuses

While interpersonal relationships were a key component to participants' descriptions of effective professional development activities, they were also described as factors that either support or constrain participants' implementation efforts. The interpersonal relationships participants' had on their campuses, both with colleague and administrators, were reported as important to the continued learning process and supporting participants' efforts to implement new practices in their classrooms.

As one participant previously noted, teaching can feel very isolated, as each teacher goes into his or her own classroom and sets out to accomplish the goals necessary for each of the students within that particular class. It is only during planning and lunch periods, or before and after school, that teachers can talk with one another, share ideas, and act as supports for one another. Elementary teachers often have a common planning time for each grade level, while secondary teachers will often share this time with others in their own content area, but this is not always the case, and finding a common time to talk and share can be difficult, if not impossible.

Collegial support.

The need for collegial support becomes necessary, just as the previously mentioned characteristics related to sustained effort show, for teachers to be able to create and sustain change for themselves and others. Laura's experience with her own

team, who was supportive of her efforts and wished to learn from her, is a positive example of this construct in action.

> I would have said, a while back, I can do it on my own. It's nice to have [other teachers' support] but it's not something I have to have. Now that I've had a team where we work so cohesively together, it's so important. You feed off of your team. If your team is positive, you are more likely to be positive. If your team is done with things, they are worn down, then you are going to start feeling those things. It's really important that everyone contributes to their team, and I am very lucky to have that this year. – Laura

Laura was the one participant who felt that she was fully supported by her grade-level colleagues, and had been able to fully implement ideas obtained through the SRWP and other professional development opportunities. Her experience is not typical, and even she recognized that when she said, "I'm very lucky. I'm able to use what I've learned. Every time we meet [with the other SRWP teachers], I am shocked by the people who say they can't do what we're being taught."

Because of a lack of collegial support on their home campuses, most of the participants in the SRWP Summer Institute felt unable to implement the instructional changes they wanted upon returning to their classrooms. Those that felt supported by their teammates were able to make more substantive changes, and this support was portrayed as invaluable to their growth and continued learning. Melissa, when describing her implementation efforts, said "It's been really hard for me to bring back some of what I learned in writing project, like the writer's workshop model, into the school. I have received zilch support from the other teachers on my team." When asked why she thought others were so resistant to her ideas, she added, "They don't get it, they don't understand it. You have those other teachers that think, 'it's just one more thing' and they want to dismiss it." She described her experience with implementation

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as disappointing, noting that she continued to struggle with implementation of her new knowledge and skills throughout the school year.

The lack of collegial support was often mentioned as a factor in participants' motivation to participate in the SRWP's Summer Institute. These teachers felt constrained by the relationships they had with colleagues on their campus, and were motivated to find opportunities to form relationships with people that supported them. This theme, while closely related to that of the community of practice within effective professional development, highlights the importance of relationships not only within learning opportunities but outside of them as well. Teachers reported that the need to be understood, the need to help others and be helped by others, and the need for supportive relationships on their campuses, were important to their continued growth as professionals. As Debbie described her experience,

> I want to be with peers where I don't have to explain. It's almost like dating [laughs]. It's almost like you don't want to have to explain everything that person needs to know about you so that you can justify what you are doing. And with the Writing Institute, I didn't have to do that. They got that part, so we could just move on. We could grow. I wasn't having to explain myself.

Participants all recognized a characteristic among non-supportive colleagues as being *resistant to change*. This characteristic was recognized by participants as an important characteristic of those colleagues who did not support their improvement efforts or desire to change their instructional practices. Even though they themselves were not exhibiting this characteristic, the participants all worked closely with colleagues who did, and I asked participants to describe their understanding of this characteristic based on their experiences with resistant colleagues. Their responses, while varied, paint a portrait of the teacher who is *resistant to change* that permeates the schools in

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which these participants' worked. "I think it's hard to get people to change if they think what they're doing is working," said Debbie. She added, "Especially if anything sounds like it's going to be more work or more effort. Their perception is, 'I'm getting the job done doing half of what she is doing, so why would I want to do it?' It seems foolhardy." Melissa echoed this sentiment when discussing other resistant colleagues on her campus.

> I think part of it, it's understandable, for some people, they have been doing this for so long, how dare somebody come in and tell them how to do it differently? I've constantly got to keep reminding myself that it's important to move. – Melissa

When asked what she thinks causes resistance to change in other teachers, Andrea said, "Fear. One word. Fear. They don't understand the demands I have, they don't understand the way things are, they are asking for something I can't give." Her words seem to summarize the notion of *resistance to change* very effectively, particularly as it relates to the theme of the collegial support necessary to implement change in one's classroom. The participants all felt that they wanted to learn and grow as professionals, and all wanted to implement what they had learned in their own classrooms, but the resistance to change they met when discussing their ideas with their peers was an important factor in their own implementation patterns.

In all, these patterns related to collegial support show the importance of social interaction and peer support in implementation patterns for the participants, just as we earlier discovered the importance of these social connections within the actual learning process. While most teachers spend the majority of their days teaching alone, they nonetheless value the support and advice of their colleagues in the planning and reflection processes that help them to accomplish their instructional goals. And just as

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the support of their colleagues is a necessary component to successful implementation, so is the support of administrators.

Administrator support.

School and district administrators are the leaders of reform efforts aimed at improving student achievement. These initiatives are often supported by professional development aimed at helping teachers to understand and implement these improvement efforts. This type of professional development should include the above-mentioned characteristics if it is indeed expected to change teachers' practices and beliefs about teaching. The participants viewed the support of the administration as not only important but necessary for them to be successful in implementing change and continuing to grow as an educator.

One way in which administrators can be supportive of teachers' improvement efforts is by helping to create the sustained effort mentioned earlier. When professional development is viewed as something that is "given" during the week before school begins, and those ideas are never revisited and no opportunities for follow-up or discourse are created, then professional development misses its mark of affecting change on the classroom level. Debbie's experiences with positive support from her administrators included opportunities on her campus to participate in "professional learning communities on book studies, on leadership. We've read books together and talked about them." Her principal supports her efforts to continue to learn in order to make "decisions that are focused on learning," she said. Thus, the building administrators were not only supporting her learning outside of campus but creating

new opportunities within the campus. This leadership characteristic kept Debbie motivated in her own quest for professional growth.

When administrative support is present, teachers felt that this was a benefit to them and allowed them to more effectively implement new practices. For all but one of the participants, the school administrators were supportive of their teaching and learning practices, and this support was mentioned as positively supporting their instructional decision-making. Melissa said, of her administrators, "They are constantly showing appreciation. And in a school this big, it still feels like they see what you do as an individual, so that's a big motivation." Laura agreed that the support of her administrator had been important for her, saying, "She wants us all to be continuing [our learning], whether we are going to workshops, whether we are going to school, whether we are working, she believes that better teachers are teachers who are learning."

Curriculum and Standardized Testing

Curriculum, both as it is mandated by state standards and written in district curriculum documents, does not always match with student needs or teacher beliefs and practices, and therefore influences the implementation of new knowledge and skills. The curricular documents that govern a teacher's daily decisions vary greatly from district to district and even from grade level to grade level. Some teachers reported that their curriculum was mainly a scope-and-sequence document that gave recommendations for the order and pacing of instructional goals, while others reported a more prescribed curriculum that included specific units, lessons, and instructional activities that must be followed. All of these documents are geared toward helping

students to master the state curriculum, which all teachers must follow and is assessed by the state standardized assessment.

All but one teacher voiced dissatisfaction with their districts' curriculum on at least one occasion, and the reasons for dissatisfaction varied and were numerous. The constraints felt by the participants came mainly from the curriculum's inability to meet their students' learning needs or to be flexible in matching their own personal teaching style or philosophy. Debbie, when discussing this mismatch, summed this point up well when she said, "How can I still teach my class the way that I want to within the constraints of that? It's almost like a game. It's almost like, how can I be creatively compliant? [laughs]." She went on to discuss a concrete example of this problem when discussing the following instructional dilemma.

> Our curriculum maps in social studies, they are very fast-paced, and I am sure that is the same everywhere. So, I am supposed to teach three weeks of European geography and then a week on the Industrial Revolution, a week on WWI, and a week on WWII. That seems daunting, when the kids have no background in world history; they've only ever had Texas and American history. Our textbook has only two pages on WWII in it. And just finding, figuring out a way to make that meaningful for the kids, I always just go back to reading and writing.- Debbie

All participants reported that the most important factor they considered when making any instructional choice was the needs of their students. Student need was a recurring and important theme throughout all of our conversations, whether talking about educational practice, theory, or personal philosophy, and this idea alone could serve to answer a completely different line of research questions, but within the context of matching instruction to the written curriculum, it was also an important factor. For most teachers, they felt they spent a great deal of time differentiating the curriculum to meet student needs and struggling with the depth and breadth expected by their

curricular documents. Debbie discussed this idea related to her curriculum when she said, "I know I have my district-mandated curriculum, but so much of that with writing, [the students] just don't need it, or they need more. I don't think it's very individualized." All agreed that factors related to student need had to be considered when making decisions about improvement efforts or implementation of new practices within their current structures.

Teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement change, to reform their educational practices, were also colored by the pressure of standardized testing and the constraints the test placed on their grade-level curriculum. In their state, students must meet minimum standards on the state standardized assessment in order to be considered successful, and the recurring mention of this test throughout our interviews also identified it as a curricular constraint in many ways. Three of the four participants taught in "testable" grade levels, and all three of these teachers expressed concern or frustration with the state standardized assessment. Melissa's words summarize these feelings best. "I have a very kind of rebellious attitude towards [the test]. I'm annoyed by [the test] [laughs]." She went on to clarify this point by adding, "I feel like, if we're doing what we are supposed to be doing in the class, it shouldn't be that difficult for them." Debbie further clarified her own dissatisfaction with the culture of testing by saying, "My belief system is, we are creating life-long readers and writers, and [the test] is going to take care of itself if I meet that goal. And I've not been proven wrong on that goal."

These curricular constraints, whether from national, state, or local levels, effect teachers in every classroom, and professional learning can be viewed as one way for teachers to learn how to overcome these limitations to best meet the needs of the

students. One other important factor, time, is also ever-present in each teacher's life, and the participants' report it as a significant force impacting their implementation efforts.

Time

The amount of time, or lack thereof, was reported as being an important factor that affected participants' ability to implement change in their classrooms. Time, as described by participants, was most often a constraint to their implementation of improvement efforts. The tasks necessary to implement change, including the planning of lessons, the assessment of student work, the time for critical dialogue with peers, and the reflection on daily practices in order to improve instruction, all require time. One thing teachers have little control over is the amount of time they have in a given day to complete the myriad tasks and roles to which they are assigned on their campuses.

Most teachers reported multiple responsibilities outside of their role as classroom teacher, and these all compete for the finite amount of time that exists in any given day. This tug-of-war can mean compromises with which teachers are not always comfortable. Andrea, whose role as a literacy specialist often left her with competing responsibilities, was particularly affected by how time affected her daily decisions.

> There is a sense of never completing anything, or never doing anything to my satisfaction really. Or, if I do manage to do it to my satisfaction, I've knocked out the time constraints. There's this idea that I'm always late and I'm not doing enough. I'm behind and there's stuff I should be doing. Yes, there are all of these hats that I wear, and no, on a daily basis there is not, it doesn't feel like there's enough time.

The other participants also mentioned time as an important environmental factor when making instructional choices, particularly as they related to previously mentioned themes like addressing the curriculum and student needs, working with peers, and

reflecting on their daily decisions. The participants all described time as something that was driving, or even pushing, them toward the end of each day, and as a factor they felt controlled by more than any other.

The participants' experience of time as a controlling factor in their daily activities was best described by Laura, who said, "I'm having to grapple with, we've got this, this, this, this, this to do. How am I going to get these things done?" The overwhelming amount of objectives to be covered in a single grade level's curriculum, in addition to the myriad other responsibilities given to teachers today, including character education, citizenship, and administrative "busywork," left less time for the participants to teach their core objectives in each subject. When trying to enact change related to writing instruction, when time is a crucial ingredient to student success, this factor becomes even more precious and coveted by participants. Debbie's decisions related to time are reflected as,

> I've really tried to focus on carving out longer periods of time. I know we are supposed to have them write every day, but that's hard for me to do with my schedule, so what I do try to do is, when we are writing, try to carve out more time for it and give them time to do all of it, the brainstorming, the writing. I still feel like I am rushing them through all of that, I still feel like they aren't getting enough time to write.- Debbie

Much in the same way that the participants valued time for their own learning and exploration, then, they also viewed it as important to their own teaching. They all referred to time, in this capacity, as something they had little control over and something that forced them into making decisions that were not necessarily ideal. Debbie accurately described this on-going battle with time when she discussed her curricular decision-making. "How can I still teach my class the way that I want to within the

constraints of [the time allotted in the curriculum]?" she wondered aloud. That, it seems, is the question on everyone's mind.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings revealed by this research study. The findings were presented as they related to the two research questions that guided the research study. As is typical of phenomenological studies, the findings were also presented in tandem with the participants' own words, not only to illustrate the depth and complexity of the themes, but also to give voice to those with important experiences to share.

The following chapter will include a discussion of these results, both as they relate to alternative theories and to the published research in this area. This chapter will also include further interpretation and synthesis of these findings as well as provide direction for further research related to this phenomenon. Laura's words seem to summarize best the perspectives on professional development that emerged from these data:

> I think that a good staff development models good teaching practices. And if it's not modeling good teaching practices, if they are standing up there and lecturing to you, and they are telling you all of the things that you are *supposed* to be doing with your students and you're not actually seeing those things being modeled, then how are you supposed to take it back to your class?- Laura Downs, interview

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The rationale for undertaking this research study was to understand more fully teachers' perceptions of effective professional development so that we can see how the academic community can better serve the needs of these teachers, thereby leading to increased achievement and love of learning for the students they serve. This "essential bridge," as Lieberman and Wood (2002b) refer to the link between professional learning and student success, is important on many levels and cannot be overlooked as important to the ongoing improvement of our nation's classrooms. Much has been written over the past three decades in regard to effective practices for professional development (Fullan, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998; Guskey, 2002a, 2002b; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; McBride et al., 1994; M. W. McLaughlin, 1990). Many of these studies have attempted to gain the teachers' perspectives through surveys and short-term interviews, but little has been done to focus on the long-term needs of teachers related to overall professional development implementation, and rarely is the teacher's voice heard in reports of such endeavors. By investigating professional development using a phenomenological perspective, by listening to the voices of those most directly affected by professional development experiences, and by exploring the factors that affect these teachers' implementation of changes in the classroom, this research study highlights the importance of "going to the source" to better understand this phenomenon. Ultimately then, this research study attempts to better understand how teachers' impact student achievement in the classroom through the use of effective teaching.

Another important motivation that led to this research study was the competing voices that inform us about adult learning experiences. In education, we have moved toward ever-increasing diversification of our theory base, with each sub-discipline creating their own "buzz words" and theory related to learning, and yet what we need is a more unifying theory, one that combines all of what we know about adult learning and professional development into one coherent structure. Andragogy, self-directed learning, social cognitive learning, social development theory, situated learning, activity theory, even critical theory and humanism- all of these are theories that lend confidence to the themes revealed herein, yet all in some way fail to holistically reveal what is important and meaningful to the participants in this research study. What is the essence of teachers' learning and teaching experiences? What do the themes and patterns revealed in chapter 4 say about effective practices for professional learning in today's schools and how we support teachers in their efforts to improve practice? These are the topics that will drive this chapter.

<div align="center">Review of the Research Study's Purpose and Methodology</div>

Before I begin the in-depth discussion of the themes from chapter 4, it is necessary to place this entire research study into the broader context from where it originated. In this section, I will briefly review the purpose of the research study, as well as the methodology used to gather and analyze the data. Within this overview, I will also reexamine the theoretical framework that I originally thought would guide this research study, with particular attention to how that framework has evolved through the course of data collection, analysis, and reporting. A more in-depth discussion of this framework will follow.

Statement of the Problem

Professional development is viewed by teachers, administrators, and policy makers as the primary vehicle for improving classroom instruction and ultimately student achievement, yet teachers in their own classrooms never use much of what is delivered in the name of professional development (Guskey, 2002b; Zepeda, 1999). As a researcher, I believe that a disconnect exists between what research says is appropriate, including best practices for these types of learning opportunities for teachers, and what is actually being delivered in the name of professional development by schools, districts, and other education agencies. It is also believed that many teachers possess a desire to learn, grow, and change professionally yet are not adequately supported in their schools and classrooms to implement desired change.

It is therefore unclear if there are characteristics of professional development and environmental factors that affect implementation patterns that are more likely to contribute to participant satisfaction with professional development opportunities and sustained implementation and engagement with acquired knowledge and skills. This research study investigated these characteristics as they relate to teacher transformation following professional development experiences. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe and understand the experiences of teacher participants who have completed the SRWP's Summer Institute sometime during the past five years, as well as identify the environmental factors that affect their ability to engage in and implement various behaviors and beliefs transferred from the professional development experience. The research questions guiding this research study were:

(1) How do teachers perceive and describe their experiences of participating in professional development, such as the National Writing Project?

(2) How do teachers perceive and describe the factors that support or constrain their instructional decision-making as it relates to new knowledge and skills acquired through professional development?

Review of the Methodology

Phenomenology, with its philosophical roots in the work of Husserl (1970),"describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or *the phenomenon*" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51, emphasis in original). Researchers utilizing this methodology search for the *essence* of the lived experience based on the memories, images, and meanings described by the participants (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). This tradition, which is also deeply connected with the tenets of constructivism, seeks to understand the meaning constructed by participants based on their experiences.

As discussed in detail in chapter 3, this research study began with an identification of the purpose and research questions. Following this, I identified eight participants from the population sample who shared a common professional development experience, the SRWP's Summer Institute. While all eight of these participants agreed to take part in the present research study, only four participants' data were used throughout the entire research study. Three were eliminated early on to provide the greatest diversity of experiences, and one was eliminated because I could not gain access to her classroom for observations due to administrative constraints. Ultimately, the four final participants represent a wide range of teacher characteristics, as revealed in their biographies in chapter 4.

Data collection, in the form of classroom observations and lengthy, open-ended interviews, took place throughout the 2007-2008 school year. I visited each teacher on multiple occasions, collecting field notes and conducting interviews on each visit. After each classroom visit, field notes and transcripts of interviews were reviewed to begin the process of preliminary analysis. The themes and patterns revealed in these early stages served as starting points for questions in subsequent interviews.

The use of the phenomenological method was crucial to understanding the participants' perceptions and experiences related to professional development. By examining these experiences and searching for the essence of effective learning experiences, I hoped to find answers to my questions about professional learning and implementation. By bracketing my own beliefs prior to the research study, in the form of the *Epoch* shared in chapter 3, I sought to make known my own experiences and pre-conceived notions. I returned to this *Epoch* before every reduction and analytic session in order to remind myself of the phenomenological perspective I bring to the research study and attempt to examine the data to "preserve the reality of the thing itself" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 50).

Throughout the data collection and reduction process, I was confronted with the power of my own beliefs and experiences. The participants of my research study had all shared an experience similar to my own in their participation in the SRWP's Summer Institute. Additionally, they were all classroom teachers who faced many of the same challenges I did while in the classroom. We all shared similar views about effective teaching and the application of educational philosophy. Despite all of these similarities, I consistently and consciously reminded myself that each one of these individuals

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experienced the world differently than I, had different previous experiences that impacted their construction of meaning, and had different needs in their current teaching situation. These differences were not only unlike my own but different from each other. I tried to enter each observation or interview with this knowledge in the forefront of my mind, but it was, admittedly, not always easy.

For instance, Andrea teaches in the same school district that I taught in at the time, and she and I shared many of the same frustrations with the district's curriculum and instructional mandates. She was also a resource teacher on her campus, sharing similar duties and status as my position as a Title I resource teacher. We both worked with struggling learners in a small group environment, and we both felt pressure to assist the students and to help the other faculty members on our campus improve their practice and knowledge. With all of these things in common, I found myself agreeing with her description of the constraints she felt, but I had to also work very hard to view her experience through alternate lenses and ask questions that forced both she and I to consider other possible solutions or meanings behind her statements. In all, the time I spent with her was the most challenging for me as a researcher but also the most enlightening, as I came to understand how important the phenomenological perspective really was. My experiences with Andrea helped me to hone my research skills and further bracket my own experiences, thereby assisting me in the collection of data from the other three participants.

Interpretations and Discussion

Overall, the themes discussed in chapter 4 captured the essences of what this group of teachers perceived as effective professional development and the influences

on their practice. The voices of these participants help to answer the research questions for this research study. When considering these themes, connections can be made to multiple theories and lines of research that support each one of the themes that emerged from the participants' descriptions. This discussion is therefore organized by the themes revealed in chapter 4, with a focus on how the existing theory base supports these claims.

First, it is important to take a moment to examine the literature related to the overall purposes and importance of professional development in general, as it sets the stage for the remaining discussion. Overall, much has been written about the role professional development plays in changing educational practice. We must first change what teachers know and believe in order to change what teachers do. These individual changes then have the power to change schools and ultimately change the outcomes of student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1996a, 1997; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998; Guskey, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Teacher improvement and continual learning are important to the overall health of our educational system. "Few matters are more important than the quality of the teachers in our nation's schools. Few matters are as neglected" (Goodlad, 1990, p. xi).

Neves' (2001), in her meta-analysis of the literature related to professional development, concludes, "There seems to be a general agreement that programs for professional development should: (1) happen over time, (2) give teachers responsibility for their own professional development, (3) promote partnerships between schools and universities, (4) apply standards, (5) involve teachers in knowing more subjects and how to teach, (6) happen in learning communities, (7) promote inquiry and research, and (8)

reflect research and the best practices" (p. 55). These principles are evident in the

standards published by numerous organizations and researchers, including the National

Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001), the National Conference of State

Legislatures (Hirsch & Hirsh, 2008), and in research on effective professional

development (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Lieberman, 1995;

"Professional development for the new millennium: Professional development model,"

2001; Sparks, 1994). These standards served as a starting point for analysis of

participant data in this research study, but a continual search for alternate perspectives

and a unified understanding of the theory that guides professional development led to a

discussion of the related literature that follows.

Meaningful Context and Purpose: How We Learn Professionally

The first theme identified in chapter 4 focused on the context and purpose for

professional learning activities. Participants identified the need for effective professional

development to be delivered in ways that met their needs as learners as well as provide

meaningful application to their current teaching roles. All teachers come to professional

learning opportunities with emotional, physical, and cognitive needs, much like students

in the classroom. Within the learning environment, teachers are looking to increase their

own capacity as learners and to transfer that knowledge into effective teaching practices

that will benefit their students.

The first aspect of meaningful context and purpose explored by the participants

was the physical environment, which is certainly supported in the published literature

about professional development contexts. "Physical arrangements and personal comfort

are important ingredients in successful teaching and learning" (Brockett & Hiemstra,

1991, p. 112). By taking time to set up the physical environment so that it supports the learning tasks and activities, is comfortable and welcoming, and makes the necessary provisions to attend to participants' physical needs, professional development providers can then focus energy and effort on meeting the emotional and cognitive needs of participants (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Haberman, 2004; Knowles, 1980; Maslow, 1954, 1970; Vosko, 1991). Within the present research study, participants described how the meeting of their physical needs on a daily basis allowed them to feel more comfortable during the Summer Institute, and were therefore more ready and able to learn.

Galbraith (1989; 1990) also confirms this theme when he notes that the educational climate of a learning activity is comprised of both the physical environment and the emotional climate. The social atmosphere of the learning community is a part of the learning context, and thus it should be non-threatening (Knowles, 1980). Participants in this research study discussed many different activities they enjoyed that contributed to the emotional climate, including having multiple opportunities and means of communicating and sharing with all of the members of the learning community and the many activities designed to allow participants to get to know one another early on in the experience. The contribution of these emotional factors to participant satisfaction and overall learning readiness has been noted in the literature of adult learning and professional development, and while seemingly simple, is indeed an important factor to adult learning effectiveness (Magolda, 1992; Silverman & Casazza, 2000; Sisco, 1991). After all, development is not only cognitive. It must include beliefs and attitudes as well as knowledge and skills. DiPardo and Potter (2003) emphasized that development must

attend to emotional and affective aspects of teacher growth, as these are inseparable from the cognitive or intellectual aspects.

In addition to the learning environment, participants also described effective professional development as meeting their diverse learning needs and styles. The literature on adult learning recognizes the importance of creating learning opportunities that are flexible and can accommodate different styles of learning (Cranton, 2006; Silverman & Casazza, 2000; Trotter, 2006). This is also supported by the literature on effective teaching, as a varied repertoire that accommodates multiple learning styles and needs is a necessity in today's classroom (Ding & Sherman, 2006; Harris, 1998; Polk, 2006). "The principles that lead to improved student learning also guide the professional learning for teachers" (Eun, 2008, p. 135). The accommodation for learning styles, including assisting learners to develop an awareness of their own learning style, psychological type, values, and preferences, can lead to more transformative learning experiences (Cranton, 2006).

One aspect mentioned specifically by all participants was the importance of active learning embedded within professional development activities. Professional development, as described by these participants, was viewed as most successful when it utilized a transaction rather than a transmission model of learning (Desimone et al., 2002; Knowles, 1980; Laub, 1996; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987). As Hampton (1990) noted, in learning activities that are structured for transaction, instructors or leaders are viewed as guides and content resources, and learner knowledge and experience are considered to be valuable resources in the learning transaction. The transmission model, in contrast, is focused on relaying information to the learner, in

transmitting knowledge between leader and participant, usually in the form of lectures, presentations, or other training models that involve little student-teacher interaction or active learning. Showers, Joyce and Bennett (1987) found that lecture-style inservice, or transmission forms of learning, have a 5% carryover rate to the classroom, but transaction-type models, including the use of peer coaching and inquiry-based learning, have a 95% carryover rate for classroom implementation. As Therese Dozier, senior advisor on teaching to former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley and 1985 National Teacher of the Year, said in an interview with Dennis Sparks of the National Staff Development Council,

> The more we can show people how staff development and the school can be structured to impact student learning, the more teachers will be motivated to participate in professional learning. Instead, teachers often get professional development that is insulting and mind numbing, treating them as mindless individuals who can somehow be fixed with just the right one-hour workshop (2000, p. 2).

By moving away from traditional workshops and training sessions, and toward meaningful investigation of teaching practices focused on immediate classroom needs, professional development can more effectively address the climate of today's classroom and help teachers to develop as professionals. Dozier added to her comments above when she said, "In other professions, practitioners have opportunities to learn and grow during the course of the day as they interact to solve problems and work on projects, share expertise, and give one another feedback" (Sparks, 2000, p. 3). It is these types of learning opportunities, embedded within transactional learning environments, she argues, that should be the basis for the professional development of educators.

Transaction environments should also include opportunities for active learning, characterized by participant involvement in learning, meaningful analysis of pedagogy

and content, and meaning-making activities that are learner-centered (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; J. W. Little, 1993). The inclusion of active learning in professional development is two-fold. Active learning creates more meaningful learning for participants, but it is also hope that participants will then have an effective model they can use to create active learning in their own classrooms. The National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development reiterate this point in the group's Process Standards. "Consequently, it is important that the learning methods used in professional development mirror as closely as possible the methods teachers are expected to use with their students" (NSDC, 2001).

Active learning was described as being an important element for this research study's participants' overall satisfaction with professional development experiences. Desimone et al.'s (2002) longitudinal research study on the effects of professional development on teachers' instruction showed support for the inclusion of active learning within professional development opportunities. Teachers in this three-year research study found greater benefit from learning experiences that included opportunities to obtain feedback on their own teaching, the review of authentic student work, and opportunities to observe and discuss other's teaching. This satisfaction with active learning opportunities also translated into a higher rate of classroom implementation for active learning strategies, such as student-based projects, debate and argumentative speech, problem-based learning, and performance-based assessments.

Transactional learning, as described above, is consistent with Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy. Andragogy also assumes that the learner brings knowledge and experiences with them to the learning environment. In a learning environment consistent

with the andragogical practices discussed in chapter 2, learners collaborate with one another and the instructor, using what each brings to the learning environment to construct meaning. The theory of andragogy also concludes that participants' readiness to learn is dictated by their social roles, in this case, their role as teacher. According to the theory of andragogy, adults enter into learning to acquire knowledge and skills that will be useful right now, in the immediate context of their lives (Knowles, 1970, 1978, 1980). This match between learning opportunity and social role was described by participants in this research study. Each noted excitement when learning something that would assist them in their own classrooms, and this often served as motivation for pursuing professional learning opportunities.

Other researchers, educational theorists, and observers of educational reform or improvement efforts have noted the importance of learning experiences linked to the professional goals of teachers (Eun, 2008; Guskey, 2000; Lieberman, 1995; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007; Whipp, 1979). Lieberman (1994), who has studied the National Writing Project and teacher learning networks for many years, discussed teachers' need for practical learning experiences. "Teachers are more interested in an article based on research that is connected to their lives than on one that demands conformity to a list of practices" (p. 381). Guskey and Huberman's (1995) synthesis of the literature goes on to hypothesize that today's professional development "… does not acknowledge or address the personal identities and moral purposes of teachers, nor the cultures and contexts in which they work" (p. 14). This sentiment was clearly echoed by the participants in the current research study and supports the recommendations made by

Sparks (Sparks, 1994; Sparks & Loucks-Horlsey, 1989) and others to improve the practices of professional development.

Participants in this research study also noted that one benefit to the NWP's model was that each participant experienced writing and being a writer as their own students would in the classroom. Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) explored this idea further in their discussion of the conceptual framework of professional development. "A truism in teacher education and teacher development concerns the need for teachers to experience a pedagogical approach from the standpoint of a learner before they are able to implement this approach in their own classroom" (p. 18). Many have agreed and called for professional learning to be phrased in the dialect of the relationship between teachers and their students and instructional practices framed around what we want students to know and be able to do (Guskey, 2000; NSDC, 2001; Whipp, 1979).

The focus on writing process and writing instruction within the NWP model is another of its strengths, according to the participants, and this is supported by the standards for effective professional development outlined by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001). By limiting the scope of the learning experience to one content area at a time, and focusing efforts on the improvement of content-specific pedagogy, professional development efforts become more focused and productive. NSDC's Quality Teaching Standard states:

> Successful teachers have a deep understanding of the subjects they teach, use appropriate instructional methods, and apply various classroom assessment strategies. These teachers participate in sustained, intellectually rigorous professional learning regarding the subjects they teach, the strategies they use to teach those subjects, the findings of cognitive scientists regarding human

learning, and the means by which they assess student progress in achieving high academic standards (2001).

The recommendations of this group for effective professional development that can facilitate this goal include attending "extended institutes with follow-up activities throughout the school year," performing the work of those in that field (i.e. writing), and experiencing "firsthand as learners the instructional approaches they in turn will be using with their own students" (NSDC, 2001). In addition, teachers can make use of research study groups, observations of classroom lessons and demonstrations, and receive coaching to improve their content-pedagogy, knowledge and skills (Fishman et al., 2003; Garvin, 2003; Guskey, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; NCATE, 2001). Participants in this research study added that being asked to experience instruction as a student, particularly instruction related to writing, which all described as a very personal endeavor, was particularly powerful. During the Summer Institute, they experienced an increased sense of efficacy about their own writing abilities and their ability to teach writing effectively because of the types of learning opportunities they were given.

Certainly, the ways in which teachers are educated are important, as this section illustrates. The methods of instruction utilized by professional development providers are often questioned and viewed as one factor that affects overall learning effectiveness. The NSDC's position on this is clear. "Because it is natural that teachers will teach as they themselves are taught, it is imperative that the instructional methods used with educators be congruent to the greatest extent possible with those they are expected to use in their classroom" (NSDC, 2001). In addition to the types of learning opportunities offered, there are additional factors that affect participant satisfaction, and

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these will be the basis for the discussion of the next theme revealed in this research

study's data analysis.

Interpersonal Relationships: The Culture of Learning

While the focus of the earlier discussion was on the instructional tools related to

professional development, this section focuses on the overall culture of learning that

defines effective learning. In chapter 4, this section was limited to the ways in which

interpersonal relationships impacted learning, but in examining the research and theory

base for support, it became clear that there were additional factors that contributed to

the culture of learning, and these will be included in this section. In addition, there is

greater focus within this part of the discussion on the alternative theories and research

that can inform us about effective professional learning.

There are many who have defined the purposes of professional development, but

for the purposes herein, I will use the following definition: "Professional development is

a growth-promoting learning process that empowers stakeholders to improve the

educational organization" ("Professional development for the new millennium:

Professional development model," 2001). Within this broad context of learning,

according to published standards and accepted models, is the need for teachers to

learn from one another in a social environment (Drago-Severson, 2998; Guskey, 2000;

Lieberman & Wood, 2003; NSDC, 2001; NWP, 1999). The work of the NWP begins with

the Summer Institute, and one of the core principles for this learning experience is

"teachers teaching teachers" (NWP, 2008b). The learning and sharing that takes place

within professional development supported by social practices such as these allows for

collaboration between knowledgeable teachers to create what Moll and Greenberg

(1990) describe as "funds of knowledge" within the network. Neves (2001) argues that "becoming members of a large and strong network gives teachers professional power. Moreover, the network informs the practices of other teachers and expands the goals of the community" (p. 343). The use of social practices to create learning networks and a culture of learning in professional development was an important theme revealed in chapter 4 for all participants.

This type of professional development, predicated on the beliefs indicated previously, can be viewed as a form of what Grossman et al. (1999) call "socially mediated human development" (p. 5). The work of social-constructivist theorists, such as Vygotsky and his followers, as well as Dewey and more contemporary social-constructivists such as Lave, Mezirow, and Kegan, provide a framework for examining this type of professional development experience. These theories also formulate the basis for a great deal of research into effective professional development, and this body of work was also consulted when preparing this analytic review.

In the planning stages of this research study, I should note, I focused on the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (see chapter 2). At the time, this theory offered a great deal to assist me in my understanding of what happens as a result of professional development, or what teachers learn from these experiences. As a novice researcher, though, my understanding of the phenomenon in question was shallow, and as data collection and analysis progressed, I began to understand the importance of emotional, or affective, development from professional learning. For the participants, it was not simply the knowledge and skills they acquired that changed their classroom practices, it was also how their beliefs were transformed and how they themselves

experienced learning that impacted them as well. As stated earlier, cognitive growth

cannot be separated from emotional growth, and by relying solely on Bandura's theory, I

found I was neglecting an important perspective of the participants. While cognition and

the learning of knowledge and skills is indeed important, it did not serve as the sole

learning outcome for my participants. Therefore, I began to search for alternative

theories to support the perspectives of the participants, theories that offered a more

humanistic view of learning and encompassed the whole person, which led me to

consider the social-cultural theories of Vygotsky and other social-constructivists.

Lev Vygotsky's work in the field of developmental psychology included interest in

understanding child development and the effective education of children. His prolific

works include several key concepts widely known in education today and germane to

the context of this research study, including the use of psychological tools, mediation,

internalization and the zone of proximal development, scaffolding, and the interrelation

between language and thought in learning situations (Daniels, 1996; Wertsch, 1985).

According to Vygotsky (1978; 1987), only by interacting with others and the world in

which one lives can each individual internalize meaning. Psychological functions, to

Vygotsky, are inherently social and comprise a single system, as human learning and

mental functions stem from social interactions.

Professional development, formulated within a Vygotskian framework, may be

defined as the transformation of those forms of behavior that were used between people

in concrete social interactions (i.e., intermental plane) to the forms of individual mental

processes (i.e., intramental plane)" (Eun, 2008, p. 136). This construct, embedded

within Vygotsky's theory, is known as the unity of behavior and consciousness. The

internal activity, what Eun referred to as the intramental plane, is not separate from the external activity that informed it, the intermental plane.

Mediation and Scaffolding: The Vygotskian Framework

The connection between learning and language forms the foundation for this theory, as language is an inherently social construct. In *Thought and Language (1986),* Vygotsky argues that mental processes cannot be separated from speech, and the development of mental concepts and cognitive awareness occur through the use of both inner speech and oral communication.

> External speech is a process that involves the transformation of thought into word, which involves the materialization and objectivization of thought. Inner speech involves the reverse process, a process that moves from without to within. Inner speech involves the evaporation of speech into thought. However, speech does not disappear in its internal form. . . . Inner speech is speech. It is thought that is connected with the word. However, where external speech involves the embodiment of thought in the word, in inner speech the word dies away and gives birth to thought" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 280).

Language is a part of another important Vygotskian construct known as mediation (Vygotsky, 1987). Mediation involves the use of tools, systems, and other people in the transition between social interaction and mental function. Tools or material resources that could serve as mediators for learning in professional development include textbooks, equipment, teaching materials, curriculum guides, and research and practitioner journals. Systems can include the use of symbolic representation, such as writing, and other language components that can lead to deeper understanding. Human mediation, in the form of expert guidance, peer coaching, critical discourse communities, and content-area authorities, are also an important component, in the Vygotskian framework, to professional learning, and include language systems in their use.

Within the context of the present study, mediators are an important component in effective professional development. Language is used in multiple ways to assist learners, including as a source of information, knowledge, and expertise and as a medium for expressing one's own ideas experiences, and problems. Other tools are also important for mediating professional learning, including the tools of teaching and the human mediators that encompass the interpersonal relationships participants' shared with others during professional development. These mediators were important to their overall learning.

These types of mediators help move learners toward each individual's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Eun, 2008). ZPD is defined as the difference between a learner's actual developmental level in independent learning situations and his/her potential developmental level under the guidance of a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). In the case of professional development, the more knowledgeable other could be another teacher or the PD provider.

Bruner (1975) described a process he called scaffolding as a metaphor for how learners can reach the ZPD. It refers to the support provided by a more knowledgeable other that assists each learner in achieving learning goals. "The support offered by the expert is accommodated to the emerging new capabilities within the novice and eventually completely withdrawn" (Eun, 2008, p. 142). While scaffolding can occur between two individuals, it can also occur in social groups, and is known as collective scaffolding. In this type of learning environment, no distinction is made between novice and expert, and all members of the group share knowledge and expertise equally (Eun,

2008). It is this type of scaffolding that participants noted in the NWP model and saw as beneficial to their overall learning experience.

Other social learning theorists have noted the important role others play in human learning. Bandura's (1977b; 1986; 1989b) social cognitive theory emphasizes the importance of vicarious reinforcement and social modeling in effective learning. Adult learning theories, such as andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning, all are based on social interactivity and socially-mediated learning (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001a, 2001b; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 1997). The literature is replete with examples of effective professional development, as measured in multiple ways, but none of these learning environments are characterized by isolated learning or solely independent endeavors. People play an important role in the development of one another.

Continuity and follow-up support for professional development are important components in the Vygotskian framework. These factors serve as mediators for learning that allow internalization to occur. Sufficient time and support, both during and after the learning experience, are necessary components to allow learning to become a part of the long-term psychological systems of participants (Vygotsky, 1987). Professional development, viewed as a sustained effort over time and a continuous cycle of reflection on classroom practice and action aimed at improving that practice, is among the standards for effective professional development outlined by NSDC and researchers who have investigated PD practices for many years (Darling-Hammond, 1996b; Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Lieberman & Wood, 2003; P. M. D. Little & Bouffard, 2004; NSDC, 2001; Sparks & Loucks-Horlsey, 1989;

Stronge, 2002). Within the framework of Vygotsky, this time and support, necessary for

the transition of complex psychological structures from the intermental to the

intramental, is vital to success.

> Teachers need to be provided with sufficient time and opportunities to reflect on
> what they have learned through their engagement in professional development
> programs. The complex and prolonged development process characterized by
> fits and starts may be challenging for individual teachers as well as for the entire
> school. However, the path toward higher levels of development may be traversed
> in no other way than through unleveled roads that at times necessitate a few
> steps backward in order to proceed forward. (Eun, 2008, p. 147)

Within the context of this research study, participants' perceptions of the NWP

model as well as other effective learning opportunities included opportunities for follow-

up and a sustained effort at improving classroom practice. The in-depth nature of the

Summer Institute allowed critical time for the formation of beneficial social relationships.

Research into effective professional development indicates that duration and intensity of

the learning experience are positively correlated with classroom implementation of

newly learned knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Desimone et al., 2002; Shields,

Marsh, & Adelman, 1998; Weiss, Montgomery, Ridgway, & Bond, 1998). Participants in

this research study, because of the longer duration of time and instructional practices

used, were able to examine their own classroom problems in a comprehensive manner,

formulating a plan of action for implementation and gain the necessary background in

educational research and theory to support their plans. Therefore, for professional

development formulated on the principles of socially-mediated learning to be successful

it must include these opportunities for sustained effort and in-depth involvement.

As stated earlier, language is key to socially-mediated development. It is the use

of both inner speech, through metacognitive experiences like writing, as well as oral

language experiences such as discourse and coaching, that teachers can benefit from socially-mediated development during professional learning experiences. Billig's (1999) studies investigated the role of private discourse, or inner speech, in the formation of opinion and in decision making. This self-talk serves self-regulatory as well as metacognitive purposes in the learning process. Professional development that is truly aimed at improving practice, and therefore student learning, must begin with critical reflection, or examining presuppositions (Mezirow, 1990). By engaging in critical reflection, that which the learner questions the status quo or social norms, one can then trigger higher psychological functions and thus learn in a more transformative manner. Through the use of inner-speech and peer discourse, this critical examination and problem-solving cycle can occur.

Participants in this research study noted the importance of these mediated, social interactions to their overall professional learning experiences. As previously discussed in chapter 4, *critical dialogue*, *reflective conversations*, and simple *talk time* were all important components of effective PD described by participants. These social opportunities were critical to each participants' overall development and learning experience, and this theme supports the use of the Vygotskian framework for learning.

Reflective practice has been identified as one characteristic of effective teachers (Harris, 1998; Kottler & Zehm, 2000; Stronge, 2002). Stronge (2002) defines reflective practices as the " "careful review of and thoughtfulness about one's own teaching process" (p. 20). His review of the literature on the characteristics of effective teachers shows the use of many different methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and observations, of teachers judged effective by administrators, test scores, board

certification, and case studies of effective schools. His conclusion about the role of reflection in teaching is that, "Effective teachers continuously practice self-evaluations and self-critique as learning tools. Reflective teachers portray themselves as students of learning" (Stronge, 2002, pp. 20-21) Reflective teachers are characterized as introspective, not afraid of feedback, and readily accepting of constructive criticism. Professional learning opportunities, then, that respond to the reflective practices of teachers can be most effective at assisting teachers in meeting their self-identified learning needs and therefore the needs of the teachers' students.

Metacognition, or knowing what and how we know, is a cognitive strategy learners utilize during reflection. During metacognition, learners utilize language structures to analyze their thinking and self-evaluate to solve problems and regulate future decisions. Language is a key component to this metacognition, and Vygotsky's theory fully supports this relationship, and he said "the relationship of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a movement from thought to word and from word to thought" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 250). Oral language systems, such as critical discourse, can serve as mediators for metacognitive learning, and many have also noted the power of writing as a metacognitive tool (Bruffee, 1983; Marzano, 1991a, 1991b; Scardemalia & Bereiter, 1986). Writing, when viewed as a thinking tool, requires higher levels of thought than other language skills.

In Dewey's *How We Think* (1933), he hypothesized that there are "four types of cognition: (a) reflective- which, used for problem solving, moves through a series of steps from a question to a solution; (b) conceptual- which, based on experience, develops generalized concepts; (c) critical- which evaluates ideas; and (d) creative-

which leads to new ideas" (Laub, 1996, pp. 7-8). The use of language in all of these types of systems is evident, and Dewey's ideas are compatible with those of Vygotsky, as they both focus on the connection between thought and word. For both theorists, the use of writing could be seen as a learning tool, in which the learner is using the language system to formulate ideas, test theories, share experiences, or record important observations and inferences (Laub, 1996). The act of writing allows for cognition at higher levels, creating lasting connections between content, experience, and prior knowledge, and at the same time, creating a record of experience for future use.

When examining professional development experiences, one must take into account opportunities for participants' use of language as a mediator for learning. Within the frameworks of Vygotsky and Dewey, professional learning that includes opportunities for oral and written language, as well as the time to engage in inner speech and reflection, can engage teachers in more meaningful education experiences. In addition, by encouraging teachers to utilize these mediators, and providing models for ways to assist students as well, effective professional development is using language as a teaching tool, and not solely as a content focus.

Collaborative Models of Professional Development

Other models of professional development have been proposed using this framework, including the use of the outlined principles of Vygotsky's theory, and include social systems for learning. These models include professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller, 2001; Protheroe, 2004), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2006;

Wenger et al., 2002), and teacher networks (Carmichael, Fox, McCormick, Procter, & Honour, 2006; Cousin & Deepwell, 2005; Lieberman & Grolnick, 1996; Lieberman & Wood, 2002b, 2003; McDonald & Klein, 2003; Wood & Lieberman, 2000). These types of social systems give teachers or other professionals opportunities to interact with and learn from one another, discuss common issues, and engage in meaningful problem solving. Lieberman's (1994) discussion below highlights the need for this type of learning in schools.

> While teachers tend to view outsiders as experts, they also regard them as insensitive to the realities of schools. These teacher attitudes, stemming from years of being pressed to use knowledge created outside schools and often unrelated to real classroom life, persist in spite of recent efforts by some researchers to apply new knowledge that reveals the necessity for teachers to be supported by, and involved in, professional communities (p. 380).

Vygotsky's theory also presupposes that, in order for social interaction to be a mediator for learning, it must be situated in an activity that has a clear purpose and is goal-oriented (Vygotsky, 1987). These theories and the research base that supports them, previously reviewed in chapter 2, lend credibility to the importance of collaborative learning and cooperation among peers in effective professional learning environments. The added benefit of such models, as DuFour (2004) reminds us, is they are based on the assumption that professional development is intended to ensure, not that students are just taught, but that students learn. "This simple shift- from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning- has profound implications for schools" (p. 8).

By utilizing the types of mediators described previously within collaborative systems of learning, the social interactions are meaningful for participants, and the work accomplished within these systems is grounded in context and purpose. Within these types of collaborative systems, individual participation and contribution develops over

time, as experience and needs shift for each member. Within the literature on communities of practice, for instance, the use of peripheral participation by novices offers a built-in system to support scaffolding and progression toward each member's ZPD (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The use of common language structures in all of these types of collaborative groups can also be seen to support the Vygotskian framework.

Guskey (2000) categorized all professional development into seven major models: (a) training,(b) observation/assessment, (c) mentoring, (d) involvement in a development/improvement process, (e) research study groups, (f) inquiry/action research, and (g) individually guided activities. While the last two are more likely to be engaged in by individual teachers, all have some component of collaboration embedded within them. While the first, training, is often considered to be synonymous with professional development, this type of learning experience does not have to be limited to lecture. Eun (2008) summarizes this category well, by describing training as "large group presentation and discussions, workshops, seminars, colloquia, demonstrations, role-playing, simulations, and micro-teaching" (p. 140).

Each of the other categories described by Guskey (2000) is most successful when engaged in as a part of a school-based learning community. These types of learning experiences offer opportunities for teachers to:

- Observe one another and receive critical feedback (observation/assessment)

- Learn from a more knowledgeable other (mentoring)

- Sustain continuous efforts toward change while acquiring new knowledge and skills (involvement in a development/improvement process)

- Stay abreast of and share ideas about the latest in research and theory related to practice (research study groups)

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- Solve problems at the school and/or classroom level (inquiry).

If one were to examine the work of participants during a Summer Institute for a NWP site, daily activities and long-term program goals would support the use of nearly all of these models. Teachers engage in small research study groups throughout the Institute, share research and action research plans with one another, view teaching demonstrations and critically reflect on these micro-teaching experiences, receive feedback from more knowledgeable others within the learning community, and engage in individual inquiry, or action research, to solve problems relevant to his or her own classroom. Inquiry and action research invite opportunities for the purposeful social interactions necessary for the higher levels of internalization described by Vygotksy (1987). Eun (2008) argues for a combined approach which utilizes many of the models that Guskey describes, and I believe that is exactly what the Summer Institute offers, a combination of many different models used throughout the summer, that offer many different types of social interactions for learners.

Other standards have been written to describe the characteristics of effective professional development. By examining participants' descriptions of their effective learning experiences, particularly as they relate to those experienced during the Summer Institute, we begin to have a clearer picture of how the NWP compares to these national standards and how participants' perceptions compare to these published standards. This comparison is the focus of the next section.

Examining NWP in Light of Professional Development Standards

When examining the most often cited set of standards for effective professional development, those of the National Staff Development Council, the importance of learning communities is clear.

The most powerful forms of staff development occur in ongoing teams that meet on a regular basis, preferably several times a week, for the purposes of learning, joint lesson planning, and problem solving. These teams, often called learning communities or communities of practice, operate with a commitment to the norms of continuous improvement and experimentation and engage their members in improving their daily work to advance the achievement of school district and school goals for student learning (NSDC, 2001).

Sparks & Loucks-Horsley's (1989) five models of professional development, and Sparks' (1997) publication of the five standards for effective professional development, include learning activities for teachers that are results-driven, standards-based, content-rich, job-embedded, and school-focused. These standards, and the ones discussed earlier from the NSDC, are social-constructivist in nature and embody many of the characteristics the participants of this research study indicated as important to their own learning experiences, including those that were a part of the NWP experience. However, while the intention is similar, I see some discrepancies between the NWP model and those outlined as necessary for quality professional development. I will use Sparks' criteria listed above to organize this argument for ease of discussion.

First, I examine the NWP model in the context of results-driven professional development. The NWP has engaged in client satisfaction surveys for many years in order to obtain participant feedback after NWP sessions. In addition, more than 150 research studies, both internal and external to NWP, have been conducted, using many types of methodologies, to examine the impact of NWP programming on teachers and their students (NWP, 2008d). A more systematic investigation of NWP methods and the effects of professional development efforts on participants' teaching began a few years ago, in the form of Local Site Research Initiatives. These studies, which utilized more rigorous research designs, are beginning to show the larger picture of the overall impact

of NWP work on student achievement (Swain, LeMahieu, Friedrich, Fessehale, & Yang, 2007). However, the federal government has cited NWP for a lack of evidence of the program's effectiveness (ExpectMore.Gov, 2004). NWP's plan of action to address these concerns is available online through this source and includes multiple steps to continue to address these areas to improve their focus on providing results-driven learning experiences to teachers.

Next, is the NWP a standards-based model for professional development? Because each NWP site is locally driven and not mandated by a set curriculum or prescriptive model, the needs of each site's participants can be addressed by focusing on the state and/or local standards that impact student learning. Sparks (1997) recommends that planning for professional learning begin with what students are expected to know and do, and that can be viewed as a strength of NWP sites. In Texas, all students are expected to master the same set of knowledge and skills at each grade level, regardless of what school they attend.

However, because each NWP site serves a large geographic area, participants in Summer Institutes are from many different campuses, and sometimes represent many different school districts. Because of this diversity, each individual participant comes with a slightly different set of needs in terms of how to reconcile what they learn during the Summer Institute and their own teaching context. The flexibility of the NWP model, with only a set of social practices and learning principles rather than a scripted set of teaching activities, can certainly meet a great deal of these needs, but nonetheless, the large diversity among participants' teaching contexts can present challenges.

Sparks' (1997) next criterion is content-rich professional development. NWP's model of focusing on writing and the teaching of writing provide participants with opportunities to learn new models, see appropriate instruction that is aligned with state standards, and experience best practices from the student perspective, all centered around one strand of the literacy content focus. This lengthy, focused learning experience, whose sole purpose is to improve the teaching of writing, could undoubtedly be considered content-rich by any standard. By increasing content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy, teachers are more easily able to translate that knowledge into effective instruction for a wide variety of student learner needs and assist students in making real-world connections to what they are learning (Koppich & Knapp, 1998).

Next, Sparks (1997) calls for effective PD to be job-embedded. Most teachers view professional development as something external to their daily lives, something that is done to them, not something in which they participate (J. W. Little, 1997). A review of the research by the National Foundation for the Improvement for Education (NFIE) confirms that, when teacher learning is embedded within school-based learning communities, student learning is improved (Renyi, 1996). The NFIE (1996) report shows "that when professional development is built into the daily, weekly, and yearlong job of teaching, it results in changed practice and student success. One of the most critical barriers to providing these types of opportunities is not resources, but time" (Hirsch & Hirsh, 2008). This barrier will be examined more fully later in this chapter.

The National Writing Project's work is not job-embedded, as it does not take place within the confines of a single school and is not aimed at inquiry and problem solving for a single school context. Once the Summer Institute is over, participants

return to their own campuses and contexts, and while follow-up meetings are helpful in sustaining implementation efforts, they cannot substitute for the daily social structures in which teachers work. However, I believe that participation in the Summer Institute informs participants about how this type of learning community is structured and provides examples of the types of benefits from collaborative learning experiences, examples that can then be transferred to other learning communities that are job-embedded. Because of the NWP goal of creating teacher leaders, I see this as one way participants become motivated to take the NWP model back to their own schools and create learning communities. An interesting alternative to this research study would be to create or investigate professional development that is similar to the work of NWP yet more locally based to study the similarities and differences in implementation patterns by participants.

The final criterion in Sparks' list is professional development that is school-focused. By this, Hirsch and Hirsch (2008) are referring to school reform efforts that focus on building the capacity of schools. This capacity should include a collective focus on continuous improvement, joint responsibility for student learning, and becoming a cohesive unit that builds upon the strengths and challenges of the school environment (Darling-Hammond, 1998b; Hirsch & Hirsh, 2008; Koppich & Knapp, 1998; Sparks, 1997).

Again, I see this as an area for improvement in the NWP model. I do believe that the NWP model is designed to and focused around building the capacity of individual teachers; it is not school-based and therefore cannot have as one of its aims the improvement in specific campuses. As argued previously, though, I believe that the

NWP model does serve to inform participants about how to organize effective professional learning experiences, a model they can then take with them back to their own campuses. As participants begin to share their ideas and practices and to become teacher leaders in their own communities, the NWP model can spread and have effects in less obvious but equally important ways.

This section has offered a discussion of the literature related to the second theme revealed in data analysis. This theme, which focused on the interpersonal relationships necessary for effective learning, is heavily grounded in the work of Vygotksy and other social-constructivist theorists and researchers. What has been offered here is a portrait of what effective learning experiences should look like. The next section, though, will deal with the disconnect often found between the learning environment and the teaching environment, including the environmental factors most readily identified as barriers to effective teaching.

Environmental Factors: Forces that Impact Learning and Implementation

While there is a great deal of evidence that illustrates the characteristics of effective professional development, I am still left with one lasting question, one that the participants of this research study helped to illuminate. If we have so much evidence, including theory, research, and professional standards, that inform the educational community about how to create effective professional learning experiences, why are classroom practices and student achievement not experiencing more of an impact? Why do reform efforts seem to take so long? Why, as some have noted, does change in education happen at a glacial pace? These questions lead to an important examination of the other factors that affect efforts to improve educational practice. These factors

include the environmental and outside forces that influence teacher implementation in the classroom.

So often, teachers report satisfaction with learning experiences and are eager to implement new practices in their classroom, but they do not live and work in a vacuum. They are at the mercy of so many competing pressures, mandates, agendas, and sets of standards, and for many, simple survival and maintenance of the status quo is all they can muster each day. Kottler and Zehm (2000) break these stresses down into four major areas of stress.

(1) What others do to you. Difficult kids, incompetent administrators, backbiting colleagues, uncooperative parents, and unsupportive friends and family all cause stress.

(2) What the environment does to you. The politics, conflicted relationships, chaos, negative attitudes around you, and less-than-desirable physical space contribute to stress levels.

(3) What the job does to you. There is too little time and too much to do. You are on your feet nonstop through the day. Even finding time for a bathroom break is a challenge, much less time to catch your breath. Everyone wants a piece of your hide.

(4) What you do to yourself. Your own unrealistic expectations, fears of failure, self-doubts and insecurities, negative attitudes, and irrational thinking create your own needless suffering (Kottler & Zehm, 2000, p. 41).

Participants of this research study, when describing their own experiences, cited most of these sources of stress. Many of these sources stem from relationships with other people- parents, students, peers, administrators. These pressures, when viewed as a larger part of the overall system that affects teacher learning and implementation, help to more clearly illustrate the importance of the types of effective social structures for learning discussed in the previous section. When schools and learning environments are characterized by a philosophy of inquiry, when teacher problem-solving and

reflection is a valuable part of the school community, many of the stresses listed above become more manageable. Also of importance, I believe, is that, of all the stresses listed here, it is only those in the final category, "what you do to yourself," that the individual teacher has sole control over. While a teacher may attempt to exert control over others and their physical environment, in reality, they are only really in control of themselves and how they react to the pressures they face each day.

The sources of stress most common in the participants' descriptions were the impact of curriculum, standardized testing, and time on daily instructional choices. These factors held a great deal of sway over each participant's daily life, and each was described as a barrier to the implementation of change efforts in the classroom. When viewed together, these forces, I believe, stem from one source, which I call accountability. Within our nation's schools today, a large emphasis on accountability measures, academic expectations, administrative leadership, and high scores on standardized tests. The human dimensions of teaching and learning are no longer an emphasis in today's classroom (Kottler & Zehm, 2000). As schools and districts become more concerned about test scores and accountability systems, they enact control over teachers by mandating curriculum documents, documentation of intervention measures, greater time spent in meetings and planning sessions, and more responsibilities heaped upon the shoulders of the average teacher. This pressure has created a ever-increasing whirlwind of stress and anxiety for teachers today, and it is this stress that the participants in this research study felt most acutely.

Short of repealing No Child Left Behind (U.S.Congress, 2002) and removing all states' requirements for student passing rates and standardized test initiatives, the only

way to assist teachers in dealing with such barriers, I believe, is to transfer onus for professional learning away from the outside service providers and toward the school administrators and curriculum leaders. By giving teachers opportunities to learn most effectively within their schools, to engage in meaningful work that is compatible and supported by their school community, we can truly make learning a part of the teacher's daily life.

Within the context of this research study, it is important to consider the role of learning communities in the implementation patterns of the participants. Each participant indicated that the knowledge, skills, and beliefs they acquired through their SRWP experience, and those they felt more excited about implementing in the classroom, were often not implemented because of the lack of support they felt from colleagues on their campuses. When examining participants' descriptions relating to collegial support, one pattern is very clear. Those teachers who felt support by the peers and administrators experienced the highest level of implementation, while those who experienced the least support had the most difficulty in implementing change efforts in their classrooms. Clearly, then, the nature of the social environment of each school is a crucial factor when considering, not only what and how teachers learn, but in what they do with that new knowledge in their classrooms.

Teacher learning, it seems, is best supported within schools that are crafted as learning communities, schools that embody the tenets of socially-mediated learning previously discussed. If we cannot bring the schools to professional development, it seems, then we must bring professional development to the schools.

> The school context has to be transformed to be compatible with the teachers' efforts at implementing what they have acquired from their professional

development experiences… the everyday working context of teachers has to be in accordance with the conditions conducive to the continuous professional growth of teachers (Eun, 2008, p. 150).

This type of community must be created, obviously, by proactive school administrators who are committed to creating these conditions, who are committed to the ideals of social constructivism, and who are committed to creating more effective teaching and learning for their teachers and students. "Many administrators don't view teachers as professionals, so they believe they must control and monitor all of their time. They don't trust teachers to use their non-instructional time wisely" (Sparks, 2000, p. 2). It is this type of attitudinal barrier that must first be overcome in order to effect real change in education.

Schools that embody these tenets, which truly value professional learning and make efforts to assist teachers in systematic learning for systemic change, are rare, I think. Other effective professional development models that are not job-embedded, such as the NWP, offer educators an alternative to school-based initiatives yet still provide valuable learning experiences that embody the characteristics and standards previously discussed. It is still necessary and imperative, I believe, to continue to focus research efforts on the improvement of all professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice, Policy, Research, and Theory

What does all of this mean? Where do we go from here? As I see it, the themes and patterns that emerged from these four teachers' stories are significant on many levels and can tell us a great deal about the structures and content necessary for effective professional development. This research, while limited in scope, can

nonetheless inform those who provide professional development as well as those who

draft and enforce policies relating to teacher preparation and professional learning. In

addition to providing implications for practice and policy, I also offer additional

recommendations for further research needed in this area. Finally, I conclude with a

discussion of the theory base related to professional development and what I, as a

researcher, have learned from this study related to educational theory.

Implications for Practice

First, and most practically, these teachers' perceptions and descriptions can

inform the practices embedded locally within the Southwest Regional Writing Project's

Summer Institute and ongoing professional development opportunities. The participants

described their experiences with the Summer Institute as overwhelmingly positive, but

there is always room for improvement in any learning activity. More specifically, the

directors of the SRWP can continue to provide the types of community building activity

that bring these teachers together and help to forge the community of practice

described herein. In addition, by continuing to support teachers engaged in reflective

inquiry related to their own classroom problems, the SRWP continues to provide a

setting for teacher problem solving. Perhaps by building upon this idea, the Summer

Institute directors can better assist teachers in identifying those problems most relevant

to teacher inquiry, tying more closely the work done in the Summer Institute with the

contexts and resources available to teachers at their campuses. The continuation and

enhancement of monthly meetings, as a place to not only critique teaching practices but

also to continue to share ideas and assist in problem-solving, would also continue to

sustain the community once it has left the initial arena of the Summer Institute. By

building upon the continuity model already in place within the Summer Institute, strengthening this component as a vehicle for assisting participants in overcoming the barriers and obstacles they face on their own campuses, could lead to more effective implementation by SI participants and increased student achievement in writing.

Also, by creating stronger continuity structures, the SRWP in effect extends the Summer Institute community of practice model into the school year, offering participants a lived experience of this model with greater relevance to their daily work and a stronger connection to the inquiry work of each participant. This model, as described previously, could then serve as a model of effective, continuous learning that each participant then could bring back to their home campus, modifying the SRWP model to work on schools. This, I believe, is a natural progression to the work of the NWP and one of its central goals, as participants become teacher leaders on their own campus, sharing the ideas related to effective professional learning they were exposed to by the NWP model.

Within the SRWP's Summer Institute, the perception by the participants was that the knowledge gained from the teaching demonstrations was less favorable than other aspects of the experience, such as the discussions about current research, the sharing of quality children's literature, and the inquiry related to their own teaching. Participants reported that the teaching demonstrations did not teach them something they did not already know or were not already using. However, they valued the critical responses to the demonstrations, all stating that this aspect helped to develop their own sense of how to evaluate their own teaching, but the actual content or teaching strategies covered were less beneficial. Following this emergent pattern, the SRWP directors can use this information to plan and implement high-quality teaching demonstrations that are more

relevant to the participants' learning needs and classroom goals. By pre-assessing participants' levels of interest and need, then seeking out presenters for demonstrations who can provide instruction related to the audience's level of understanding, the demonstrations can better assist teachers on the multiple levels of content knowledge, pedagogical understanding, and reflective practice.

Implications for Policy

Beyond the setting of the Summer Institute, the larger arena of staff development provides another implication from the reported themes, calling for a critical examination of how our K-12 campuses are supporting professional learning. It was revealed in the data that the goals and values of the campus undoubtedly affect teachers' work and continued learning. But, what are these schools valuing in terms of professional learning? What support systems are in place that assist teachers in continuing to learn and sustaining change efforts? Schools, and the administration that guides them, must not only talk the talk, as it were, but they must also walk the walk. More specifically, schools could support teacher learning and change efforts in one or more of the following ways:

- Establish professional learning communities on each campus, providing structure and resources for teachers to engage in self-directed and continuous inquiry.

- Provide more time within teachers' daily schedules to engage in reflective discourse with colleagues, write reflective journals about their own practice, or locate and dissect relevant literature and theory connected to campus and classroom issues.

- Involve teachers in decisions regarding school-wide or departmental professional development opportunities.

- Provide time and resources to allow teachers to observe one another in order to establish positive professional relationships, share ideas, and learn about effective pedagogy in context.

To this end, Desimone and her colleagues (Desimone et al., 2002), in their three-year research study of the effects of professional development on teachers' instruction, point out that school districts, arguably the most prolific providers of professional development, must often make tough decisions related to the depth and breadth of learning opportunities for teachers. "Districts and schools often must choose between serving larger numbers of teachers with less focused and sustained professional development or providing higher quality activities for fewer teachers" (Desimone et al., 2002, p. 105). Why must schools make this type of choice at all? In order to deliver quality learning opportunities to teachers, districts and schools must be given the necessary resources. Time, money, materials, and qualified facilitators are all necessary components for professional development, and yet educational policies that focus on the number of clock-hours logged or credit hours taken, as well as budgeting for the most "bang for their buck," are not structured to provide this type of support.

Furthermore, schools and districts often view professional development as mere training, with little emphasis on meaningful problem-solving, the sharing of expertise among practitioners, or the opportunity to receive feedback from peers because the very structures of our schools limit contact between teachers to a 50-minute planning period (Sparks, 2000). Dozier discussed these same ideas.

> "We have to begin with the issue of time. We have to rethink the structure of a teacher's day so teachers have opportunities to reflect on their own practice and as a faculty to collaboratively determine the strengths and weaknesses of a school's program. We're talking about a special kind of time- blocks of uninterrupted time, without students, during which teachers work collaboratively on the content they teach and ways they teach it" (2000, p. 2).

This change in mindset on the part of school and district leadership to rethink policies related to time allocation would allow teachers to see the impact that effective

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professional development can have on their own teaching and students' success, thereby raising satisfaction and achievement at the same time.

Implications for Research

The paucity of research that utilizes phenomenological methods to investigate effective professional development and the conditions that support teachers' improvement efforts in their classrooms also deserves attention. Engaging teachers' in rich, open discussions about what is important, indeed necessary, for them to continue to improve their practices is viewed as important by this researcher. The type of data gathered using extensive interviews could lend credibility to and inform other types of research into professional learning and can help illuminate the conditions that prevent true improvement of teaching methods and beliefs. In this age of accountability and standards-based education, it seems only natural that one area of concern for educational researchers is to listen to and understand the voices "on the front lines." I believe that teachers desire an audience to listen to their concerns, understand their contexts, and assist them in making better instructional choices. Through phenomenological investigation, researchers can provide that audience and lend authority to their voices, their concerns, their needs.

In addition to the type of research just described, additional research is needed to examine the impact of professional development on student learning. How much of what is learned in professional development transferred into student achievement? Guskey's (2000; 2002a) model for evaluating professional development, combined with the use of complementary research methods and data sources, could yield a great deal of information to answer this question, and further research into this area is needed.

Implications for Theory

       As discussed previously, there are many voices within the educational community that can inform us about the questions under investigation. Over time, educational theory and research have come to be comprised of a number of discourse communities, groups of researchers and theorists working toward a common goal, using common language, and utilizing common tools in their pursuit of understanding. Examples of these types of discourse communities are those who study communities of practice, professional learning communities, and teacher networks. All three of these communities are studying similar phenomena, and yet the language they use to describe the people, places, and events surrounding these phenomena are quite often different. More importantly, I think, for the purposes of discussing the results of this research study, these groups do not often communicate with one another or share research across sub-disciplinary lines. Researchers in higher education, for example, may not know what their colleagues in curriculum and instruction or educational administration are investigating. They are all working toward a common goal, to improve social learning experiences, and yet their own learning experiences are not always informed by their peers down the hall, across campus, or at other institutions. Each group seeks to, in some way, make a commodity out of the intellectual property being produced in their discourse community, and by creating a new language to describe similar constructs, their theory and research become unique and, therefore, more marketable to consumers.

       In searching for one theory base to support the findings of this study, it became clear that this was indeed a daunting task. The views and perceptions shared by the

participants were supported and illustrated by multiple theorists, as discussed previously. It seems clear, though, that there are overarching commonalities between these theories that can be examined and discussed. Certainly a great deal can be learned by examining the two main views discussed, that of social cognitive and socio-cultural theorists, and yet neither of these theories wholly explains or lends support to the various themes reported by the research participants. Indeed, like much of research that involves the understanding of human learning and interactions, these results indicate a complex and intricate understanding of how teachers learn through professional development and apply that learning to their classroom instruction.

Therefore, what this study suggests, and what I as a researcher have learned most from conducting this study, is that adult learning and the practice of professional development are most effective when they are supported by a foundation of practice and principles that are found in constructivist epistemology rather than those found in only one particular theory. The label *constructivism* has come to be applied to many theories in education, theories that seek to understand how learners develop concept development and meaningful understanding rather than simply the acquisition of behaviors or skills (Fosnot, 1996). What this study suggests is that, rather than focusing primarily on one of these theories, that of social cognitivism or socio-culturalism for example, as researchers we need to instead examine the intersection of these larger ideas, a synthesis of the many ideas brought forth in these theories. "The important question to be asked is not whether the cognizing individual or the culture should be given priority in an analysis of learning, but what the interplay between them is" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 23). Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin (1984) further elaborated on this idea with:

The biological and the social are neither separable, nor antithetical, nor alternatives, but complementary. All sources of the behavior of organisms, in the temporal sense to which we should restrict the term cause, are simultaneously both social and biological, as they are all amenable to analysis at many levels. All human phenomena are not 'causes' of those phenomena but merely 'descriptions' of them at particular levels, in particular scientific languages. (p. 282)

Constructivist epistemology and practice that is grounded in these beliefs is founded upon two main principles, as described by Howe and Berv (2000):

(1) Learning takes as its starting point the knowledge, attitudes, and interests students bring to the learning situation, and

(2) Learning results from the interaction between these characteristics and experience in such a way that learners *construct* their own understanding. (pp. 30-31)

It is the responsibility of constructivist educators, whether as teachers of child or adult learners, to "actively promote a fallible view of knowledge by inviting critical perspectives to be brought to bear on these conceptual schemes" (Howe & Berv, 2000, p. 36). These experiences must be grounded in multiple modes of delivery, modes that include opportunities not only for direct instruction of new concepts but the critical examination and reconstruction of the concepts themselves and the cultural tools learners use to understand them. By engaging in instructional activities that provide knowledge and skills coupled with critical dialogue, construction of knowledge and the examination of beliefs and ideas from multiple perspectives can occur, providing true constructivist learning.

This study, then, supports a view that allows for multiple constructivist theories to be utilized in the creation of professional development experiences and environments that promote effective professional learning. By allowing for many perspectives that examine both how the mind constructs meaning independently and how the social world

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influences and enhances that construction can lead to learning experiences that allow for the interplay between these to develop. Therefore, I argue for a broader vision of educational theory that supports these multiple perspectives and allows for the reinterpretation of adult learning in this more global sense.

Synthesis and Conclusions

Where do we go from here, then? It seems that the work of professional developers must become, as argued earlier, entrenched within the school context, and the policies and structures that comprise teachers' daily lives must also be changed to support this necessary job-embedded learning. We must, in fact, rethink what professional development really is and look for more meaningful ways to assist teachers in their learning pursuits.

Alternatives to the traditional model of professional development increase the possibility that teachers will transfer their learning from learning activities, such as professional development, to the classroom. This transfer of learning is important for professional development activities to be useful in any way. Only when practitioners implement new learning into practice, in both similar and new situations, can we be assured that learning has occurred for educators, which is the ultimate purpose for professional development.

Overall, then, the results of this research study indicate that teachers who are engaged in professional learning that focuses on meaningful context and purpose, the use of interpersonal relationships within the learning context, and a critical examination of the environmental factors that influence their instructional choices can indeed make a difference in their students' achievement and learning. School administrators and district

coordinators interested in improving the quality of teaching practices that increase

student achievement would do well to focus on embedded professional learning within

the professional lives of teachers, focusing on these previously identified components

for success:

> Effective professional development must have a supportive context and meaningful purpose which: meets the physical and cognitive needs of participants; focuses on improving practice, content knowledge, and pedagogy; provides participants with choice, adequate time and ownership of learning experiences; and includes opportunities for sustained learning and accountability.

> Learning experiences are greatly affected by interpersonal relationships and opportunities for social learning and should be built upon the principles of: taking risks in the learning environment; sharing beliefs in a community of practice with effective support structures; involving all members, including the leaders, in the community of practice; and including opportunities for dialogue and the sharing of best practices as tools for learning.

> Implementation efforts are influenced by multiple sources, including: collegial and administrator support; curriculum and standardized testing; and time. Effective professional development must include attention to assisting teachers in dealing with these influences when they become barriers to implementation efforts.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your experience with writing project. What did you learn? How has it changed you, if at all?

2. What do you see as goals for yourself in becoming a better teacher of writing?

3. What are some of the routines or rituals you use in your classroom?

4. What type of choice do students have in their writing in your classroom?

5. What types of tools do students use to help them in their writing?

6. What role does modeling play in your classroom?

7. How do students share their writing in your classroom?

8. How is writing used in your curriculum or integrated into how you teach?

9. How do students publish their work? How often does this happen?

10. Do you utilize writing workshop in your classroom? How often?

11. What types of genre are you students exposed to in your writing classroom?

12. Why do you assign writing?

13. What do you think of the quality of your students' writing?

14. What are your students' greatest strengths and weaknesses in writing?

15. Do you use the writing process in your classroom? If so, how?

16. How do you motivate them to write?

17. How do you assess their writing?

18. Do you feel competent to teach writing in your class?

19. What learning experiences do you attribute to your own teaching methods?

20. What or whom in your school facilitates and supports your use of these practices in your classroom?

21. What in your school hinders your teaching of writing?

22. How has your practice in teaching of writing evolved over the years?

23. What or whom influenced this change?

24. Have you influenced other faculty members in their practice of the teaching of writing? If so, how?

25. What sustains you in the teaching of writing?

Motivation Toward Professional Development Scale

Read each statement carefully. Of the five responses listed after each statement, circle the one that best characterizes you, answering as honestly as possible with the description that applies to you now. Feel free to write comments after any statement about which you wish to provide more information.

1. The primary purpose of professional development is to upgrade classroom teaching performance.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

2. Information and skills presented through professional development apply to my classroom.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

3. Teachers are involved in developing purposes, activities, and methods of evaluation for professional development activities.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

4. Teachers do not incorporate knowledge gained from professional development activities into their teaching performance.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

5. More support and/or follow up are needed to implement ideas or activities generated by professional development activities.

Strongly agree   Agree Neutral   Disagree Strongly Disagree
  5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

6. Professional development programs are determined by the needs and concerns of the teachers.

Strongly agree   Agree Neutral   Disagree Strongly Disagree
  5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

7. Teachers are asked to identify professional development topics which they feel will strengthen professional competence.

Strongly agree   Agree Neutral   Disagree Strongly Disagree
  5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

8. I prefer not to attend professional development activities.

Strongly agree   Agree Neutral   Disagree Strongly Disagree
  5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

9. Teachers actively use information presented in professional development activities to enhance classroom instruction.

Strongly agree   Agree Neutral   Disagree Strongly Disagree
  5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

10. Assistance and/or materials to implement the learning activities gained from professional development are provided.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

11. Teachers would prefer professional development activities be carried on within the school.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

12. Many professional development activities do not appear relevant to my teaching needs.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

13. If more teachers were involved in planning professional development programs, teacher commitment would be greater.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

14. I am able to apply professional development training to my classroom teaching.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

15. The administration supports my implementation of professional development activities.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

16. I have the opportunity to select professional development activities that will improve my teaching effectiveness.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

17. I enjoy learning new things related to my profession.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

18. I am excited when I learn something new that I can apply in my classroom.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

19. Professional development and continuing education are not helpful to me as a teacher.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

    5   4   3   2   1

Comments:

20. Continuing to increase my knowledge and skills is important in my job as a teacher.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

21. Being someone who continues to learn is not important to me.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

22. I willingly seek out opportunities to learn something new that will help me in my classroom.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

23. I feel that professional development is not very important for teachers.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

24. I am motivated to attend professional development sessions offered by my school or district.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

25. I am motivated to attend professional development sessions offered by outside groups or organizations.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
        5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

26. I am motivated to continue my education at the college level.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
        5   4   3   2   1
Comments:

*Source: Adapted from "Teacher Attitude Toward Inservice Questionnaire,"
        McBride, R. E., Reed, J. L., & Dollar, J. E. (1994). Teacher attitudes toward staff
        development: A symbolic relationship at best. Journal of Staff Development,
        15(2), p. 36-41.*

Teacher Information Survey

Name _____

Degrees Held	Conferring Institution	Year
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How many years have you been teaching? _____

In which schools and at what grade levels have you taught?

_____

_____

Are there any subjects you particularly like to teach?

_____

_____

_____

Are there any subjects you particularly don't like to teach?

_____

_____

_____

What are the professional development experiences you have had that have impacted your teaching habits the most?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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