HOW SCHOOL LEADERS PRIORITIZE AND ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO IMPROVE TEACHER QUALITY THROUGH TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY IN SUBURBAN NORTH CAROLINA

by

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ABSTRACT

DEONTÉ RASHAWN TYSON. How school leaders prioritize and allocate resources to improve teacher quality through teacher professional development: A multiple case study in suburban North (Under the directions of DR. SANDRA L. DIKA)

This multiple case study examined the methods by which school leaders determined and planned teacher professional development, as well as what teachers perceived as their professional development needs and how they believe school leaders take those needs into account. The study took place at two suburban elementary schools (1 traditional public, 1 public charter) in the Charlotte Metro area. The analysis of qualitative data provided by school leader interviews revealed the process by which school leader's determined professional development for teachers in their respective schools. Descriptive quantitative data was gathered through teacher questionnaires about their professional development needs/desires and their perceptions on how school leaders took those into account when planning professional development. In both schools, leaders indicated they try to balance school and district needs with the needs of individual teachers when planning teacher professional development, and teacher perceptions of how leaders determine professional development were generally aligned with leader reports. While the majority of teachers at both schools communicated an overall satisfaction with professional development, teacher respondents at the traditional public school expressed higher levels of agreement to being satisfied with professional development and that their needs were being met. Implications of the study's findings include a focus on teacher collaboration as an integral part of professional development, as well as the need for teacher input in the professional development planning process.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to you!

Yes, you!

Because you are God's child

Because you dream

Because you are a King/Queen

Because you are royalty

Why else?

Because you have a vision

Because you are strong

Because you will never give up

And…

Because you won't take any wooden nickels

Also…

Because you actually took the time to read this

Whatever your dream is, keep on pushing and let nothing distract you from your destiny!
"For we walk by faith, not by sight"
2 Corinthians 5:7

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The national conversation on teacher quality since the passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001 points to teacher professional development as a key lever to improve teacher quality. Educators and researchers have developed models and best practices, but less information is available about how school leaders actually facilitate professional development at the school level. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), an average of $1.5 billion of Title II federal funds and billions more from other federal funding sources are allocated annually towards teacher and school leader professional development. Despite this significant resource allocation, the links between professional development, effective pedagogy, and student success are not straightforward. The aim of this study was to examine one aspect of this relationship - how school leaders determine professional development needs and how teachers perceive their needs and the extent to which those needs are being met – through a case study of two elementary schools in suburban North Carolina.

The National Staff Development Council and other researchers agree that teachers should receive assistance to further the development of skills and knowledge previously attained through professional development (NSDC, 2001). At the center of all professional development activities should be the increase of student learning. During professional development, teachers should be treated as learners who are interested in learning new concepts to improve their craft (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995).

Modes of teacher professional development in the United States have changed throughout the years, from predominantly workshops to more modern forms of teacher professional development that focus on cooperative learning. Researchers concur that

when teachers experience quality professional development focused on content, there is a direct correlation to student achievement (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Teacher professional development is such an important component to the extended developing of teachers that teachers in countries such as Switzerland, Germany, China, and other countries get 10-20 hours of professional development a week (McRobbie, 2000). Professional development is an expected practice for not only teachers in the United States, but for teachers all over the world.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on teacher professional development, particularly how professional development looks and operates at the school level. In this opening chapter, the researcher summarized the national and state policy contexts related to teacher quality to contextualize the study. Next, the problem statement, research questions, and purpose are outlined. Finally, delimitations, limitations, definitions, and assumptions guiding the study are delineated. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

National Policy Context of Teacher Quality Since 1965

Passed in 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was a component of the Great Society program introduced by President Johnson. ESEA outlined the involvement of government in K-12 policy and offered more than $1 billion per year in aid to what is commonly known now as Title I, which educates disadvantaged students. ESEA has been reauthorized more than half a dozen times and with each rewrite the federal government's role is sought to be expanded (Klein, 2015).

The effects of ESEA are evident in the current public education system in the United States (Taylor & Christ, 2010). Title I programs were established as part of ESEA

to offer additional opportunities to schools with a high volume of children living in poverty and with the goal to improve the achievement rate for students who suffer from disadvantaged circumstances. Head Start, another legislation program of the ESEA, provides preschool education to underprivileged children in an effort to prepare them for formal education. Other major acts resulting from the ESEA include the Bilingual Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The ESEA is revisited and updated every five years to include the newest amendments.

Due to concerns over the international competitiveness of the American education system, ESEA was significantly updated in 2001 as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Klein, 2015). NCLB passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support in 2001 and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in January 2002. The role of the federal government increased by holding schools responsible for the academic progress of their students.

No Child Left Behind legislation required that all students be taught by "highly qualified teachers" (NCLB, 2001). According to evaluative reports from the U.S. Department of Education, a highly qualified teacher was defined as having:

1. A bachelor's degree
2. Full state certification, and
3. Demonstrated competency, as defined by the state, in each core academic subject that they teach

NCLB highlighted teacher professional development as an important component in improving the skills and effectiveness of teachers. It also increased the qualifications for Title I funded teacher assistants who provide instructional support (Klein, 2015).

Although workshops have been the most popular form of professional development in American education by far, research on the workshop model suggests that it has limited impact on student learning or teacher practice (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). The workshop model was rejected by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which defined all professional development funded through the law to include activities that "are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences" (NCLB Act, 2001). Although the law discusses the ineffectiveness of the one-day workshop approach, there is little evidence to show that states and school districts are adhering to this directive.

The most recent federal policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), was signed into law in December of 2015 by President Barack Obama. ESSA aims to relinquish the input by the federal government in educational policy and give more freedom to states in educational decision-making (Klein, 2016). ESSA focuses on personalized and evidence-based professional development. According to the law, funding for professional development should be grounded in research and catered to the precise needs of the educator. Lawmakers believe that this law will not only enhance the results of professional development but also will increase teacher capacity to assist students in succeeding (Pierce, 2016).

ESSA is expected to create new professional development opportunities by allowing states to create new teacher, principal, and school leadership academies in high

need schools (Pierce, 2016). ESSA will also support the recruitment of new teachers. The law will allow for processes that will allow for teachers certified and/or licensed in one state to be hired in other states. Along with these enhancements, ESSA also redefines the definition of professional development as "… sustained, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and inclusive" (ASCD, 2015).

Table 1, adapted from ASCD (2015), highlights similarities and differences in the requirements for teacher and leader effectiveness in the No Child Left Behind Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act. The effects of the new ESSA on teacher professional development are too recent to be studied in the research literature on the effects of professional development. The current study provided a glimpse into how schools are responding to the new law in the planning of teacher professional development.

Table 1

Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Requirements in the No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds Acts

Requirement	No Child Left Behind (NCLB)	Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Teacher education and certification	Requires that all teachers in core subjects are highly qualified, as defined below: • New teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and pass test in subject matter • Existing teachers have bachelor's degree, license or certification in subject they teach and demonstrate expertise in that subject	Terminates requirements for highly qualified teachers
Title I teachers	Requires that teachers and paraprofessionals supported by Title I-A monies to meet state license and certification requirements	Identical to NCLB
Definition of Professional Development	Professional development is defined as activities that improve the knowledge of teachers in subjects they teach, allow them to become highly qualified, and expert understanding of instructional strategies	Improves definition of professional development and says it should be personalized, ongoing, job-embedded and: • Open to all school staff • Data driven • Have educator input • Evaluated on a regular basis Creates academies to assist in meeting need for effective educators Creates new teacher programs for clinical training opportunities
Professional Development Activities	Requires states to provide professional development that is scientifically based for teachers of core subjects	Expands access to professional development. Professional development is evidence based.
Teacher Evaluations	No teacher evaluations but does require states with NCLB waivers to create or improve teacher evaluation system	No requirement for teacher evaluation system, but if Title II funds are used to create or change school evaluation system, must be partially based on student achievement.

North Carolina Educational Policy Context

According to official information published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2016), the state of North Carolina has 115 local public school districts which are made up of approximately 2,500 traditional public schools. The state is also home to 148 charter schools and three residential schools for students who have hearing or visual impairments. Laws, procedures and policies for public schools (grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth) are implemented by the NCDPI. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study identifies subjects and course content, and outlines the assessment and accountability model that is used to appraise student, school and district achievement. Education leaders in North Carolina were the first in the nation to address learning standards, student test and school accountability concurrently (NC.gov, n.d.).

The Educator Effectiveness division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) provides leadership, technical assistance, resources, and consultative services to schools in North Carolina with the purpose of improving student learning and achievement through professional learning (NCDPI, 2016). To assist in these efforts, several partnerships have been formed with higher educational institutions, local and national organizations. The North Carolina State Board of Education adopted the Standards for Professional Learning in 2011, which outlines characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching, supportive leadership and improved student results (NCDPI, 2016).

The term professional learning and professional development are used interchangeably throughout the NCDPI website. When outlining effective teaching strategies, professional learning and professional development are mentioned at the

forefront of methods to improve those strategies. According to the NCDPI, professional development is "a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (NCDPI, 2009).

In the state-supported document by Learning Forward (2011), seven standards are outlined as means of increasing professional learning that leads to improved teacher effectiveness and better results for students:

- Learning Communities – by committing to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- Leadership – having skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning
- Resources - through prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning
- Data - using a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
- Learning Designs – by integrating theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
- Implementation - applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.
- Outcomes – by aligning its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

The same document (Learning Forward, 2011) also outlines four prerequisites for effective professional learning to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement:

- Educator commitment
- Educator willingness to learn
- Ability to foster collaborative inquiry and learning
- Differentiated mindset

Thus, the NCDPI has made significant efforts to ensure that teachers in the state have access to professional development. As part of those efforts, the department has created a system of online courses that count toward teacher professional development. North Carolina has committed themselves to providing resources for teacher professional development.

Problem Statement

According to a recent report published by the National School Boards Association and the Center for Public Education (Gulamhussein, 2013), most of the research surrounding professional development has concluded that the workshop model of professional development is ineffective for improving student learning and teacher practice. Often, these workshops are "packaged" by a consulting company hired by the school district and may have a limited relationship to goals or interests of the teachers and the school district. In Gulamhussein's (2013) review, 90% of the teachers who attended professional development said that it was not useful. Professional development is not achieving the goal of improved instruction leading to increased student learning (Desimone, 2011).

Research Question and Purpose

Teacher professional development has been the primary means to educate teachers on new practices, technology, standards, and more. Published studies regarding

teacher professional development focus on effectiveness and models of professional development. Limited research, however, has focused on views of professional development from school-level personnel. Each year, school districts spend vast amounts of money of professional development for teachers. How do administrators decide the use of professional development funds, and how do teachers feel these choices are meeting their needs and wants? The purpose of this dissertation study was to understand 1) how elementary school leaders at two suburban elementary schools – one public and one charter - determine professional development needs, 2) how the teachers at those two schools perceive their own professional development needs and the extent to which leaders take their needs into account when planning professional development; and 3) how school leader and teacher perceptions align at each site and across sites.

A multiple case study approach with an embedded unit of analysis was used for the research design. The data sources for the study were chosen through convenience sampling and included two elementary-serving schools within the Charlotte, North Carolina area. Qualitative data for the study was gathered through guided interviews with school leaders. Interviews were then open coded and key concepts were identified to get an idea for how prioritization and resource allocation for teacher professional development is conducted at each school. The quantitative data for the study was obtained from an online teacher questionnaire. Descriptive statistics from the questionnaire responses were tabulated to describe and analyze teacher perceptions at the two schools.

Delimitations of Study

The term *delimitation* refers to the characteristics of the study that could limit its scope, including both exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made throughout the study (Simon & Goes, 2010). There are two delimitations of note in this study. First, the geographic location of the study is limited to the metro area of Charlotte, North Carolina. Charlotte is the largest city in North Carolina, with an estimated population of nearly 800,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015). Charlotte and its home county (Mecklenburg) are notably more racially and ethnically diverse than surrounding counties, and also have overall higher levels of educational attainment.

The second delimitation to the study is the selection of the two schools within the geographic area. Both encompass elementary school grades, one traditional public (K-5) and one public charter (K-8). The chosen schools meet the study criteria (suburban elementary schools) and the researcher was able to gain access to these schools.

Limitations of Study

Limitations are factors that may affect the results of a study and are usually outside of the control of the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2010). A limitation to this study is the use of self-reported data. Although the confidentiality of participants was maintained, they may have withheld information or failed to report honestly out of concerns of being identified. Additionally, the school leader participants did not have a similar number of years of experience at their respective sites – the charter school principal had been serving in the role since the school's inception 18 years ago, while the traditional school principal had only served for two years.

Definitions

School Leader or Administrator – This term refers to anyone who is considered to be a part of the school's administrative team. This can include principals, assistant principals, dean of students, professional development leads, and curriculum coordinators/leads.

Assumptions

For this study, the researcher assumes that school leaders and teachers are providing honest feedback to the best of their ability. The researcher also assumes that participant feedback will be unbiased and contain no ulterior motives.

Summary

The national and North Carolina state policy context of teacher professional development supports the need for a study on the prioritization and allocation of teacher professional development by school leaders. In this chapter, the research purpose and related questions were outlined, along with important delimitations, limitations, definitions, and assumptions guiding the study.

The remainder of this dissertation includes four additional chapters. Chapter two is composed of a literature review to address key questions on the existing literature including how teacher professional development has been discussed in federal policy, theoretical frames used to understand teacher professional development, how school leadership and teacher professional development have been linked to teacher quality, and how teacher quality is linked to student success. Chapter three details the research design, research questions, and procedures used in the study, and includes a description of the schools and participants of the study. The chapter also addresses how the researcher collected and analyzed data to address the research questions. Chapter 4 summarizes the

results of the study based on the use of the same three research questions for each case. The last chapter of the dissertation provides a discussion of the results, along with implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher quality is a significant factor in improving primary and secondary education in the United States, with teacher professional development being the key lever to improving the quality and effectiveness of practicing teachers. There is no one way to carry out professional development. There are different perspectives on teaching, therefore different perspectives appear on how to conduct professional development (Kennedy, 2016). Kennedy (2016) also reports that one reason it is hard to plan professional development is due to the multiple roles teachers play; manager, actor, mediator, role model, salesmen, and many more.

The aim of the study was to understand how elementary school leaders at two suburban North Carolina schools plan professional development to meet teacher needs, and the extent to which teachers at those schools perceive their needs were met. To frame this study and develop the research design, a review of conceptual and empirical literature was conducted to address the following three questions:

1. What are the main theoretical frameworks guiding teacher professional development?
2. What are the predominant modes of teacher professional development and how are they linked to teacher effectiveness?
3. How is school leadership linked to teacher effectiveness and teacher professional development?

Relevant literature for review was sought by examining federal agency and education organization websites, as well as through electronic searches of the ERIC database using search terms including teacher quality; school leadership; principal; teacher professional

development. Limited empirical, peer-reviewed studies on school leadership and the principal's role in planning teacher professional development were found, supporting the need for the current research study.

Frameworks Guiding Teacher Professional Development Models

Group-based professional development is based on the assumption that teachers learn and comprehend information in similar ways. The methods and delivery of teacher professional development can dictate the way in which professional learning is translated into classroom practice. Two learning frameworks emerged in the review of literature on teacher professional development – adult learning theory and constructivism.

Adult Learning Theory

The education system in the United States is based on the Western notion that the mind and body are separate entities (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006), and thus the educational focus is on cognition, information processing, intelligence measures, and cognitive development. The Western paradigm is not only prominent in the North America but also in Africa and Asia. Merriam and colleagues (2006) assert that one of the most prevalent themes found in the Western paradigm of education is the significance of freedom and independence. Western models promote the learner being more independent in order to be in control of their life and learning in order to be a productive member of society. Western models also use the model of teaching-learning transaction, passing knowledge from someone who has specialized knowledge to someone who knows nothing or has very little knowledge of a particular subject. Another common theme in the Western paradigm is that of formal education; that learning only takes place in a traditional classroom setting, with an instructor in the front of the class using a set

curriculum, usually leading to some type of tangible sign of successful completion (e.g., certificate, degree, continuing education credits).

Moore (2010) indicated that adult learning is a multifaceted area of study due to the number of variables affecting the field of study. Some of those variables include learning styles, teaching styles, motivation, cultural issues, self-esteem, past learning experiences, and personal issues. Most adult education researchers believe that adults learn more effectively when subject matter is relevant to individual goals. By keeping the goals in mind, the learner has a continued level of motivation throughout the learning process. In essence, the purpose of adult learning is to fulfil personal desires or look for answers to different life challenges; and thus the instructor must work under the premise that they are there to facilitate the learning process and make sure that the adult learner receives the knowledge that they were seeking (Moore, 2010).

There are several guiding principles and bodies of knowledge that shape the understanding of adult learning, notably andragogy (Wang, 2010). The term was first introduced in Germany in the early 1800s, but began to be used in the American context in the late 1960s after Malcom Knowles presented his first published work. Knowles' perception of andragogy is rooted in six assumptions:

1. Self-Concept: Adult learners are independent and self-sufficient.
2. Role of Experience: Adults draw on prior life experience is resource for learning.
3. Readiness to Learn: Adults are willing to learn what they believe they need to learn.

4. Orientation to Learning: Adults learn for things they can put to use now rather than things they may need in the future.
5. Internal Motivation: Adults are more internally motivated when it comes to learning.
6. Need to Know: Adults need to know and understand why they are learning what they are learning.

Knowles applied the principles of andragogy to work in a leadership training that he did with the Girl Scouts, and to his graduate courses at Boston University.

These assumptions create a basis for adult learning as well as a basis for educators that instruct adults. Cretchley and Castle (2001) note that andragogy has had a profound influence on the views and teaching viewpoints of adult educators in several countries worldwide. Although some theorists have questioned Knowles' assumptions, there is still a general consensus that respecting adult identity and involvements is important for adult learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006. Valuing adult experiences translates to (1) engaging adults in the development of their own learning activities; (2) developing activities that encourage dialogue and sharing of experience; (3) supporting and teaching reflective practices that allow adults to adjust and grow from new and potential disruptive experiences; and (4) providing experiences that allow adults to more immediately use learning to deal with life or work issues (Drago-Severson, 2009; Knowles, 1984; Merriam et al., 2007).

Understanding the methods and motivation behind adult learning provides a solid background for designing professional development plans and opportunities. These

concepts have been used by educational researchers and professional development groups to create what they consider highly qualified professional development programs.

Constructivism

Feedback, peer interaction and active engagement are an integral part of the continual learning process for teachers. Professional development has been the tool most commonly used to continue that education for educators. According to the constructivist approach of learning, adult learning is based on experiences, reflection, interaction and situations (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004). Examples of learning in the constructivist view include mentoring, coaching, participation in professional learning communities, or participation in self-directed learning to discover new ideas and teaching strategies (Little & Curry, 2008). Hord (2009) further stated that in order for constructive learning to take place, it requires an environment in which those involved work in harmony and the learning is rooted in authentic activities and context.

Constructivism proposes that learning is not a passive process but one that requires building knowledge and personal understanding through self-reflection and thought. Learning also takes place based upon how the learner interacts with and interprets new concepts and events (Maclellan & Soden, 2004). Individuals bring past experiences and philosophies, combined with their history and world views in their own learning process when they build knowledge internally by interrelating with environment (Kamii, Manning, & Manning, 1991). Learning in this manner develops stages of active learning and sets idea development and profound understanding, rather than just being able to regurgitate concepts previously "learned" (Fosnot, 1996).

The numerous types of learning and instruction associated with constructivism provide potential approaches of how teachers will best retain and relate learned knowledge. The best instructional method for teachers integrating new pedagogical practices into the classroom must incorporate principles of the constructivist learning process. This means that the instruction needs to incorporate: (1) Learning as an active process; (2) Learners constructing knowledge based on prior experience and knowledge; and (3) Learning as a social process.

Summary

Adult Learning Theory and constructivism are based on differing assumptions about how adults learn, and both models have been used extensively to guide teacher professional development. Andragogy is accepted worldwide as a basis for not only how adults learn, but is also used as a basis for teaching adults. Constructivism builds on the assumptions of andragogy and expounds on the relationship of the instructor and the learner. Awareness of the importance of these models provided a background for the dissertation study reported herein.

Predominant Modes of Teacher Professional Development

Since the passing of NCLB in 2001, different professional development models have arisen with the hope of improving teacher quality. Some of the models that have been the most popular include formal teacher induction, the credits or degrees teachers earn as part of recertification or to receive salary boosts, the national-board-certification process, and participation in subject-matter associations or informal networks (Sawchuk, 2010). The researcher elected to focus on two common modes that involve whole-school or larger group delivery: workshops and professional learning communities.

Workshops

Although the most popular form of professional development by far, research on the workshop model shows that it has limited impact on student learning or teacher practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Research has shown that professional development should be sustained, coherent, integrated into regular school day responsibilities, and focused on student results to be effective (Wei et al., 2009), qualities that one-time workshops fail to meet. The workshop model was rejected by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, although there is little evidence to show that states and school districts adhered to this directive.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

More recently, with the focus on accountability, professional learning communities (PLCs) have emerged as an important model in teacher professional development. PLCs were modified from the business sector to fit the world of education, and the concept of a learning organization became that of a learning community that would strive to develop collaborative work cultures for teachers (Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004). Darling-Hammond and colleagues noted that professional learning communities also support the thought that professional development should build strong working relationships among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009), and involve collaboration and sharing of knowledge among educators rather than one individual teacher working in isolation (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

According to DuFour (2004), when professional learning communities are done correctly, and teachers are working together to analyze classroom instruction, and using questioning to promote deeper learning, this leads to higher student achievement, which

is the ultimate goal of teacher professional development. According to a study conducted by Garet and colleagues (1999), in which professional learning communities were the only form of teacher professional development the teachers in the study received, self-reported data indicated that teachers found PLC's more rewarding and effective than traditional professional development methods. School leaders in that study also reported the PLC's to be a success, and that teachers learned new skills and attitudes that transferred to the classroom.

Role of School Leadership in Teacher Professional Development and Teacher Effectiveness

Models of school leadership emphasize the school leader's role in developing the organization and its people, including professional development. Two dominant models of effective school leadership are transformational leadership and instructional leadership. These two models and their relationship to teacher professional development were reviewed, along with literature on school leadership and its relationship to professional development.

Transformational Leadership

According to Garcia-Morales and colleagues (2012), transformational leadership heightens consciousness of collective interest among the organization's members and helps them to achieve their collective goals. In this style of leadership, emotional bonds are created between the leader and their subordinates and usually inspire the subordinate to want to reach higher heights. Transformational leadership conveys the importance of having a shared goal and instilling a sense of purpose, direction and meaning into the followers' work (Bass, 1999). These leaders usually also have charisma and can provide

inspiration to their followers (Bass, 1999). The ability for a leader to display charisma usually generates positive feeling such as pride, self-confidence and motivation in their employees and that usually shows in their work and their respect of the organization. Transformational leaders also provide high expectations for their staff and usually learning opportunities for their staff so that they can be more independent and put their critical thinking skills to use when problems arise.

Transformational leaders tend to have a positive influence on those who work closely with them, as well as those who work in a position that they supervise. This may be due to the individualized attention that a transformational leader is able to give. Transformational leaders understand the needs of an individual and assist them in working towards their goals through coaching, words of encouragement, and/or mentoring. In education, burn out amongst teachers is always something that administrators worry about and want to prevent. Research has shown that higher levels of social support (usually from an administrator) have been known proven to show association with lower levels of stress and employee burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Nielsen et al. (2008) suggest that three work characteristics facilitate the relationship between transformational leadership and the well-being of their followers; improved role clarity, amplified meaningfulness, and increased development opportunities. Improved role clarity means to have understanding of the role one has been hired (or volunteered) to complete. Transformational leaders also assist in improving role clarity amongst their followers by 1) making sure that they have the necessary information and tools and understanding to work toward the shared vision and 2) by giving knowledge and opportunity for them to develop a skillset for them to read and

analyze information on their own (Sofarelli & Brown, 1998). Studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and meaningful work (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). The shared vision can be used to help employees see how their work is meaningful and thus provide inspiration. Establishing a vision is also an important component in teacher commitment. Geijsel and colleagues (2009) conducted a study of 328 teachers and concluded that a major component of transformational leadership was vision building. Vision building had a direct correlation to teacher commitment to teacher buy-in and school goal setting. The more school leaders included teachers in the process of assisting with the school vision, the more the vision was internalized.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership has also been prominent in research on effective school leadership. There was a large push to use instructional leadership methods in the 1970's and 1980's due to the effective school movement. An emphasis on instructional leadership has been recently reintroduced into the education realm due to the emphasis on leaders being accountable for student performance (Hallinger, 2005). Instructional leadership involves creating a clear vision and direction for a school and setting high standards not only for teachers and those facilitating classroom instruction, but for students as well (Barth, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) furthered the description of instructional leadership to involve facilitating opportunities amongst teachers, with a specific focus on classroom practice. An administrator is expected to understand the principles of quality instruction and have adequate knowledge of the curriculum in order

to understand that appropriate information is being communicated to the students (Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008).

At the core of instructional leadership are supervision and feedback (Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008). In schools, supervision can manifest itself as recurrent class observations that focus on teaching strategies, support for teachers (usually in the form of professional development), coaching/mentoring, and even some collaboration when necessary. Most research concerning instructional leadership and supervision is conducted from a general perspective rather than within and across content areas, which may underestimate the challenges of supervision when it comes to instructional leadership (Siskin, 1994). The literature refers to clusters of content areas as subcultures (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). Few studies within educational leadership literature have focused on how administrators navigate the subcultures when it comes to things such as teacher evaluation. The research has also been very limited on teacher perceptions of the feedback offered by an administrator who has a working knowledge of their content area but not a background in that specific area. Depending on the feedback given, this could influence how the teacher responds to the feedback as well as their opinion of the administrator and the school (Lochmiller, 2016). In order for teachers to completely receive the feedback, they have to trust that the person giving the feedback has knowledge of what they are discussing.

The ability of a school leader to give feedback to teachers about what is going on in the classroom is an important component of instructional leadership (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2006). School leaders are acknowledged as being experts and that through various interactions and feedback with classroom teachers they are able to spread seeds

of knowledge of different pedagogical approaches. This acknowledgement involves underlying assumptions that school leaders possess some degree of knowledge and understanding of the various content areas, and an understanding of best practices for the learning of and teaching of a particular subject matter. Part of an administrator's supervisory instruction is to also empower teachers to make decisions that are in best interests of the students being served (Leithwood & Louis, 2011). The goal of every school is to educate the students in that building to the best of their ability. Feedback provides teachers with a tool of assistance in order to continue their growth or compliment the things they are doing well in an effort to make sure that students are indeed getting the best education possible.

School Leadership and Teacher Professional Development

One of the key elements of the No Child Left Behind Act and its successor (ESSA) is the concept that teacher quality is important to student success. One of the focal points in improving teacher quality is professional development. At the same time, school and district leaders are encouraged and incentivized to make data-based decisions. In order to meet teacher professional development needs, leaders must know what those needs are and allocate proper funding and time for such programming. Joyce and Showers (1988) remind that in order to see change in classroom practice, it not only takes resources but also significant amounts of time. With professional development requiring a significant amount of time to complete, the school leader has the responsibility to provide that time for the teacher to participate in opportunities that will enhance their classroom practices.

Acknowledging that teachers must ultimately be responsible for their own learning, Bredeson (2000) outlined the role of the school leader, which is to encourage, nurture, and support teacher learning, and not to be the gatekeeper or governor of teacher professional development. Bredeson argues that as teachers begin to take more control of their learning and growth, the administrator's role is to encourage practices that are supportive to the teachers' goals. The goal of the principal should not be to dictate when, where, and how a teacher learns but rather to cultivate the learning and move teachers towards a higher level of independency. In Bredeson's study, while discussing the idea of teacher independence during evaluation, teachers were told that they needed to give students a more active role in governing the classroom and assisting in the process of choosing what activities went with a lesson. Doing this engages the learner and usually results in higher participation and understanding.

Another important role of the school leader is to make sure that professional development is aligned to school goals (Bredeson, 2000). In order to do so, the school administrator must have a clear understanding of the direction that the school is going in and thus create a set of school goals that is aligned to that direction. Those school goals set the stage for what characteristics are desired in a potential hire, themes for each school year, funding/resource allocation, and possible professional development opportunities. The school administrator sets the culture for the year and it is very important for them to communicate their commitment to professional development early on so that the building staff can be just as committed. Bredeson notes that leaders can set that tone with a discussion surrounding the design, delivery, content and outcomes of professional development.

Very limited empirical research is available on what specific processes and factors school leaders consider in practice to determine teacher professional development. In a report published by the Center for American Progress (Donaldson, 2011), principals report issues such as time and funding that put constraints on their decision making for what professional development their staff will undergo. The principals in the study also agreed that these constraints also restricted them from offering some professional development that they might have wanted to offer. The study also revealed that when districts fail to provide vigorous learning opportunities to educators, instructional quality is affected. It is crucial that professional development not be dependent on financial circumstances, and thus, districts share the responsibility to assist in providing professional development opportunities.

Summary

The review of literature, organized around three questions, reveals the following important considerations for the design of the current study:

1. Adult learning theory and constructivism are the main theoretical models guiding teacher professional development
2. Workshops have been a predominant mode of teacher professional development and empirical evidence shows limited effectiveness; professional learning communities are currently favored related to the climate of teacher quality related to accountability and student success
3. Effective school leadership models include transformational and instructional leadership; with emphasis on the role of the school leader in teacher

professional development but very limited empirical evidence on how school leaders actually plan and allocate resources

These literature review findings guided the development of the study design and methods, outlined in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Professional development and its delivery models are amongst the major topics of conversation when it comes to teacher quality. Many of these conversations have stemmed from the demands for accountability via the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and its successor, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. However, little research has focused on how school leaders prioritize and allocate professional development opportunities for teachers within the building that they operate. This dissertation study explored how school leaders determine the professional development needs of their teachers and if the perceived professional development needs of the teachers are a factor in that decision making process.

This multiple case study explored the process of professional development decision making at two suburban public elementary schools located within the Charlotte, North Carolina Metro area – one traditional and one charter. Interviews with school leaders provided qualitative data on the professional development selection process at the school as well as the types of professional development offered for teachers. Survey questionnaires administered online to teachers provided descriptive quantitative data to identify teachers' perceived professional development needs and to what extent they feel those needs are considered when school leaders decide on professional development agendas for the year.

Worldview and Rationale for Case Study Approach

The research issue under study; how school leaders make decisions about professional development for teachers and how those align with teacher needs and expectations; is a problem of practice. A pragmatic worldview (Creswell, 2013) focuses

on using data to solve problems, as well as selecting the research approaches that best lead to solutions. Data from a single approach may provide a limited view of the problem. This research study sought to understand professional development at the school level; both from the vantage point of school leaders and teachers; through a case study that involves collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Case study design provides a structure for understanding processes and programs (Merriam, 2001). Multiple case studies provide an opportunity to study a phenomenon at more than one site, thus may enhance the generalizability of studies (Gay, Mills, & Airaisan, 2009). Yin (2014) recommends at least two cases to provide more robust findings and avoid a focus on the rareness of a single case.

Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to understand how school leaders prioritize and allocate funding for professional development within their school. The following three questions guided the research:

1. How do elementary school leaders determine professional development needs and opportunities for educators within their building?
2. What do teachers perceive as their own professional development needs and desires and to what extent do they feel school administrators/leaders take these into account when planning professional development?
3. How do school leader and teacher perceptions align at each site?

Research Design

The study utilized Yin's (2014) research design for multiple case studies with an embedded unit of analysis, depicted in Figure 1. Several data sources were examined to analyze the contextual conditions in relation to each case. Data from the selected schools were analyzed to understand how school leaders plan professional development and how teachers perceive their own needs and how well those needs are being met. Interviews with school leaders provided qualitative data on the planning process while the questionnaires from teachers provided descriptive quantitative data on teacher needs and perceptions. The design is embedded (rather than holistic) because the data was not pooled across the two schools (Yin, 2014).

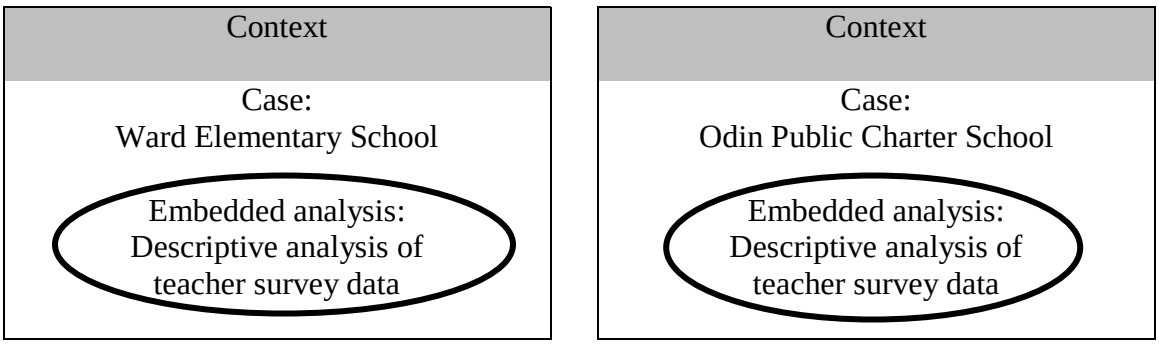

Figure 1. Yin's (2014) multiple case design with embedded analysis.

Site Selection

The research was carried out at two elementary-serving schools within the Charlotte, North Carolina metro area. In order to protect the privacy of the schools used in the study, pseudonyms are used in place of the actual school names. The schools were chosen based on convenience sampling, and the principals of these schools agreed to participate in the study once approved by the UNC Charlotte IRB (Appendix A). The

schools include one county public elementary (Ward Elementary) and one public charter elementary serving school (Odin Public Charter School). While both schools receive public funding and are held accountable by the state assessment and accountability system, charter schools in North Carolina have significantly more freedom from regulations and are not tied to district initiatives (NCDPI, 2016).

Ward Elementary School (K-5) is located in county that makes up part of the larger Charlotte metro area, but is not part of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. The school is a Title I school and enrolls about 330-400 students annually. At the time of the study, the school employed 24 full time teachers with 16.7% of those teachers holding an advanced degree (North Carolina School Report Card, 2016). The teacher turnover rate in 2015-16 was 25%, higher than both the district (12%) and state (13%) level. The school received a grade of "C" for school performance, EOG reading, and EOG math on its 2015-16 School Report Card, which is the same grade received on their 2013-14 and 2014-15 School Report Card, but they did meet growth status for the 2015-16 school year.

Odin Public Charter School (K-8) is a year round school located in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School district. The school is also considered a Title I school. The school had 47 full time classroom teachers in grades K-5 at the time of the study, 85.6% of which were considered highly qualified (North Carolina School Report Card, 2016). Yearly enrollment for grades K-5 averages 810 students per year. Teacher turnover rates were not reported on the most recent report card. The school received a grade of "C" for school performance, EOG reading, and EOG math in 2015-16, but did meet growth

status. Odin Public Charter also received a grade of "C" on their 2013-14 and 2014-15 School Report Card.

Participants

The participants for this study included school leaders and teachers. In order to obtain participants, the researcher made contact with the principal at each school and asked to spend time at the particular school to interview the school leader and discuss the teacher survey with potential teacher participants.

For this study, a school leader was defined as a licensed Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean of Students, or other individual with significant responsibility to administer teacher professional development at the site. The researcher interviewed one leader, the school principal, at Ward Elementary, and two leaders (Director of Professional Development and Principal) at Odin Public Charter. The leaders are identified by pseudonyms and a description of the each leader is provided in the case studies reported in Chapter 4.

Teachers in this study were defined as licensed (or degreed and working towards their license) employees who instruct students in a core academic subject area. The specific participants at each school were chosen using a convenience sampling method. The researcher had a goal of 75% participation rate for teachers at each school site. Survey participation was open to all teachers who met the study requirements and who indicated consent to participate online. The response rates for eligible teachers at each site were close to the researcher goal, 68% at Ward Elementary (n=13) and 72% at Odin Public Charter (n=26). Detailed information about the participants is provided in the case descriptions in Chapter 4.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

According to Stake (1995), multiple types of data collection procedures are usually employed when doing case study research. Research states that using multiple bases of evidence adds to the validity of case study research. The use of two cases also allows for the researcher to triangulate the data and look for common themes across the data.

This research employed two methods of data collection in order to answer the research questions and to provide descriptive examination of professional development allocation in the multiple schools.

School Leader Interview

School leaders participated in a single semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interview consisted of open-ended questions so that the administrators had a chance to express themselves in an open manner (Appendix B). The questions were asked in the same order to all leaders, but the researcher had the option of asking additional questions based on the school leader responses. By conducting the interview in this manner, it allows for strengthened response comparability and minimized interviewer biased (Patton, 2002). Participants were allowed as much time as needed to respond to each question. Interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes in order to give the participant sufficient time to answer all questions. The interview took place in the building that the administrator resides in the room of their choice in order to make them as comfortable as possible. To ensure accurate reporting, the researcher digitally recorded the interviews.

Teacher Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire was prepared using SurveyShare electronic survey software (see Appendix C). Teachers received an invitation to participate in the online questionnaire via their school email address. Time to complete the questionnaire was estimated to be between 5-10 minutes. Participants were not required to enter any personally identifying information (e.g., name, SSN) to enter the survey.

The questions on the teacher survey questionnaire were derived from the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (OECD, 2013). The instrument is shown in its entirety in Appendix C. The survey included questions about demographic background (e.g., gender, age, qualifications), perceived usefulness of past professional development activities, assessment of current professional development interests and needs, and assessment of school leader determination of professional development needs. All items involved forced choices, however two questions were open ended to allow teachers to share their comments. Only the researcher and the dissertation adviser had access to the online data and downloaded data files were stored on password-protected machines.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included both qualitative and quantitative methods to address the two research questions.

Research question 1: *How do elementary school administrators/leaders determine professional development needs and opportunities for educators within their building?* The interviews with administrators were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. At the conclusion of each administrator interview, the researcher wrote a brief reflection on

various aspects of the interview, including key takeaways, body language of the school leader(s), and any other information the researcher deemed pertinent to the study.

After transcription, the researcher followed a general grounded theory analysis approach (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyze the data. First, the researcher did open coding of the interview transcripts to identify key phrases (codes). Next, the researcher used axial coding to make connections between the codes and identify key concepts. In the next stages, similar concepts were grouped together to generate topics that described the process of planning professional development for elementary school leaders at each site.

Research question 2: *What do teachers perceive as their own professional development needs and desires and to what extent do they feel school administrators/leaders take these into account when planning professional development?* The demographic data from the teachers at each site was compiled to develop a description of the participants. Item frequencies were calculated to describe teacher perceptions of the utility of different professional development activities, as well as their satisfaction and perceived level of need in different areas. In some cases, averages were calculated to better quantify the level of need or importance. Open-ended questions on factors used by school leaders to determine professional development needs and any other comments provided were coded into categories and summarized by frequencies of comment categories.

Research question 3: *How do administrator and teacher perceptions align at each site and across sites?* This research question aimed to provide a full description of each of the two cases, as well as a cross-case analysis. The themes identified in research

question 1 were compared with the expressed professional development needs and categories of factors identified by teachers in research question 2 to describe the alignment between perceptions of leaders and teachers at each site. Finally, the researcher discussed similarities and differences in alignment of perceptions at the two sites.

Ethical Considerations

The nature of research lends itself to making sure some ethical protocols are put in place with the hope of eliminating any bias and protecting not only the study participants but the researcher as well. The first step in the process of keeping the study ethical was the completion and submission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application. Upon successful approval of the IRB application, the researcher was then able to proceed with the study.

Participants in the study had to provide consent to participate. School leaders reviewed and signed a consent form (Appendix D). This form specified the purpose of the research, confidentiality procedures, and data security measures. Teachers viewed a page upon launching the electronic survey and indicated consent by clicking, responding to, and submitting the survey.

All research data that was able to be maintained and stored electronically was stored on the researcher's computer, which is password protected.

Summary

The study addressed three research questions about the teacher professional development process at the school level:

1. How do elementary school leaders determine professional development needs and opportunities for educators within their building?

2. What do teachers perceive as their own professional development needs and desires and to what extent do they feel school leaders take these into account when planning professional development?
3. How do leader and teacher perceptions align at each site and across sites?

A case study design was used for the study, with data collection methods involving interviews with school leaders and electronic survey questionnaires with teachers at each site. Agreement to participate was obtained from the selected schools once IRB approval had been granted. Data analysis methods were both qualitative and quantitative, and intended to provide evidence related to each research question by case and across the two cases.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study focused on how elementary school leaders at two suburban public elementary schools (one traditional and one charter) determine professional development needs, how the teachers at those two schools perceive their own professional development needs and the extent to which leaders take their needs into account when planning professional development; and how school leader and teacher perceptions align at each site. This information can be used to better assist in professional development decision making, as well as how one might better allocate resources. Schools are given a budget for professional development and that often means that school leaders have to be creative and use those monies appropriately and make tough decisions regarding what things educators in their school can or cannot do.

As outlined in Chapter 3, this study used a multiple case study approach with an embedded unit of analysis (Yin, 2014). Both qualitative and quantitative data sources were analyzed for each case. Qualitative data was provided through interviews with school leaders, while quantitative data was obtained from survey questionnaires completed by teachers. Within case qualitative analysis included theme association and a descriptive analysis based on the interviews. Lastly, a cross case analysis of qualitative and quantitative data was examined for similarities and differences amongst the cases. In this chapter, I describe the data and present the results of both the within and cross case analyses. Data was collected between April 2017 and May 2017.

Case 1: Ward Public Elementary

Ward Public Elementary (K-5) is located in a county that makes up part of the larger Charlotte metro area, but is not part of the Charlotte Mecklenburg School District.

The school is a little over 60 years old and houses classes in the main building, as well as in mobile units. Of the 330 – 400 students the school enrolls yearly, 65% are considered to be economically disadvantaged. There is almost an even split as far as gender is concerned (52% female, 48% male). The average student to teacher ratio is 16:1.

The school leader interview at Ward Public Elementary was conducted with the school principal Ms. Hitchcock (pseudonym), who has been in place for two years. Before becoming principal, Ms. Hitchcock taught Spanish at various levels including the high school (three years), middle school (one year), and preschool (two years). Her previous administration experience includes serving as high school assistant principal and middle school principal. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction.

Ward Public Elementary has a total of 24 teachers. Of the 24 teachers, 19 were met the criteria for inclusion in this study, being licensed (or degreed working toward their license), and instructing students in a core academic class. Of the 19 teachers qualified to participate in the study, 13 completed the teacher survey (68% participation rate). Detailed information about the teacher participants is shown in Table 2. All participants were full-time female teachers, which represents the population at the school. Among the 13 participants, 10 were permanent employees. The participating teachers were diverse in age range, with most being 35 or older, and degree completion, with most having completed no higher than a bachelor's degree.

Table 2

Demographic description of teacher participants at Ward Public Elementary (n=13)

Characteristic	Description	Frequency
Gender	F	13
	M	0
Age	25-34	2
	35-44	7
	45-55	4
Appointment	Full time	13
Employment Status	Permanent	10
	Fixed-term (for more than 1 year)	1
	Fixed-term (for 1 year or less)	2
Education	Bachelor's Degree	9
	Master's Degree	3
	Other	1
Years in Position	less than 1 year	2
	1-3 years	2
	3-5 years	1
	5-10 years	4
	10 years or more	4

School Leader Determination of Professional Development Needs and Opportunities

Understanding how elementary school leaders determine professional development needs and opportunities for educators in their respective buildings was the focus of the first research question.. Based on open coding of Ms. Hitchcock's responses to the interview questions, three topics illustrated how she determines professional development needs and opportunities for educators within her school.

Individualization: Ms. Hitchcock indicated that professional development is done in multiple ways at her school, taking the teacher's individual needs and characteristics

into consideration. She is aware that different teachers have different learning styles (visual, auditory, read and write, and kinesthetic). While she meets with grade level groups at least one hour per week, she gets to know individual teachers through classroom observation at least twice a week, with a goal of being able to get in their class four times a week. She stated that through those classroom observation conducted with her Assistant Principal, "if we see a need or a lack, then we want to provide training in that area to address the need or the lack."

Ms. Hitchcock also highlighted working with teachers on their individual professional development plan (PDP) as a way to individualize professional development. Ms. Hitchcock indicated that she sits down with teachers in the planning phase and to help them plan out how they can reach their goals and offers suggestions that may assist in meeting the goal, including identifying outside opportunities. She believes in professional development and wants teachers to play a role in determining what they believe will be the most beneficial to them, and ultimately, to their students.

School-wide Development: Ms. Hitchcock explained while there is plenty of room for her to determine professional development needs for her staff, the district still has a role to play in that decision making process "about 10% of the professional development that our teachers undertake has to do with district-wide initiatives." Each year the school creates a school improvement plan with the input of teachers in the building, which must be in alignment with initiatives set forth by the district. The school improvement plan is a collaboration of teachers and administrators looking at what the client (the student) needs and figuring out how to ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills to deliver those needs. With that being said, Ms. Hitchcock says there have been times where she has

argued that the district initiative for that year was not what was in the best interest of her students, and received permission to go along with her school improvement plan as drafted.

Data is another driving force in determining professional development at Ward Public Elementary. Ms. Hitchcock explained that data is constantly collected and that data has a direct impact on school improvement plan, as well as each teacher's individual professional development plan. She further explained at least one goal on a teacher's individual PDP must be incorporated based on the school's overall plan, which is based on data collected during the previous school year.

Ms. Hitchcock expressed that data gathered and general teacher working conditions are discussed with teachers in their weekly grade level PLC meetings. She said that in those meetings, professional development is often intertwined. During the PLC, they discuss goals and strategies for classroom improvement. She reports that "about 85% of the time that teachers are using the strategies that we've taught them or that someone else has taught them in a session."

Finances: Ms. Hitchcock expressed that finances are a factor in determining professional development opportunities. There are some development activities that can be done for little or no money, but most require allocation of financial resources either directly or indirectly. Ms. Hitchcock said that she has several streams of monies for professional development activities, including district funds, school funds, and outside sources. She said that she believes that any teacher who wants to should be able to attend professional development. She has a team that works on grants for the school and those monies go into a pot for those who need them.

Additionally, Ms. Hitchcock believes in sending her teachers to offsite professional development: “I try to encourage staff to go outside of the school because I'm very supportive of their efforts.” She is a believer in staying up to date with technology and will send an entire grade level team offsite to attend professional development as long as she has the money and resources to do so. She encourages teachers to look for their own professional development and then approach her with it and she does what she can to ensure that they can attend.

Teachers’ Professional Development Needs and Perceptions of Administration

The second research question focused on understanding teacher perceptions of their own professional development needs and desires, as well as beliefs about the extent to which school leaders take those needs and desires into account when planning professional development. Data supporting this question was gathered through the teacher questionnaire.

Table 3 shows teacher participation in different professional development activities over the last 12 months and the perceived effectiveness of each activity.

Table 3

Professional development participation and perceived effectiveness among teachers at Ward Public Elementary (n=13)

Professional development	Did not participate	Extremely effective (4)	Somewhat effective (3)	Minimally effective (2)	Not at all effective (1)	Average
Courses/Workshop (on subject matter or methods and/or other education related topics)	0 (0.00%)	10 (76.92%)	3 (23.08%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.77
Education conference or seminar	4 (30.77%)	6 (46.15%)	3 (23.08%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.67
Qualification program (degree program)	5 (38.46%)	7 (53.85%)	1 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.88
Observation visits to other schools	4 (30.77%)	8 (61.54%)	1 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.89
Participation in a Professional Learning Community	0 (0.00%)	12 (92.31%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	3.85
Individual or collaborative research on a professional topic of interest	4 (30.77%)	7 (53.85%	2 (15.38%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.78
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching, as a part of a school arrangement	0 (0.00%)	9 (75.00%)	3 (25.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.75

All of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire had participated in three professional development types during the past 12 months: courses/workshops, professional learning communities, and mentoring/peer observation/coaching. A significant proportion of teacher respondents (60% or higher) had attended a conference or seminar, attended an observation visit at another school, an individual or collaborative, and been enrolled in a degree program.

Perceived effectiveness of the professional development activities was high; above M=3.5 in all cases. Among the activities with universal participation, professional learning communities had the highest perceived effectiveness (M=3.85 out of 4), followed by courses/workshops (M=3.77) and mentoring/coaching (M=3.75). Among the activities with less than full participation, observation visits to other schools (M=3.89) and enrollment in degree programs (M=3.88) had the highest perceived effectiveness, while conferences/seminars and individual or collaborative research on a professional topic of interest also showed high perceived effectiveness.

Three teachers reported wanting or needing professional development opportunities additional to what had been provided to them in the past 12 months. Among reasons for not getting access to desired opportunities, two teachers cited conflict with work schedule, two cited family responsibilities, and one cited school budget. Each of the possible reasons are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Reasons for lack of access to desired professional development opportunities among teachers at Ward Public Elementary (n=13)

Option	# Responses	Response %
Professional development was too expensive for school budget	1	16.67%
There was a lack of employer support	0	0.00%
Professional development conflicted with my work schedule	2	33.33%
I didn't have time because of my family responsibilities	2	33.33%
There was no relevant professional development offered	0	0.00%
My school leader was not supportive of me attending	0	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%

Teachers were next asked to rate their perceived need in different professional development areas (see Table 5).

Table 5

Perceived level of need for professional development in different areas among teachers at Ward Public Elementary (n=13)

	No need at all (1)	Low level of need (2)	Moderate level of need (3)	High level of need (4)	Average level of need
Content standards in my grade level	3 (23.08%)	3 (23.08%)	7 (53.85%)	0 (0.00%)	2.31
Student assessment practice	1 (7.69%)	6 (46.15%)	6 (46.15%)	0 (0.00%)	2.38
Classroom management	3 (23.08%)	7 (53.85)	2 (15.38%)	1 (7.69%)	2.08
Knowledge and understanding of grade level content	3 (23.08%)	6 (46.15%)	4 (30.77%)	0 (0.00%)	2.08
Knowledge and understanding of instructional practices for my grade level (pedagogy)	2 (15.38%)	6 (46.15%)	5 (38.46%)	0 (0.00%)	2.23
Instructional Technology skills for teaching	1 (7.69%)	3 (23.08%)	8 (61.54%)	1 (7.69%)	2.69
Teaching students with special needs	0 (0.00%)	5 (41.67)	6 (50.00%)	1 (8.33%)	2.67
Student discipline and behavior problems	1 (7.69%)	3 (23.08%)	8 (61.54%)	1 (7.69%)	2.69
Teaching in a multicultural setting	0 (0.00%)	5 (38.46%)	8 (61.54%)	0 (0.00%)	2.62

Average perceived need in the different areas ranged from moderately low to low. The areas with a moderately low reported need were instructional technology skills for teaching and student discipline (M=2.69), followed by teaching students with special needs (M=2.67) and teaching in a multicultural setting (M=2.62). Respondents reported a low level of need in classroom management and knowledge and understanding of grade level content (M=2.08). In four categories, at least one teacher expressed a high level of need: classroom management, instructional technology skills, teaching students with special needs, and student discipline/behavior problems.

The final closed-ended questions on the teacher survey addressed general satisfaction with professional development and perceptions of how well needs are being met (Table 6). This question used a Likert-type scale and the response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 6

Satisfaction with professional development among teachers at Ward Public Elementary (n=13)

	Strong Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I am satisfied with the professional development at this school.	4 (30.77%)	7 (53.85%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	13
Leaders at this school are concerned about my professional development.	4 (30.77%)	5 (38.46%)	2 (15.38%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (0.00%)	13
My needs as an adult learner are being met.	5 (38.46%)	6 (46.15%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (0.00%)	13
Overall my professional development needs are being met.	5 (38.46%)	6 (46.15%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (0.00%)	13

The overall responses from this question show that the majority of respondents (11 of 13, 85%) are generally satisfied with the professional development at Ward Public Elementary, and feel their adult learning and professional development needs are being met. There is somewhat lower agreement (9 of 13, 69%) with the statement that leaders at the school are concerned with their professional development.

Towards the end of the survey, teacher respondents had the option to answer an open-ended question about how they believed their school leaders determined professional development. The majority of respondents (10 of 13) provided a response to this question. Among the methods listed, teacher input (5 of 10) was the most frequently

cited, including teacher recommendations, surveys of teachers, and information gathered in professional learning community meetings. Three responses indicated that professional development was determined by data from teacher evaluations and student scores. Two responses indicated that needs were determined by the county (district).

The final question on the survey invited teachers to share any additional information about their professional development experience. Only three teachers commented, including (1) wanting professional development to be during school hours and close to the school, (2) professional development has been helpful in understanding the needs of students, and (3) being happy with the job the school has been doing with professional development.

Alignment of Perceptions of Leaders and Teachers

The focus of the third research question was to determine how perceptions of leaders and teacher align at the school site. After examining the topics from the school leader interview of Ms. Hitchcock and the results of the teacher survey (n=13), some areas of good alignment stand out. Ms. Hitchcock expressed that professional development for her staff was chosen based on teacher observation, student data, and budget constraints; which aligned largely with teacher perceptions expressed in the open-ended question. There were few responses to this question, so it is not possible to know if the other respondents shared these perceptions.

Weekly PLC meetings provide opportunity for Ms. Hitchcock to spend time with a small group of teachers and communicate necessary information to them. She said that when possible she embeds professional development into these meetings. Ms. Hitchcock also does a weekly newsletter which informs teachers of upcoming events, professional

development opportunities, and possible articles of interest. PLC's had a perceived effectiveness score of M=3.85, which is between somewhat effective (3) and extremely effective (4). These interactions with teachers appear to allow them to get better insight into how the school leader is planning and preparing for teacher professional development, thus fostering higher alignment between how leaders plan teacher professional development, and teacher perceptions on how leaders plan teacher professional development.

Case 2: Odin Public Charter School

Odin Public Charter School (K-8) is located within the Charlotte Mecklenburg district, but is not part of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. The school opened its doors a little over 19 years ago. Of the 1300 – 1350 students the school enrolls yearly, 87% are considered to come from low-income families. There is almost an even split as far as gender is concerned (49% female, 51% male). The average student to teacher ratio is 18:1. For the purposes of this case study, only the elementary level (K-5) of the school was examined.

The school leader interview at Odin Public Charter was conducted with the Director of Professional Development (DPD) as the primary source and the School Director offering additional comments when necessary. At the time of the study, Odin was in its 18th year of operation and both the DPD and School Director have been there since the schools inception. The DPD Ms. Eastlawn (pseudonym) has been in her current role for 15 years, while the School Director Ms. Sunbury (pseudonym) has been in her position since the school started. Ms. Eastlawn is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in Curriculum.

The elementary grades (K-5) at Odin Public Charter have a total of 78 full time teachers. Of those, 36 met the criteria to participate in the teacher survey, meaning they instructed a core class and were degreed (or working towards their license). Of the 36 teachers who fit the criteria for the study, 26 responded to the survey (72%). Table 7 provides demographic information about the teachers who participated in the study. Five of the respondents were on a fixed contract for 1 year or less, which is common at charter schools. One teacher reported having an alternate degree. Over half of the respondents (54%) were in the 25-34 year old range. Exactly half of the participating teachers (13) had been in their respective position for less than 3 years.

School Leader Determination of Professional Development Needs and Opportunities

Open coding of the data based on the school leader interview revealed the following topics as to how they determine professional development needs and opportunities for educators within the school.

Schoolwide Development: Odin Public Charter has schoolwide professional development in which all employees have to participate in. This professional development is not optional and usually takes place during teacher workweek (before the start of the school year), on a teacher workday, or during early release time. Ms. Eastlawn stated, "Regardless of what your title is, your position, if you're an instructional person in the building, whether you're considered a teacher, an assistant, or an interventionist, anybody like that that deals with any sort of instruction regardless of where they are, participates in staff development."

Table 7

Demographic description of teacher participants at Odin Public Charter (n=26)

Characteristic	Description	Frequency
Gender	M	4
	F	22
Age	18-24	1
	25-34	14
	35-44	8
	45-55	2
	55 or older	1
Appointment	Full time	25
	No Response	1
Employment Status	Permanent	18
	Fixed-term (for more than 1 year)	2
	Fixed-term (for 1 year or less)	5
Education	Bachelor's Degree	11
	Master's Degree	14
	Other	1
Years in Position	less than 1 year	7
	1-3 years	6
	3-5 years	4
	5-10 years	5
	10 years or more	4

The entire school professional development is centered on three frameworks: PBS (positive behavior support) Model, school instructional framework model, and pillars of operation. Ms. Eastlawn (DPD) explained that all persons in the building that work with students need to have an understanding of the PBS model and therefore is important that they are properly trained on how to use it effectively. She further explained this model is used to support behavior/discipline, culture, and climate. School instructional framework

is more focused toward the teachers and helps them identify and learn concepts such as what makes a good lesson, how to write a good lesson plan, and classroom management and strategies.

The last part to professional development for the entire staff is that of the pillars of operation: academics, building students, and college/career readiness. Ms. Eastlawn informed the researcher that it is very important for teachers to understand these pillars because it helps to facilitate their role. This specific professional development focuses on how to provide students the knowledge and skills, how to improve student character, and how to help students move towards college or the workforce upon graduating from high school.

Targeted Development: Targeted professional development for small groups or individual teachers is another method by which teachers receive professional development. Targeted professional development takes on many forms including mentorship, coaching, and professional learning communities. Some of the targeted professional development is state mandated, such as mentorship for beginning teacher support within their first 3 years of licensure. Teachers not only participate in the mentorship program but also in all schoolwide professional development as well.

The second part of targeted professional development is based completely on individual teacher needs, which are determined and reported in several ways. The most common method by which teacher get professional development on a specific need is by request. If a teacher feels they have a need in a certain area, they can go to Ms. Eastlawn and request development in that area. She shared an instance when a teacher came up to her and said, "Look, I don't get it. I don't understand why these kids aren't listening to me.

I don't understand why…". She then uses that information to get the specific teacher the professional development needed. Classroom observation also provides valuable insight into what specific areas teachers need professional development. Ms. Eastlawn explained that there are guidelines for the frequency of classroom observations for each teacher, and these observations are conducted by lead teachers, Ms. Eastlawn, assistant principals, and/or other administrators. Based on the data collected from these observations, the observer can then suggest specific development.

Ms. Eastlawn indicated that the school has come a long way with their professional development. She said that at first, things were difficult because there was not a lot of support for charter schools as far as professional development is concerned. Now, she said there are more resources for charter schools, as well as support and that has made for an increase in professional development resources and opportunity.

Teachers' Professional Development Needs and Perceptions of Administration

The second research question for this case study concentrated on teacher perceptions of their professional development desires and needs, as well as school leader efforts to take those needs into account when planning teacher professional development. As with the public county elementary teachers, teachers at the Odin Public Charter participated in an online survey.

Table 8 shows what professional development teachers at Odin Public Charter participated in over the last year and how effective they believed it to be.

Table 8

Professional development participation and perceived effectiveness among teachers at Odin Public Charter (n=26)

Professional development	Did not participate	Extremely effective (4)	Somewhat effective (3)	Minimally effective (2)	Not at all effective (1)	Average
Courses/Workshop (on subject matter or methods and/or other education related topics)	0 (0.00%)	9 (34.62%)	17 (65.38%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.35
Education conference or seminar	14 (56.00%)	4 (16.00%)	7 (28.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.36
Qualification program (degree program)	18 (69.23%)	6 (23.08%)	2 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.75
Observation visits to other schools	21 (80.77%	3 (11.54%)	2 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3.6
Participation in a Professional Learning Community	5 (19.23%)	12 (46.15%)	8 (30.77%)	1 (3.85%)	0 (0.00%)	3.52
Individual or collaborative research on a professional topic of interest	9 (34.62%)	6 (23.08%)	9 (34.62%)	2 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	3.24
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching, as a part of a school arrangement	3 (11.54%)	13 (50.00%)	8 (30.77%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (3.85%)	3.43

All of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire had participated in courses/ workshops during the past 12 months. Numerous teachers respondents (65% or higher) had been a member of a professional learning community, participated in mentoring/peer observation/coaching, or had been involved in individual or collaborative research on a topic of professional interest.

Perceived effectiveness of the professional development activities was moderately high: above M=3.0 in all cases. The one activity with full participation had a perceived effectiveness of M=3.35 out of 4. Among the activities with less than full participation, enrollment in degree programs (M=3.75) had the highest perceived effectiveness.

A few respondents reported wanting or needing professional development opportunities beyond what had been provided to them in the past 12 months. Among reasons for not getting access to desired opportunities, eight teachers reported no relevant offerings, five reported a conflict with work schedule, three cited lack of employer support, three reported school budget, and two state family responsibilities. Each of the possible reasons are captured in Table 9.

Table 9

Reasons for lack of access to desired professional development opportunities among teachers at Odin Public Charter (n=26)

Option	# Responses	Response %
Professional development was too expensive for school budget	3	17.65%
There was a lack of employer support	3	17.65%
Professional development conflicted with my work schedule	5	29.41%
I didn't have time because of my family responsibilities	2	11.76%
There was no relevant professional development offered	8	47.06%
My school leader was not supportive of me attending	0	0.00%
Other: [View]	4	23.53%

Teachers were next asked to rate their perceived need in different professional development areas (see Table 10).

Table 10

Perceived level of need for professional development in different areas among teachers at Odin Public Charter (n=26)

	No need at all (1)	Low level of need (2)	Moderate level of need (3)	High level of need (4)	Average level of need
Content standards in my grade level	6 (23.08%)	9 (34.62%)	9 (34.62%)	2 (7.69%)	2.27
Student assessment practice	3 (11.54%)	9 (34.62%)	9 (34.62%)	5 (19.23%)	2.62
Classroom management	7 (26.92%)	9 (34.62%)	9 (34.62%)	1 (3.85%)	2.15
Knowledge and understanding of grade level content	6 (24%)	13 (52.00%)	6 (24.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1.92
Knowledge and understanding of instructional practices for my grade level (pedegogy)	3 (11.54%)	13 (50.00%)	9 (34.62%)	1 (3.85%)	2.31
Instructional Technology skills for teaching	2 (7.69%)	6 (23.08%)	14 (53.85%)	4 (15.38%)	2.77
Teaching stduents with special needs	1 (3.85%)	3 (11.54%)	10 (38.46%)	12 (46.15%)	3.27
Student discipline and behavior problems	1 (3.85%)	15 (57.69%)	5 (19.23%)	5 (19.23)	2.54
Teaching in a multicultural setting	2 (7.69%)	11 (42.31%)	11 (42.31%)	2 (7.69%)	2.5

Average perceived need in the different areas ranged from moderately high to low level of need. The area with the highest reported need was teaching students with special needs (M=3.27). Other areas reporting a moderately low level of need were instructional technology skills for teaching (M=2.77), followed by student assessment (M=2.62),

student discipline/behavior problems (M=2.54), and teaching in a multicultural setting (M=2.5). In all but one category, knowledge and understanding of grade level content, at least one teacher expressed a high level of need.

The final close-ended questions on the teacher survey addressed general satisfaction with professional development and perceptions of how well needs are being met (Table 11).

Table 11

Satisfaction with professional development among teachers at Odin Public Charter (n=26)

	Strong Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I am satisfied with the professional development at this school.	6 (23.08%)	8 (30.77%)	6 (23.08%)	6 (23.08%)	0 (0.00%)	26
Leaders at this school are concerned about my professional development.	6 (23.08%)	8 (30.77%)	8 (30.77%)	1 (3.85%)	3 (11.54%)	26
My needs as an adult learner are being met.	6 (23.08%)	8 (30.77%)	5 (19.23%)	7 (26.92%)	0 (0.00%)	26
Overall my professional development needs are being met.	5 (19.23%)	9 (34.62%)	2 (7.69%)	10 (38.47%)	0 (0.00%)	26

The overall responses from this question show that just over half of the respondents (14 of 26, 54%) are generally satisfied with the professional development at Odin Public Charter, feel their leaders are concerned about their professional development, and sense their adult learning needs, as well as professional development needs are being met.

Towards the end of the survey, teacher respondents had the option to answer an open-ended question about how they believed their school leaders determined professional development. The majority of respondents (22 of 26) provided a response to this question. Among the methods listed, teacher observation and feedback (12 of 23) was the most frequently cited, including teacher surveys and teacher concerns. Two respondents indicated that school leaders choose at their discretion. Two other respondents cited using school data as to how they believe school leaders determine professional development. One respondent indicated that needs were determined based on teacher experience and another indicated it was based on school budget. The final three respondents indicated that they were unsure how school leaders determined the needs.

Administration/Teacher Alignment

The focus of this research question was to determine how perceptions of leaders and teachers align. After analyzing the topics from the school leader interview of Ms. Eastlawn and the results of the teacher survey (n=26), some areas of alignment stand out. Ms. Eastlawn expressed that whole school professional development was chosen based on their three pillars which aligned with several teacher perceptions expressed in the open

ended questions. Ms. Eastlawn also expressed that teacher observation and feedback was another method by which teacher professional development was based which aligned largely with teacher perceptions expressed in the open-ended questions.

Teachers at Odin Public Charter undergo several observations throughout the course of the school year. These observations are conducted by peers, team leaders, and administration. In the interview, Ms. Eastlawn expressed that one of the main goals of the observation process is to monitor instruction and identify teacher needs. After the observation, post observation meetings are held with the observer and the teacher to discuss what was observed. From these meetings, areas of improvement are identified, and those areas become concepts discussed in targeted professional development. The meetings held between the observer and the teacher allow for teachers to have a better understanding of how teacher professional development is decided, and thus increasing the alignment between how leaders at Odin Public Charter decide professional development and the perception of the teachers as to how professional development is decided.

Cross-Case Analysis

Within case analysis provided the opportunity to discover alignment between how school leaders plan teacher professional development, and teacher perceptions on how leaders plan professional development. The second part of research question three involved a descriptive analysis across the two sites. Table 12 compares several aspects of the planning process and teacher perceptions for cross-case analysis.

Table 12

Cross–Case Analysis Ward Elementary (n=13) and Odin Public Charter (n=26)

	Ward Elementary	Odin Public Charter
How school leaders allocate professional development.(topics)	Individual teacher need School-wide development Finances	School-wide development Targeted development
High participation areas of professional development	Workshop – 100% PLC – 100% Mentoring – 100%	Workshop – 100% Mentoring – 88.5% PLC – 80%
Professional development perceived effectiveness M> 3.5	Courses/Workshop Education conference/ seminar Qualification Program Observation visit to other school PLC Individual/Collaborative research Mentoring	Qualification Program Observation visit to other school PLC
Perceived high need professional development M> 3.0	None	Teaching students with special needs
Satisfaction with professional development at school (% strongly agree or agree)	85%	54%
Leader at school are concerned about my professional development (% strongly agree or agree)	69%	54%
Overall professional development needs being met (% strongly agree or agree)	85%	54%

Two schools, Ward Elementary and Odin Public Charter were selected for the study. Each is an elementary (K-5) serving school, and are located in the Charlotte Metro area. Both schools have leaders who have been in place for at least a couple of years. The leaders at each school are tasked each year with planning professional development for teachers in their building. Both leaders expressed using school-wide professional development and targeted development (individual, small group) as factors in the planning process. The leader at Ward Elementary also expressed that finances play a role in the professional development decision making process. From the beginning of tenure for each school leader, they expressed have been committed to professional development and worked to make sure that teachers were getting the development needed.

The workshop model of professional development was also a method still being used at both schools. There was a 100% participation at each school by reporting teachers for workshops. At Ward Elementary, the reporting teachers gave the workshop model a perceived effectiveness rate greater than 3.5 (M=3.77) which is between "somewhat effective (3)" and "extremely effective (4)." Mentoring and PLC's were among other types of developments with high participation at both sites.

The two schools differed slightly on perceived areas of high professional development need. Reporting teachers at Ward Elementary reported no areas of high need for professional development. Teachers at Odin Public Charter only had one area; teaching students with special needs, that they considered to be a high area of professional development need.

The cross case analysis revealed several similarities between the two sites, but also yielded several differences when it came to professional development satisfaction. 85% of teachers at Ward Elementary were satisfied with the professional development at their school, as well agreeing that their overall professional development needs are being met. At Odin Public Charter, only 54% of teachers reported being satisfied with professional development at their school and feeling that their professional development needs are being met.

Teachers reporting at both schools had lower satisfaction rates on their perceptions of leaders concern regarding their professional development. 69% of teachers at Ward Elementary believe their leaders are concerned with their professional development, while 54% of the teachers at Odin Public Charter feel the leaders are concerned.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine how elementary school leaders at two suburban public elementary schools (one traditional and one charter) determine professional development needs; how the teachers at those two schools perceive their own professional development needs and the extent to which leaders take their needs into account when planning professional development; and how school leader and teacher perceptions align at each site. The researcher employed a multiple case study approach with an embedded unit of analysis, and the data sources were interviews with school leaders and teacher surveys at each site. Each case was examined separately according to the three research questions outlined.

At Ward Public Elementary, the interview with the school leader Ms. Hitchcock revealed three main topics related to determining professional development needs at the school – teacher individual need, classroom observation, and the use of the professional development plan. Ms. Hitchcock expressed great interest in professional development for her staff and reported that professional development is a key component to improving pedagogy and teacher knowledge. Each year the school forms a committee of teachers who not only look for professional development opportunities for teachers, but also write grants to assist teachers in attending professional development opportunities that cost. The majority of teachers at Ward Public Elementary who responded to the survey (85%) indicated satisfaction with professional development and agreed that their professional needs were being met. Respondents reported low to moderately low needs across different professional development areas, and very few reported not getting the opportunities they wanted or needed in the past 12 months. Participant perceptions of how professional development is determined were highly aligned with what the school leader reported in the interview, although few participants responded to the question.

At Odin Public Charter School, the interview with the school leader Ms. Eastlawn revealed two main topics related to determining professional development needs at the school – schoolwide development and targeted development. Each year there are specific things that school leadership has planned for staff based on the school pillars. Slightly more than half of teachers at Odin Public Charter who responded to the survey (54%) indicated satisfaction with professional development and agreed that their adult learning needs are being met. The respondents also indicated they believe leaders at their school are concerned with their professional development. Respondents reported low to

moderately low needs across different professional development areas, with an exception in teaching students with special needs. In this area, respondents reported a moderate to high level of need (M=3.27). Participant perceptions of how professional development is determined were moderately aligned with what the school leader reported in the interview.

The cross case analysis revealed commonalities between Ward Elementary and Odin Public Charter which included; leaders using targeted professional development (individual or small group) and school wide development when planning for professional development. The samples for the two school also shared high participation in several professional development activities and high perceived effectiveness in observation visits to other schools, qualification programs, and PLC's. Teachers at the two schools have a difference of opinion when thinking of their satisfaction with professional development.

Chapter 4 summarized the results of the two case studies, based on the same three guiding research questions for each site. Each site had leaders who provided detailed information about professional development planning, and fairly high participation of eligible teachers (about 70%) in the teacher survey. A discussion of the results, along with implications for practice and future investigation, are outlined in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to explore and understand how elementary school leaders at two suburban North Carolina schools plan professional development to meet teacher needs and how teachers at those schools perceive their needs are being met. The final chapter of this dissertation reiterates the research problem and reviews the major methods used in the study. The chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of the results, discussion of their implications, and suggestions for further research.

Statement of the Problem

Improvement of classroom instruction and the increase of student achievement is an expected outcome of teacher professional development. However, evidence suggests the traditional method of using workshops to provide professional development to teachers is not considered useful by teachers (Gulamhussein, 2013) and is ineffective for improving student learning and teacher practice (Yoon et al, 2007).

In chapter 2, the review of literature was guided by three questions; what are the main theoretical frameworks guiding teacher professional development, what are the predominant modes of teacher professional development and how are they linked to teacher effectiveness, and how is school leadership linked to teacher effectiveness and teacher professional development? Two leading frameworks that guide teacher professional development models are Adult Learning Theory and Constructivism. Adult Learning Theory (Moore, 2010) has been a key theory in understanding that adults learn differently and have different motivations for learning new information. Constructivism (Kamii, Manning, & Manning, 1991) builds on these notions and claims that adult learning is based on experiences, reflection, interaction, and situations. A review of

literature on effectiveness of predominant group-based teacher professional development models, including workshops and professional learning communities, revealed teacher satisfaction in both and when done correctly with emphases on deeper thinking and ideal sharing, teachers feel their effectiveness increases. Finally, literature on the role of school leadership in teacher professional development suggested that transformational leadership is the driving force behind school culture and school leaders should seek teacher input when planning professional development. The findings of the review of literature supported the need for a study focused on how school leaders determine teacher professional development at the school level, and how teachers perceive their professional development needs and opportunities.

Summary of the Methodology and Findings

As discussed in chapter 3, this study utilized a multiple case study design with an embedded unit of analysis (Yin, 2014). The research study involved two cases to provide the possibility of more robust findings and to allow for cross-case comparison. Semi-structured interviews with school leaders provided qualitative data on the types of professional development opportunities offered to teachers, and the process by which leaders select those opportunities. Teachers at each school completed an electronic survey, providing quantitative data on perceived professional development needs and desires, and the perceived extent to which needs and desires are taken into consideration by school leaders when planning professional development. Each case study was guided by three research questions, encompassing how school leaders determine professional development, what teachers feel are their professional development needs and how

school leaders use that information, and the level of alignment between school leader and teacher perceptions.

Ward Public Elementary School is located in a neighboring county of the Charlotte Mecklenburg School District and serves students Kindergarten through fifth grades. The school is a little more than 60 years old and enrolls approximately 330-400 students on a yearly basis. The school employs approximately 35-40 staff members, including 24 full-time teachers at the time of the study. At Ward Elementary, the qualitative data provided understanding as to how the school leader decided on professional development opportunities for her staff: teacher individual need, classroom observation, and the use of the professional development plan. The quantitative data informed that the majority of teachers who participated in the study were generally satisfied with the professional development received and believed that their needs were being met.

Odin Public Charter School is located within the Charlotte Mecklenburg School District, but is not a part of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Odin Public Charter serves students Kindergarten through grade eight; however, for the purposes of this research study, only the 36 teachers in grades Kindergarten through fifth were possible candidates. The qualitative data yielded insight as to how the school leader determined professional development opportunities for the staff: schoolwide development and targeted development. The quantitative analysis found that half of teachers who participated in the study were generally satisfied with the professional development received, felt that leaders at their school were concerned about their professional development, and that their adult learning and overall professional development needs were being met.

Discussion

Adult learning theory helped to frame this study surrounding teacher professional development. Andragogy, a key principle of adult learning theory, includes 6 assumptions as they relate to adult learning; self-concept, role of experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, internal motivation, and need to know (Knowles, 1984). In the teacher questionnaire, teachers were asked about their satisfaction level with their adult learning needs. Out of the 40 respondents to the question, just over half (25) of the teachers indicated satisfaction of their adult learner needs being met. It cannot be determined what factors influenced the dissatisfaction, and what role the school leader played, if any. If the needs of the learner are not being met, it is a more difficult for the professional development to be effective.

Constructivism was the other framework of this study. The constructivist view implicates that learning is based on experience, reflection, interaction and situations (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004). The results of the study show perceived higher effectiveness rating in professional development activities that are more interactive and reflection based, such as; observation visits to other school (combined M=3.75), and participation in a professional learning community (combined M=3.69). These methods also allow for feedback and peer interaction, which align strongly with the constructivist method of learning.

The predominant models of professional development have yielded themselves to group based development; workshops and professional learning communities. All teachers who responded to the teacher questionnaire at both schools studies had participated in workshops, and all but 5 teacher respondents had participated in

professional learning communities. The teachers found workshops to be effective, with a perceived effectiveness rating of M=3.56. Although research on workshops show inadequate results on student learning or teacher practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) it is still a method that is popular and one that is perceived as effective among teachers. The other group based professional development that is becoming increasingly popular is professional learning communities. Professional learning communities allow teachers to collaborate with peers and get different perspectives and ideas to enhance classroom practice. At Ward Elementary, all teacher respondents had participated in a professional learning community, and gave it a perceived effectiveness rating of M=3.85. At Odin Public Charter, all teacher respondents had not participated in a professional learning community, but those who had gave it a perceived effectiveness rating of M=3.52. According to teacher respondents, both of these group based professional developments are perceived to be effective. What is not known from the study is how student achievement increased based on teacher participation in one of these group based developments. The school leader at Ward Elementary has an established team that assists her in professional development planning and preparation. This may be the reason that all teachers at the school have participated in professional learning communities.

When a leader allows for teacher input and shared goal making, that is an example of transformational leadership (Bass, 1999). The leader at Ward demonstrates some of these practices with the use of her professional development team, but it is not possible to characterize her as a transformational leader solely based on that. The team does not necessarily plan professional development, but they have the freedom to search out opportunities and finances for the school leader to review. Allowing the teachers to

have this freedom gives them a sense of purpose and input. It is up to the leader to make the teacher committee feel their input is valuable and to encourage pride and self-confidence in them. This type of leadership was not seen at Odin Public Charter. The school leaders make all the decisions concerning professional development, except for when teachers need individual professional development to address a specific need or concern. This may be the rationale for why teacher perceptions/satisfaction and leader practices are better aligned at Ward Elementary. When teachers do not have input, it is harder to know and understand the reason behind the decision making process. Teachers at Odin Public Charter have no input in the professional development decision making process, except to ask for specific individualized development. Based on the increase satisfaction level of professional development at Ward Elementary, it would seem beneficial for Odin Public Charter to adapt a similar method of teacher participation and input in the professional development process.

Another possible reason for lower satisfaction ratings at Odin Public Charter could be due to school population. Odin serves students from higher need populations, which requires specific focus in professional development. Some students at the school stay in homeless shelters and do not have access to "standard" living conditions and hot meals after leaving schools. From the information gathered in this study, it is unclear to what degree issues such as these are being addressed at the school during professional development.

Traditional public schools and charter schools both fall under the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in the state of North Carolina. Charter schools have access to the same resources from the state as far as professional development is

concerned, as well as a budget for teacher professional development. It is up to the school leader to decide how professional development is implemented, and what practices serve their teacher population the best. This is almost an impossible task for one person to complete solely on their own. Based on the results of this study, teacher satisfaction increases when teachers play a role in seeking out, researching, and attending off campus professional development.

Implications for Practice

This findings of this exploratory study revealed that school leaders aim to balance school or district-wide needs and priorities with individual needs when determining professional development for teachers. At Ward Elementary, the school leader reported greater emphasis on identifying and attending to individual teacher needs than the leaders at Odin Public Charter. Teacher respondents at Ward Elementary indicated higher levels of satisfaction that their professional development needs were met than those at Odin Public Charter, and the perceptions of teachers at Ward Elementary about PD allocation were closer to those reported by the school leader than at Odin. While it is not possible to make a causal connection between the prioritization of teacher needs and their satisfaction with professional development based on the data available in this study, these findings certainly suggest that school leaders should have a clearly communicated process for determining teacher professional development which should include an explanation of how individual needs are incorporated and balanced with school and district needs. One approach to determining professional development, which was not used at either school in the study, could be the implementation of a teacher professional development team that includes both teachers and leaders to help plan teacher

professional development. Learning Forward (2010) discusses this and says that a learning team, consist of school leaders and teachers working together to identify instructional gaps, and to determine what needs to be done to close those gaps. This would not only show transformational leadership by creating a shared goal, but also gives teachers a sense of buy-in and purpose, which is important to transformational leadership (Bass, 1999). To ensure individual teacher needs are heard and there are efforts to have them met, classroom observation and individual meetings are strategies that school leaders can use to acknowledge teachers as adult learners. A few teachers at Odin Public Charter reported not being able to participate in professional development due to conflicts with the school calendar. As much as possible, schoolwide and individual professional development time should be incorporated into the school calendar. Leaders should also ensure sufficient resources are allocated to allow teachers to elect one or two professional development choices aligned to their own interests during the course of the academic year.

Teachers at both school sites in this study reported on the perceived effectiveness of different types of professional development. Of teacher respondents who had participated in professional learning communities (all teachers at Ward and 81% of teachers at Odin), all but one teacher at each site indicated this form of professional development was effective. Peer mentoring and observation were also perceived as effective by most teachers who had participated in them at each site. Both approaches emphasize teachers collaborating with and learning from one another, and align with adult learning and constructivist models of teacher professional development.

Future Research

This study addressed the need for greater knowledge about how school leaders determine professional development needs/opportunities, and how teachers perceive their own needs and to what extent they feel school leaders take those needs into consideration, and there is a need for further research to understand the phenomena and illuminate practices that can be used to improve teacher quality, satisfaction, and student performance across different kinds of school settings.

This study was completed towards the end of the school year, in which planning and implementing of professional development was complete or just about complete. Simply changing this to a longitudinal study could have an impact on the results and potential implications of the study. Conducting teacher surveys at the end of the prior school year asking what they perceived as their professional development needs/desires could change the way that the school leader planned professional development. Having the knowledge of what teachers perceived as needs/desires would make for more targeted professional development, as well as allow teachers to express first hand their needs. Interviews would then be conducted with school leaders to determine two things, 1) what school leaders perceive as the needs and desires of the teachers, and 2) how they plan on taking the teacher reported needs/desires into consideration while planning teacher professional development for the following year. Teacher interviews would then be conducted at the end of each quarter to determine their satisfaction level with the professional development opportunities presented to them. At this time, teachers would also be asked to identify what pedagogical concepts learned through professional development they have implemented in their classroom. This would allow for smaller

incremental changes to be identified as the school year continues. A final interview with the school leader would be conducted at the end of the school year to understand how, if at all, they implemented teacher needs/desires into professional development opportunities.

The focus of this case study was on how school leaders allocate professional development in practice. A subsequent case study could focus on curricula and practice in school leader graduate programs in North Carolina to understand what emphasis is given to planning teacher professional development, and what opportunities candidates are given to design or implement teacher development via internships. A study on school leader programs could highlight opportunities to provide better preparation and experiences to aspiring school leaders before entering a leadership position. Interviews with faculty and students in the program, as well as content analysis of syllabi and course assignments, would be potential data collection methods in such a study.

Summary

The dissertation study reported herein examined the means by which school leaders determine professional development needs and opportunities for teachers within their building, as well as what teachers perceives as their professional development needs/desires and to what extent they feel school leaders take those needs/desire into consideration when planning professional development at two elementary schools in the Charlotte Metro area. First, school leader interviews were conducted to gain qualitative data on how school leaders determined professional development for teachers within their building. Findings indicated that school leaders worked to balance school and district needs and priorities with individual needs of teachers, which they identified through

classroom observations and individual professional development plans. Teachers at the two schools expressed an overall satisfaction with professional development, and believed that their professional needs were being met.

Implications of the results were discussed highlighting the need for teacher input when it comes to the professional development planning process. Including teachers in planning via a professional development planning team was suggested as a potential practice to assist the school leader in the planning and allow for teacher input. Finally, to expand the research literature on school leader roles in teacher professional development, future research could include a more longitudinal case study of planning at the school level or a study of emphasis on teacher professional development in school leader preparation programs.

Chapter 5 included a discussion of the results, along with implications for practice, and suggestion for future examination. Results from this and similar studies may assist to educate district and school leaders, college and university faculty, and other stakeholders who are involved in preparing for and implementing teacher professional development programming.

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APPENDIX A:
SUPPORT LETTERS FROM SCHOOL SITES

To whom it may concern:

I and my staff agree to participate in the upcoming study: "How school leaders prioritize and allocate resources to improve teacher quality through teacher professional development: A multiple case study in suburban North Carolina." I understand the purpose of the study will be to explore the process of professional development decision making at two suburban elementary schools located within the Charlotte Metro area – one public and one charter.

I am in full support of this research and understand that participation in the research is not allowed until after it has been approved by the UNC Charlotte Institutional Review Board (IRB).

If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Contact Information

APPENDIX B
SCHOOL LEADER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Tell me a little bit about yourself and the school.

1. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?
2. What is the title of your current position?
3. How many years of experience do you have in your current role?
4. How many full time teachers do you have in the building?
5. What is your current school enrollment?

   Now I would like to ask you about your decisions related to teacher professional development. When I say "teachers", I would like you to think about the teachers that are primarily responsible for academic subjects.

6. Thinking about the budget for the school year, approximately how much is allocated for professional development?
    a. Do you feel this is adequate, too much or not enough?
7. Describe how you plan professional development in your building.
8. Is there a professional development requirement for teachers?
9. What types of professional development does your staff usually participate in?
10. What do you feel is the best type of professional development?
11. Who decides what professional development opportunities teachers participate in?
12. How do teachers request certain professional development opportunities?
13. Do you discuss each teacher's professional development plan with them individually?
    a. If yes, how are their thoughts factored into deciding professional development for staff for the year?

14. ESSA was recently passed at the end of 2015. Has your PD planning and budget allocation changed since that time, and in what ways?
15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about professional development in your school?

APPENDIX C
ELECTRONIC TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey on Teacher Professional Development Needs and Experiences

Professional development and delivery models are major topics of conversation related to teacher quality. A lot of these conversations have stemmed from the demands for accountability via the No Child Left Behind act and its successor, the ESSA.

However, little research has focused on how school leaders prioritize and allocate professional development opportunities for teachers within the building that they operate.

This research study will explore the perceptions of school leaders and teachers about professional development needs, planning, and effectiveness.

1) I have read the aforementioned description of the study, and I agree to participate in this research study. I understand that my answers to the questions will be used as a part of a dissertation study. I am aware that I will not provide any individually identifying information and my individual answers will not be shared with anyone.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Demographic Information

2) Please indicate your gender.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other identity
- ◯ I wish not to disclose

3) Please indicate your age group.

- ◯ 18-24
- ◯ 25-34
- ◯ 35-44
- ◯ 45-55
- ◯ 55 or older

4) Are you currently working at a public charter school or traditional public school?

- ◯ Public Charter School
- ◯ Traditional Public School

5) Which of the following categories best describes your teaching appointment at your school?

- ◯ Full-time
- ◯ Part-time at 50%-90% of full time hours
- ◯ Part-time at less than 50% of full time hours

6) Which of the following describes your employment status at the school?

- ◯ Permanent Employment (an on-going contract with no fixed end-point before the age of retirement)
- ◯ Fixed-term contract for a period of more than 1 school year
- ◯ Fixed-term contract for a period of 1 school year or less

7) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ◯ High School Diploma
- ◯ Associate Degree
- ◯ Bachelor Degree
- ◯ Master's Degree
- ◯ Doctorate Degree

- ◯ Other: _____

8) How many years have you been in your current position?

- ◯ Less than 1 year
- ◯ At least 1 year but less than 3 years
- ◯ At least 3 years but less than 5 years
- ◯ At least 5 years but less than 10 years
- ◯ 10 years or more

Professional Development Experiences

9) Thinking of your professional development experiences during the last 12 months, indicate the effectiveness of these experiences. If you did not participate in an activity, please select "did not participate".

	Did not participate	Extremely effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Not at all effective
Courses/Workshop (on subject matter or methods and/or other education related topics)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Education conference or seminar	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Qualification program (degree program)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Observation visits to other schools	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Participation in a Professional Learning Community	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Individual or collaborative research on a professional topic of interest	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching, as a part of a school arrangement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

10) In the last 12 months, did anything prevent you from participating in more or other professional development? Select all of the reasons that apply.

- ☐ I did not want or need any other professional development opportunities

- [ ] I did not have the pre-requisites (e.g. qualifications, experience, seniority)
- [ ] Professional development was too expensive for school budget
- [ ] There was a lack of employer support
- [ ] Professional development conflicted with my work schedule
- [ ] I didn't have time because of my family responsibilities
- [ ] There was no relevant professional development offered
- [ ] My school leader was not supportive of me attending
- ○ Other: _____

11) Thinking of your own professional development needs, please indicate the extent of your needs in each of the areas listed.

	No need at all	Low level of need	Moderate level of need	High level of need
Content standards in my grade level	○	○	○	○
Student assessment practice	○	○	○	○
Classroom management	○	○	○	○
Knowledge and understanding of grade level content	○	○	○	○
Knowledge and understanding of instructional practices for my grade level (pedegogy)	○	○	○	○
Instructional Technology skills for teaching	○	○	○	○
Teaching students with special learning needs	○	○	○	○
Student discipline and behavior problems	○	○	○	○
Teaching in a multicultural setting	○	○	○	○

Other area (please indicate):

12) Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am satisfied with the professional development at this school.	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders at this school are concerned about my professional development.	○	○	○	○	○
My needs as an adult learner are being met.	○	○	○	○	○
Overall my professional development needs are being met.	○	○	○	○	○

Please comment on your responses.

13) To your understanding, how do leaders at your school determine teacher professional development needs and opportunities?

14) Anything else you would like to share about your professional development?

APPENDIX D
SCHOOL LEADER CONSENT FORM

UNC CHARLOTTE

Department of
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
"How school leaders prioritize and allocate resources to improve teacher quality through teacher professional development: A multiple case study in suburban North Carolina"

You are being asked to participate in a research study, "How school leaders prioritize and allocate resources to improve teacher quality through teacher professional development: A multiple case study in suburban North Carolina." The purpose of this research study is to explore how school leaders determine the professional development needs of their teachers and if the perceived professional development needs of the teacher are a factor in that decision making process. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign this document if you agree to participate in the study.

Deonté Tyson, a UNC Charlotte doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership will be conducting this research project. The research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Dika, who is an Associate Professor at UNC Charlotte and also Deonté's advisor.

You have been contacted about this study because you are a school leader in the Charlotte Metro Area and your school was chosen using a convenience sample. When the school was contacted, you (your representative) said that you would be willing to participate in a brief interview.

You will be interviewed by Mr. Tyson for approximately thirty to forty five (30-45) minutes. The interview will consist of questions about professional development in your building, including; how development is chosen for your staff, the budget for development and how (if at all) your relationships with your staff influence professional development decisions. The interview will be audio recorded.

It is possible that talking about teacher quality (professional development) could make you feel uncomfortable. You are welcome to skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, and you may also stop the interview at any time.

Some people find talking about teacher quality helpful. A possible benefit of this study is that the results may help facilitate future decision making regarding professional development fund allocation and decision making

The research team will make every effort to protect your privacy. All your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. The digital audio recording files will be kept on a password protected computer. The recordings will not be stored on a public network folder. The recordings will be coded by a number rather than your name. After the audio recording is transcribed, it will be destroyed. The transcriptions will contain no identifying information. During the study, all transcription materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. When the results of this study are published, participants will not be referred to by names.

The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that all research participants are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university's Office of Research Compliance at (704)-687-1871 if you have questions about your rights as a study participant. If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project, contact Deonté Tyson (513-238-9682, dtyson8@uncc.edu).

This form was approved for use on *April 27, 2017* for a period of one (1) year.

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

_____	_____	_____
Printed name of participant	Signature of participant	Date

_____

Person obtaining consent