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Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Responsibilities During District-Mandated Changes to Curriculum

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

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by

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MS, University of Maryland University College, 2007

BS, University of Maryland, University College 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Systemic changes to curriculum are an inevitable part of education; however, understanding how teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum is unclear. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions related to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. The conceptual framework for this study was change theory to explore how teachers and administrators process district-mandated changes to curriculum. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with eight teachers and seven administrators who have implemented district-mandated changes in a public school in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Data were analyzed through a priori coding and thematic analysis resulting in five themes (a) communication, (b) student centered, (c) collaboration, (d) support, and (e) adapting to the mandated change. The teachers and administrators who participated in this study shared they believe they both have the responsibility of understanding the district-mandated change to effectively implement the change. To implement change that challenge teachers' and administrators' current beliefs, participants of this study felt it was important to collaborate and share ideas. The findings from this research have potential implications for positive social change in that they may be used to develop strategies for collaboration and collective input when implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum, in support of student achievement.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my three children, Cameron, Céyon, and Harlee. You remain the driving force behind every decision I make. It is because of your existence, your motivation, and your energy that I can persevere. I hope my hard work is a motivator for you and all you seek to achieve.

Acknowledgments

To my committee chair, Dr. Blacher-Wilson, for reminding me how far I have come and to never to give up and for keeping me on track. I am forever grateful. To my second committee member, Dr. Alexson, thank you for being resourceful and firm. Thank you both for providing consistent, constructive feedback and reminding me to push myself to completion. Without your guidance and support, I could not have completed this work.

To my husband, Rashad, thank you for showing me patience and support during this process. Your understanding, encouragement, reminders, and check-ins made it possible for me to accomplish this important goal.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Education reform has been a long-standing part of the educational system and is generally initiated at the federal and state levels with a focus on efforts to improve student achievement. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) reestablished guidelines for teacher and administrator effectiveness as critical aspects of education reform. Effective implementation of district-mandated curricular changes requires coherence in a school's process and also means teachers and administrators identify what change is required and how that change fits into their programs' complexity (Mason, 2016). The consideration of other stakeholders' perceptions helps to establish a well-rounded program (Ni et al., 2018). This study promotes positive social change by increasing understanding of how teachers and administrators perceive implementing district-mandated curriculum changes and how they influence instruction.

To support and maintain effectiveness in teachers' and administrators' abilities to implement changes to curriculum, qualitative collaboration, professional development, and consistent feedback are needed (Soini et al., 2016). Nonetheless, teachers' and administrators' current practices supporting change in curriculum implementation are often not enough to support effective implementation (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016); although, according to Senge et al. (1999), learning organizations tend to be more successful at effectively implementing change. Additionally, remaining reflective and making meaning of the new information is a part of educators' process to embrace curriculum changes that may challenge their current practices (Kramer, 2018; Mason,

2016; Ravitch, 2020). Scheele (2015) explained Mezirow's (1997) transformative

learning theory that suggests that teachers and administrators reflect on implementing

changes to the curriculum as part of their assimilation process with new material. This

reflective process allows teachers and administrators to consider what they already know

about the curriculum and merge it with the curriculum changes. Transformative learning

theory describes the process as multi-step learning that includes considering one's own

outlook toward the situation, which may be previously unconsidered; reflecting on the

intended change needed; gathering ideas of others about the need for change; and making

a decision derived from the entire transformation process (Mezirow, 1997; Scheele,

2015).

      Managing the change process requires collaborative accountability among

teachers and administrators. Taking risks when transferring the newly acquired

information into educators' instructional practice is a part of the change process (Soini et

al., 2016). Managing the risky process of change also requires collective efficacy focused

on a cohesive process (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Fullan et al., 2015; Lopez & Wise, 2015).

According to Drago et al. (2018), the adaptive professional learning environment helps

guide staff through changes in the educational system. Collaborative accountability

between teachers and administrators directly influences organizational learning (Thiers,

2017). At the same time, prior experiences and the learning educators engage in through

their pedagogical studies shape an educator's perception of educating children (García-

Martínez et al., 2018; Kelly et al., 2018; Scheele, 2015).

Chapter 1 includes an overview of the gap in practice between teachers and administrators and their perceptions of the process of managing district-mandated changes to the curriculum that influence instruction. The chapter also contains an explanation of the purpose and significance of the study and how the study relates to current practices in education. I present the research questions and conceptual framework, which was derived by a careful examination of the salient literature, followed by the nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and definitions of key terms used throughout the study. The chapter ends with a summary of the chapter and a transition into the literature review.

Background

One factor influencing student achievement in elementary schools is how effectively teachers and administrators implement district-mandated changes affecting curriculum (Madimetsa et al., 2018; Tubin, 2015). These curricular changes can be initiatives at the federal, state, local, or school levels. Initiatives may include changes to curriculum and instructional design, assessments, and standards. Though previous researchers have focused on rapport (Fullan, 2000), teacher buy-in (Hartge et al., 2019), and supporting teachers (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016), minimal research has been conducted to address the perceptions teachers and administrators have of the process of implementing changes to curriculum affecting instruction. Curricular changes in education often require teachers to be receptive and administrators to support teachers through the change (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016; Kelly et al., 2018). Recent literature addressed the concept of change by focusing on teachers' self-efficacy efficacy

(Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016); however, examining teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the process that occurs around curricular changes in education, is largely ignored.

Changes to the curriculum are inevitable in education; administrators' responsibilities are to prepare to support teachers and build their efficacy to facilitate effective instruction and educators (Fullan et al., 2015). This study was conducted to address the gap in knowledge of how teachers and administrators perceive the process of implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. An analysis of current teachers' and administrators' perceptions of effective implementation of instructional changes may help determine professional development needs for teachers and administrators. The study findings may provide school-based administrators with strategies to effectively support teachers during instructional changes in curriculum.

Although Spiro (2013) noted that current research assists administrators in understanding how to support teachers during curriculum changes, additional studies could provide an understanding of how teachers and administrators perceive district-mandated changes to the curriculum and how to effectively implement change. According to Mei Kin et al. (2018) the administrator role remains the most influential in adopting the change while the role of the teacher has the most influence on the outcome of the efforts to implement the change. Teachers' roles are most significant because of their direct influence on students (Mei Kin et al., 2018). This study aimed to give voice to the perceptions of teachers and administrators as they relate to implementing district-mandated changes that can affect instruction. By understanding teachers' and

administrators' perceptions, district leadership may be better able to provide teachers and administrators with strategies to support the process of effective implementation of curriculum changes which, in turn, will support student achievement (Dixon & Palmer, 2020; Meyers & Smylie, 2017; Olivier & Huffman, 2016). According to Fullan (2020), systems do not improve unless leaders at all levels are engaged in system improvement.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of understanding of how teachers and administrators perceive implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum (Hord & Huling-Austin, 1986; Wieczorek, 2017). For successful implementation of district-mandated changes, teachers and administrators must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in the process. Elementary public school district, teachers and administrators in a large mid-Atlantic state are tasked with implementing district-mandated changes. According to Cansoy and Parlar (2018), managing the process of change is the responsibility of the teacher as well as the administrator creating "collective efficacy" (p. 555) focused on student achievement. However, Wieczorek (2017) argued there is a disconnect between teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their responsibilities for implementing district mandates affecting the curriculum. There is a lack of understanding of teachers' and administrators' responsibilities when implementing changes (Adler-Greene, 2019; Madimetsa et al., 2018).

The problem reflects a meaningful gap in practice supported by the current research literature. Mehdinezhad and Mansouri (2016) found that rapport between

teachers and administrators increases teachers' self-efficacy and can be an important factor influencing effective implementation of district-mandated changes to the curriculum. Still, Mehdinezhad and Mansouri (2016) did not analyze the responsibilities of both teachers and administrators in the process of implementing district-mandated changes in the curriculum. Cansoy and Parlar (2018) found that the role of leadership has significant influence over the effective implementation of district-mandated changes to the curriculum, but they did not study the responsibilities of both teachers and administrators in the process of implementing district-mandated changes in the curriculum. Cansoy and Parlar (2018) recommended more research into the clarity of both teachers' and administrators' responsibilities in implementing district-mandated changes in the curriculum. According to Mei Kin, et al. (2018), a gap continues to exist in teachers' and administrators' understanding of their responsibilities when implementing district-mandated changes. As teachers and administrators implement district-mandated changes to curriculum, they must understand how the changes fit into their practices to effectively implement them (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gather teachers' and administrators' perceptions related to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum (Cansoy & PArlar, 2018; Liou et al., 2019; Mei Kin et al., 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This study also helps address the gap in the practice of teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding effective implementation of district-mandated changes to the curriculum. This study's findings provide a clearer

understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the process of effective

implementation of district-mandated changes to the curriculum, thus allowing for

strategies for effective implementation of curricular changes.

This study's research paradigm was based on the interpretivist assumption, which

explores people's subjective experiences and interpretations in their natural setting

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To collect data, semistructured interviews were conducted with

teachers and administrators who have implemented district-mandated changes. The

interviews were used to gather information on teachers' and administrators' perceptions

of implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. The collected data and

subsequent analysis of the data allowed me to make sense of the findings based on the

feedback collected from the participants (Creswell, 2009). Using semistructured, virtual,

face-to-face interviews helped me to establish a rapport with the participants and create a

level of trust between the participants and researcher.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were

RQ1: How do teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in the

navigation of necessary changes during district-mandated changes to the curriculum?

RQ2: How do teachers and administrators claim they implement changes to their

instructional practices when they do not directly align with their current beliefs?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was change theory (Fullan, 1991).

Change theory is focused on how the learner processes new information by using critical

thinking and adaptation to the change. (Malik, 2016). This theory was appropriate for framing this study. When teachers and administrators receive new district-mandated changes to the curriculum, it also affects their current practices and challenges their background in the field (Hoggan, 2016). During the change, teachers and administrators engage in learning new curricular information that may counter their current beliefs and practices. According to Liou et al. (2019), internal motivation and beliefs strongly influence the effective implementation of changes to curriculum. The transformation of practice brought on by the mandated changes to curriculum relies on teachers' and administrators' beliefs and perceptions (Liou et al., 2019). During change, learners want to maintain a sense of balance, and the challenge then becomes how the new information is perceived and integrated into their current practices (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). Fullan (2020) argued that failure to recognize the process of change could result in misinterpretation. To facilitate the shift in thinking, there must be a disorienting dilemma that forces a change in thinking (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). During this process, learners face a conflict while bridging the new information with prior experiences, and this is where teachers' and administrators' responsibilities are critical.

During the change process, educators may maintain consistency in practice while understanding how to embrace new information (Peck & Mummery, 2018; Ravitch, 2020). Effective implementation of the change in curriculum is at the core of the process (Peck & Mummery, 2018). In practice, practitioners consider the work required based on what they know and what they perceive to be the expectations for successful implementation of the change (O'Brien, 2018). Managing changes in instructional

practices is influenced by district-mandated changes in curriculum. These changes affect instruction requiring educators to synthesize the new information in conjunction with what they already know. The purpose of the study, therefore, was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions related to their responsibilities for effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum.

The conceptual framework grounded this study because it is focused on the learner processing new information and adapting to that information. The data collection for this study involved an interview protocol for semistructured interviews. Interviews are a common method for gathering data in a qualitative study. The conceptual framework guided the instrument because I created the interview protocol based on the conceptual framework's constructs. The conceptual framework guided data analysis because the analysis was a priori coding created from key elements outlined by Fullan's change theory as well as themes derived from the data collected from the interviews.

Nature of the Study

This study's research design was a qualitative case study to understand how teachers and administrators perceive district-mandated changes in education. The study's population was 10,000 K–12 public school educators in a mid-Atlantic state, including teachers and administrators. The sample size was 15 participants. The sampling technique was purposeful sampling to involve an accurate representation of a larger group of practitioners. An analysis of data gathered from interviews of current teachers and administrators assisted in understanding the perceptions of people in those positions related to the process of implementing new initiatives or curriculum and how educators

manage the changes brought on by district-mandated changes. There is suggestive

research on leadership's relevance in building teachers' capacity during times of change

(Miles & Galvez, 2017). Much of the available research has been focused on the

responsibility of the teacher in preparing for change and how administrators can support

teachers in the change process (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Mehdinezhad & Mansouri,

2016); stll there is little research on teachers' and administrators' perceptions of

managing the changes.

Definitions

Change theory: Change theory is defined as the result of a progression of

necessary reasoning activities that give an extensive picture of the early and middle of the

road term changes expected to arrive at long haul objectives or destinations enunciated by

the network (Drag0-Severson et al., 2018; Everhart & Chenowth, 2013; Fullan, 1993;

Hoffman-Miller, 2022).

Perception: Perception is a mode of apprehending reality and experience through

the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action.

Individual perceptions influence opinion, judgment, understanding of a situation or

person, meaning of an experience, and how one responds to a situation. A common way

of defining perception is how individuals see things; however, perception is a process

involving not only the senses but also complex underlying mechanisms. (Given, 2008,

para. 1).

Assumptions

To ensure the validity of the data collected, all participants were asked to participate voluntarily and honestly and were made comfortable with the interview format. The assumption was that all participants understood the interview questions' focus and understood how their professional responsibilities relate to the questions. I assumed that participants had some understanding of how district-mandated changes to instruction influence their professional practice.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of the study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions related to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. Previous research has been focused on rapport, teacher buy-in, and supporting teachers, there existed a lack of understanding of the perceptions teachers and administrators have of the implementation process for changes to curriculum affecting instruction (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016; Fullan, 2000; Hartge et al., 2019). Using semistructured, virtual, face-to-face interviews, data were collected form participants who were asked to describe their experiences and expectations of the process of implementing district-mandated changes that can affect curriculum implementation. In this study, I sought to understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators related to their responsibilities in the process of implementing district-mandated changes that can affect curriculum implementation. The boundaries of the research problem and the limitations of K–12 public school educators in a mid-Atlantic public-school system limited the study's scope. Further, the status of education reform and district-mandated

changes to curriculum also limited the study's current relevance of the study to the participants.

Limitations

Limitations affecting the research include researcher bias, timeframe for data collection, and sample size. As the sole researcher responsible for formulating interview questions and collecting and analyzing data, there was an anticipation of researcher bias. My direct professional experiences in managing a district-mandated curriculum and instruction changes influenced the questions' focus. The timeframe for gathering the research and the number of participants only allowed me to capture a small amount of data that may not be representative of a larger group over a longer timeframe. The study was limited by the sample size and localization of the participants. Fifteen participants were interviewed, eight teachers and seven administrators. All participants were educators who have implemented mandated changes to the curriculum in a mid-Atlantic state. Participants had the opportunity to share individual experiences and perceptions of implementing change. The participants expressed different perceptions based on their respective experiences in the process of implementing mandated changes to the curriculum. The sample only included teachers and administrators who have implemented change in an elementary school.

Significance

In this study, I focused on teachers' and administrators' perceptions of implementing district-mandated changes that affect the curriculum, which will benefit teachers, administrators, and students. The benefit to teachers and administrators will be

increasing their understanding of the process of implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. This understanding may create increased improvement in instruction and, ultimately, in student achievement (Madimetsa et al., 2018). Current changes in education, such as the shift to the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), require teachers to be open to change and administrators to support teachers through the change (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016). Recent studies have been focused on the rapport between teachers and administrators and increasing teacher self-efficacy (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016). Effectively implementing changes to the curriculum should be driven by the needs of students and teachers (Rodríguez et al., 2017).

According to Fullan (2000), it is important to consider for the effects mandates have at the local level. Fullan et al. (2015) also suggested the importance of creating collaborative cultures where school-based teams work collectively to decide on the best methods for implementing large-scale reforms that influence district-mandated changes to the curriculum. Understanding the perceptions of teachers and administrators who implement new mandates during district-mandated changes to curriculum could lead to more effective execution of the changes and provide greater potential for student achievement (Adler-Greene, 2019; Edwards-Groves et al., 2016; Madimetsa et al., 2018; Tubin, 2015).

School district leadership can focus on strategies to support teachers and administrators with the process of effective curriculum change implementation which will, which in turn, support student achievement. Effective district leaders understand

their role as critical influencers on the school's implementation of change and instruments of leverage in the central office to lead and implement change (Dixon & Palmer, 2020; Fullan, 2005).

Summary

In this chapter, I presented an introduction and overview of the study, which included the problem, purpose, conceptual framework, research questions, anticipated assumptions and limitations, significance, and pertinent definitions of key terms. This qualitative case study was aimed at understanding teachers' and administrators' perceptions of implementing changes in curriculum that affect instruction. Fullan's change theory was the framework for this study. Change theory suggests a process for acquiring and implementing new information that requires a person to adjust to a new paradigm. When teachers and administrators are required to implement changes to instruction brought on by district mandates, their instructional practices are adjusted based on the mandate. Data were collected through interviews with 15 individuals who worked in a K-12 mid-Atlantic school district. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature that further explains the process of taking in new information, processing that information, and then implementing the new information as it relates to the responsibilities of teachers and administrators.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions as they relate to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. District-mandated changes in education have remained an inevitable part of the education system (Fullan, 2000, 2001). According to Fullan (2000), changes to education, or education reform, often fail due to implementation issues.

According to the seminal research of Fullan (2000) and Spiro (2013), much of the current research has focused on the process and effects of education reform and preparing school districts and administrators to facilitate the changes necessary in schools (Fulla, 200; Spiro, 2013). The consideration of teacher and student needs supports the effective implementation of district-mandated changes (Rodríguez et al., 2017). Teachers' and administrators' perceptions are based on their previous experiences and, in turn, influence how they manage and implement changes to instruction (Drago-Severson et al. 2018; Reid, 2021). According to Adler-Greene (2019), a more considerable concern brought on by mandated changes from the federal level is governance and lack of understanding about the disparities schools face when implementing changes that ultimately affect all students. Making sense of the change and receiving consistent support is helpful for teachers and administrators when implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. Facing changes over time also helps build teachers' and administrators'

capacities to manage district-mandated changes that present challenges (Drago-Severson et al., 2018).

District-mandated changes continue to be a part of the education system. The changes tend to affect curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Federal and state-level initiatives, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), ESSA (2015), Race to the Top (RTTT; GovTrack.us., 2022), and Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), are some initiatives which have influenced this form of change. The effect of large-scale changes has prompted a shift in thinking among teachers and administrators (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Fullan, 2004). Self-efficacy is an essential practice of teachers and administrators when taking risks and transferring newly acquired information into their instructional practice (Soini et al., 2016). Several individuals have presented models and change theories associated with organizational change and changes required of educators to meet 21st-century demands. Coban et al. (2019) argued that organizational learning is necessary for effective organizational change. Knowing the culture and organizational structure is critical to understanding how to manage the change (Coban et al., 2019). For this study, change theory was defined as the result of a progression of necessary reasoning activities that gives an extensive picture of the early and middle of the road term changes expected to arrive at long haul objectives or destinations enunciated by the network (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Everhart & Chenoweth, 2013; Fullan, 1993; Hoffman-Miller, 2022).

This chapter begins with a description of the literature search strategy used to find current and empirical literature on the successes and challenges of implementing mandated changes to curriculum and instruction. This chapter also includes a description of the conceptual framework that guided the research questions used for the study. Additionally, a thorough overview of current literature relating to effective implementation of mandated changes to curriculum and instruction and teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their responsibilities in implementing district-mandated changes is offered. Lastly, the summary presents the major themes and gaps found in the literature explaining how this study helps to understand teachers' and administrators' perceptions as they relate to their responsibilities in implementing district-mandated changes.

Literature Search Strategy

The following research databases were used to search for literature, Walden University Library, Google Scholar, EBSCO, ERIC, and ProQuest. Initially, I began with a search of the following terms: *theory of andragogy, change theory, history of education reform,* and *theory of transformational leadership*. As lead theorists began to surface in the research, a search of the following was conducted, *Fullan* and *Marzano*. A review of the literature within these topics led me to theorists Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory and Senge's systems theory (Senge et al., 1999), as well as the importance of the responsibilities of teachers and administrators in district-mandated changes in curriculum and instruction. Once relevant articles were located, I read each

article's abstract to identify the significance of the article, which led to additional terms of relevance, *teacher capacity, organizational change*, and *learning organization*.

Conceptual Framework

Fullan's change theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Change theory provided a framework for understanding how teachers and administrators perceive mandated changes to the curriculum. According to Fullan (1991), adults face new experiences based on their previous experiences. The challenges brought on by the mandated changes to the curriculum are at the core of the change process (Peck & Mummery, 2018). This literature reivew provides a brief description of change theory and how it relates to this study. Additionally, Senge's systems theory (Senge et al., 1999) is discussed to describe the relationship between attitudes, perceptions, and actions.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

The literature review provides an overview of the history of education reform, and the implications of reform on district-mandated changes affecting curriculum implementation. There is also an explanation of the concept of change theory and the conceptual implications on managing district-mandated changes. Then I present an explanation of systems theory and how it relates to the effective implementation of district-mandated changes.

In 2015, President Obama signed ESSA (2015) into law, revising many aspects of NCLB, 2002; Adler-Green, 2019). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education implemented the RTTT (GovTrack.us., 2022) initiative. This initiative was designed to foster consistent standards and assessments for teaching and learning, systems to measure

student growth, retention of effective teachers and administrators, and improvement in

student achievement for struggling schools (Wright & McCotter, 2017, p. 63). Mandates

in NCLB, ESSA, and RTTT helped to establish structures and laws to encourage

improvement in student achievement. What has been missing from federal mandates such

as these, however, is the understanding of the efforts that support student growth, which

is heavily influenced by effective implementation of curriculum and instruction (Adler-

Green, 2019; Edwards-Groves et al., 2016; Madimetsa et al., 2018; Tubin, 2015). Fullan

(2000) described the failures of past large-scale reforms initiated in 1960 as not

addressing important issues at the state and local levels. Fullan (2000) further cited a

misunderstanding of the effects of culture and collaboration as significant obstacles in

implementing change. Fullan et al. (2015) also explained the importance of lawmakers

pushing for more focus on internal accountability, leading to a more cooperative or

collective approach to sustaining student improvement.

  The most important role in education reform is that of the teachers (Baris et al.,

2019). According to Fullan (1993), it is the teacher's responsibility to be purposeful and

develop strategies that increase their capacity, clarify their vision, ask questions for

clarity, become masters of their trade, and work collaboratively with administrators and

colleagues. Mei Kin et al. (2018) suggested administrators focus on the direction of the

change and recognize the needs and processes for the change. According to Risko (2017),

a teacher's needs are a key element in establishing a shared responsibility when

implementing district-mandated changes that affect curriculum implementation.

Establishing a culture for such efforts requires organizational trust and positive

relationships (Kars & Inandi, 2018). The teachers' and the administrators' responsibilities heavily affect the effectiveness of implementing changes to curriculum that affect instruction (Mei Kin et al., 2018). A teacher's perceptions are heavily influenced by their beliefs, which influence their attitudes toward the change. Likewise, administrators' instructional behaviors directly influence the attitudes and perceptions of teachers (Mei Kin et al., 2018). According to Mei Kin et al. (2018), there is a gap in understanding how teachers' and administrators' responsibilities affect the process of implementing district-mandated changes that affect curriculum implementation.

Effective implementation of district-mandated changes affecting curriculum implementation is the responsibility of teachers and administrators (Fullan et al., 2015; Madimetsa et al., 2018; Tubin, 2015). According to Senge et al. (1999), creating a learning organization fosters a more successful culture for effectively implementing district-mandated changes. Learning organizations operate as systems, and teachers and administrators in that system come together with their own personal and interpersonal habits (Reese, 2020). Hansen et al. (2020) argued that organizational leadership is important, but more research on the relationship between teachers and administrators and the learning organizations is needed. Another factor affecting the effective implementation of change is collective efficacy (DeWitt, 2018; Madimetsa et al., 2018). When teachers and administrators work together as a learning system, remaining reflective and open to change is a necessary part of the process (Kramer, 2018; Mason, 2016; Reese, 2020). Another important factor to consider as effective for implementing change is maintaining consistency (Peck & Mummery, 2018).

Managing the process of change is the responsibility of teachers and administrators, who can create collective efficacy focused on student achievement (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Fullan et al., 2015; Lopez & Wise, 2015). Teachers and administrators can maintain professional connectedness involves embracing a mindset of being partners in the work (Drago-Severson et al., 2018). In an evaluation of change theories relating to the federal mandates initiated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) for early learning, Schindler et al. (2019) argued there is a need for more clarity and support when developing initiatives that require changes affecting curriculum implications.

History of Education Reform

District-mandated changes are also referred to as *education reform*. Education reform is a longstanding effort to create better opportunities for students (Fadzil et al, 2019). Still, according to Levin (2000), the primary benefactors of education are the students, and they are the least likely to be involved in the reform process. Levin argued that because students see the outcomes of reform efforts, their involvement is important, yet student involvement in education reform does not occur. Levin (2000) further argued in favor of the necessary participation and buy-in from teachers. According to Chimbi et al.'s (2021) study, education reform should be more student-centered.

Sustaining education reform is difficult (Cohen, 1995; Fullan, 1991; Levin, 2000; Nguyen et al., 2021). According to Cohen (1995), education reform is intended to change teaching and ultimately drive instruction, but there continues to be a disconnect between policy and practice. Cohen also argued that district reform has had significant effects in

the past, but there is a challenge in providing coherent guidance for instruction. Cohen (1995) also argued that states must provide better guidance for instruction with federal reforms, which has not been consistent across states. According to Coban et al. (2019), leadership is morphing from supervisory-focused to strategy-focused. Sadri et al. (2021) stated that few studies have focused on schools' readiness, and that staff familiarity with implementation is lacking. Sadri et al. (2021) further stated that teacher and administrator readiness is important for effective implementation of the school's goals and operational strategies.

Education reform is the neglect of the phenomenology of change (Fullan, 1991). How people perceive a mandated change may not align with how the change was intended to be implemented. According to Fullan (1991), the history of education reform has been devoid of creating a culture within the community to assist all stakeholders in processing and implementing district-mandated changes. Because change usually alters a person's practices and can sometimes challenge what they are used to, it is important to focus on the humanistic aspect of adapting and learning new things. According to Hord and Huling-Austin (1986) the disconnect between implementation and instruction has been and continues to be a problem spanning several decades. Factors influencing this disconnect include, identifying the various types of support teachers need, identifying who is responsible for the facilitation, and being patient because implementation takes time. According to Cohen and Hickman (1998), a clear plan for support and problem solving strengthens the effective implementation of district-mandated changes to the curriculum, which aims to increase student achievement (Fullan, 2000; O'Brien, 2018).

Curriculum Implementation

Effective curriculum implementation depends on many factors. Nevenglosky et al. (2019) identified the following as barriers to effective curriculum implementation, teachers need more information before implementing a new curriculum to understand what is required and how to begin to adjust their current practices. Teaching and learning are influenced by the behaviors and strategies teachers use to meet the needs of students (Fadzil et al., 2019). Additionally, participants in Fadzil et al,'s (2019) study shared that they wanted professional development and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. Madondo's (2021) study examining the perceptions of teachers on curriculum implementation revealed a significant factor influencing a teacher's perception of implementing changes in instruction is accessibility to resources. Those resources include support from administrators and colleagues as well as instructional resources, such as technology, books, and other materials. Madondo also argued that curriculum changes, timing, and purpose may affect the overall perception of teacher effectiveness.

The political influence can often motivate curriculum changes and teachers may not find the change necessary (Chimbi & Jita, 2019). Additionally, a gradual progression of the change may allow teachers an opportunity to process and reflect on their practice before implementation (Madondo, 2021). Madondo suggested the challenge in the timing of implementation is based on the idea that teachers typically must teach while implementing new curricula. This results in a rush to learn with little time to understand. Another factor influencing the effective implementation of changes to the curriculum is teachers' and administrators' ability to make sense of the change (Chimbi & Jita, 2019).

Participants of Ambusaida et al.'s (2021) study shared they faced many challenges when implementing new curriculum. Participants of this study shared there is often a mismatch between what is planned for teachers to implement and what teachers implemented. The participants attributed this disconnect to a lack of understanding the change in curriculum and the expected shifts in their practices.

Change Theory

According to Kretchmar (2021), early studies by Jean Piaget suggested people are generally able to adapt to new information when it is considered viable and adaptable. An individual's prior knowledge contradicting the new information usually causes a challenge in accepting new information (Kretchmar, 20121); as Scheele (2015) described, an individual's "frame of reference" (p. 8) influences how the individual understands and experience and the expectations the individual places on the experience for affecting change. According to Ambusaidi et al.'s (2021) study, teachers beliefs and pedagogical knowledge influence teachers' ability to effectively adapt and implement changes to curriculum. Reflecting, analyzing, questioning, and problem-solving the new information sustains the relevance (Kretchmar, 2021). Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory conceptualizes the way individuals go through the process of transformation from one paradigm to another (Scheele, 2015). Christie et al. (2015) conducted a study to test the implications of transformative learning theory. Findings revealed that when participants realized their disorienting dilemmas, they were better able to adjust their views to accept the new information.

Teachers and administrators establish their instructional practices through their experiences. Their methods and experiences affect how they perceive changes (Fullan, 2002; Garcia-Martinez & Tadeu, 2018). Prior experiences and the learning educators engage in form educators' perceptions (García-Martínez & Tadeu, 2018; Kelly et al., 2018). According to Mezirow (1997), individuals make meaning of new information based on their own experiences. Learning takes place as individuals form and reform their perception of information. There are 10 stages associated with transformative learning theory (a) disorienting dilemma, (b) self-examination, (c) assessing assumptions, (d) noticing shared experiences, (e) exploring options for action, (f) building self-confidence, (g) acquiring new skills, (h) practicing new responsibilities, and (i) interacting based on new perspectives. With these 10 stages in mind, four processes supported this study accurately. The processes included the elaboration of an existing point of view, the establishment of a new point of view, the transformation of a point of view, and the transformation of the habit of mind where the learner becomes conscientious of their biases and reforms their thinking. Transformative learning in adults differs from transformative learning in children because adults form and reform values, concepts, and feelings throughout their lives (Bouchard, 2021). The information adults acquire over time makes them who they are. When introduced to new ideas, the process for adults to transform or reform their frame of reference via reflection often includes bias.

A teacher's or administrator's professional identity shapes how well they implement change (García-Martínez & Tadeu, 2018). Teachers and administrators

establish their identities through their experiences. An overarching theme that continues to surface in the literature is how teachers' practices and experiences affect how they perceive changes. The professional practice of implementing change strengthens over time (Fullan, 2002; García - Martínez & Tadeu, 2018).

Systems Theory

Fullan (2006) explained that when teachers and administrators implement change the process is a system. While it is known the change occurs when new curriculum is implemented, there are no structures that provide a platform for administrators to manage the system of change effectively. According to Senge et al. (1999), five core learning disciplines support an organization's ability to effectively implement change as a team (a) personal mastery, referring to an individual's ability to set and meet personal goals; (b) mental models, referring to an individual's reflection; (c) shared vision, referring to an organization's ability to commit to a common goal; (d) team learning, relating to collaborative management of implementing change; and (c) systems thinking, referring to how individuals within the organization rely on one another to manage change. The same principles are evident when practiced through collective efficacy (Madimetsa et al., 2018).

By taking an organizational approach instead of an individual approach, the group works together to support one another and manage change cooperatively (Coban et al., 2019). Ni et al. (2018) believed having multiple perceptions helps to cross-validate the perceptions of everyone involved. Fullan (2006) further explained that leaders must be able to guide their organization to sustainability. Additionally, Ni et al. stated that

decisions from higher levels, such as federal and state, are more effective when they include support for building and increasing the capacity and collaboration of teachers and administrators.

The purpose of district-mandated changes, or education reform, is to increase student achievement (O'Brien, 2018). A factor influencing student achievement in elementary schools is teachers and administrators effectively implementing district-mandated changes related to curriculum (Crow, 2009; Madimetsa et al., 2018; Snyder, 2018). O'Brien (2018) argued the teachers' and administrators' active engagement in the professional and personal-professional processes of implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum supports effectiveness. O'Brien referred to teachers' and administrators' level of engagement as the hallmark of an adaptive professional. As individuals, teachers and administrators may have a unique perception when implementing district-mandated changes, teachers and administrators need to identify common themes and focus on the expected outcome (Peck & Mummery, 2018).

According to Hartge et al. (2019), effective implementation of district-mandated changes requires administrators to be cognizant of several factors affecting the process. Important expectations of administrators include an explanation of what is affected by the change, communicating accurate information, communicating how the change benefits the system and teaching and learning, imploring the ideas and thoughts of all stakeholders, clearing obstacles to help others embrace the change, acknowledging and celebrating progress, and supporting with relevant resources (Tofur, 2017). Additionally, Peck and Mummery (2018) argued that biases based on previous experiences often

impede the process of effective implementation of district-mandated changes that can affect curriculum implementation.

Hartge et al. (2019) suggested, "The concept of human sensemaking and communication from both the leader and subordinate's perspective is critical to understanding organizations when in crisis and change" (p. 102). Hartge et al. further explained the need for administrators to consider changes occurring in the culture. Hartge et al. suggested using mental maps to understand how the change will affect the current way of doing things and what those who are affected by the change need to manage the change. Additionally, Hartge et al. urged administrators to be transparent about the full scope of the change to support more effective processing by those who are affected by the change.

Teachers' and Administrators' Perceptions

Supporting change is a critical part of the administrator's role. Teachers perceive administrators do not effectively influence change, while administrators see themselves as demonstrating effective support during the change process (Mayes & Gethers, 2018). Teachers expect administrators to communicate expectations early and consistently while also identifying teacher leaders to support building teacher capacity (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019).

According to Ghavifekr et al. (2019), principals are responsible for the management of the implemented change but should also collaborate with teachers, so teachers understand the responsibilities of the administrator and are clear about the mission and vision of the school. Collective leadership is the most effective method to

support academic achievement (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019). Principals also believe that though accountability is expected, principals will need to develop specific accountability systems to ensure teachers and principals know how to accomplish the work and realize the support needed (Dixon & Palmer, 2020).

Teachers feel there should be more opportunities for collaboration and support to effectively implement curriculum changes (Smith & Robinson, 2020). According to Rogers and Burkholder (2022), there continues to be a lack of input from teachers and a lack of communication from district leaders. Additionally, teachers want principals to focus on building teacher capacity and collective focus for staff (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019). Principal effectiveness in supporting change is supported by the principal's ability to protect and invest in teachers while also creating a culture that allows teachers the opportunity to collaborate, adapt, and focus on data (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Principals realize their influence on teacher effectiveness but perceive their work to support change and student achievement is overshadowed by the mandates that accompany district changes (Wright & McCotter, 2017). Principals argue there is insufficient time to manage the administrative responsibilities that come with federal and state-mandated changes and focus on instruction and supporting teachers (Wright & McCotter, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I presented an overview of research literature relating to understanding teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their responsibilities of implementing district-mandated changes that affect curriculum implementation. I

described the literature strategies I used for the review of the literature. I also described the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this study.

The purpose of the study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions as they relate to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. The literature review described the conceptual framework, Fullan's (1991) change theory, that grounded the study. The ideas presented by the themes shared in this chapter included how the biases, previous experiences, and current practices of elementary teachers and administrators all influence how people embrace, react to, and implement change.

Additionally, the literature revealed a gap in elementary teachers' and administrators' ability to effectively support and implement change (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Liou et al., 2019; Mei Kin et al., 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). While there is often a focus on professional development to support implementing changes to curriculum focusing on teacher learning provides a more concise approach to meeting the needs of teachers (Nguyen et al., 2021; Wei, 2018; Yang et al., 2021). Administrators face the challenge of identifying how to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students and teachers (Pak et al., 2020). Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of standards by administrators, which leads to a lack of effective support for teachers (Pak, et al., 2020). These challenges tend to lead to inconsistent messaging. According to Madondo (2020), several factors influence effective implementation of changes to curriculum, including pacing of the implementation; the lack of involvement of teachers during the planning of curriculum, which causes a misunderstanding of the curriculum; and proper resources to

support effective implementation. Tofur (2017) stated that teacher input along with expert insight should be a part of reform efforts. Davis and Boudreaux (2019) found that collaboration between teachers and administrators is important for academic achievement. There are five scopes for effective collaboration when implementing mandated changes to curriculum (a) shared and supportive leadership; (b) values and vision; (c) collective learning and application; (d) shared personal practice; (e) and supportive conditions, both structures and relationships (Olivier & Huffman, 2016, p. 304).

Additionally, Davis and Boudreaux (2019) found that teachers felt their administrators were effective based on the administrator's focus on communication, professional development, and collaborative opportunities. In a study on the implementation of new curriculum, Kisirkoi and Kamanga (2018) found that continued professional development helps increase teacher knowledge and may improve the beliefs and attitudes of teachers. Yang et al. (2021) argued that professional development continues to be a widespread focus of support for teachers during changes, but the opportunities are ineffective because there is no clear understanding of teachers' professional needs. Pak, et al. (2020) also argued that barriers to effective implementation of curriculum changes include the lack of high-quality curriculum, administrators' misunderstandings of the curriculum, and insufficient time to align the new curriculum to the specific needs of their school. Mason (2016) stated effective implementation of a new curriculum requires teachers and administrators to determine how the changes fit into the school's current programs. According to Liou et al. (2019), additional research is needed

to understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators related to their

responsibilities of implementing district-mandated changes that can affect curriculum

implementation.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions related to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. I used an interview research design based on the perceptions of teachers and administrators when managing district-mandated changes in education in a mid-Atlantic K–12 public school setting. In this chapter, I describe the research design and rationale for this study and my role as the researcher. Additionally, I describe the methodology for this study, participant selection, data analysis, and instrumentation. I also discuss trustworthiness and the ethical procedures taken to validate the data collected.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative case study research design was an appropriate method for this study because the design involves analyzing data gathered from individuals' lived experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2009). I used interviews to gather information to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009). Using semistructured, virtual, face-to-face interviews helped to establish a rapport with the participants and create a level of trust. Based on the conceptual framework, Fullan's (1991) change theory, the following research questions guided this study

RQ1: How do teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in the navigation of necessary changes during district-mandated changes to the curriculum?

RQ2: How do teachers and administrators claim they implement changes to their instructional practices when they do not directly align with their current beliefs?

An analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions provides insight into how teachers and administrators respond when faced with experiences that do not fit into their beliefs. Investigating teachers' and administrators' perceptions of processing changes to curriculum helps determine how teachers and administrators integrate new information into their existing practice based on their perceptions (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). The process of implementing curriculum changes can become a challenge for teachers and administrators as they try to balance what they already know with the new information they are receiving from federally or state-mandated initiatives (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

My role as was to conduct the interviews, transcribe interview recordings, and analyze participants' responses. As I was the only observer, there was a potential for researcher bias in this study. As a teacher, I have found it challenging to implement newly mandated initiatives, such as America's Choice and NCLB (2002). Often the administrator support did not relate to my classroom setting's needs, leaving me to figure out how to facilitate the change in my specific learning environment. I also carry this experience as an administrator. I have had to support the changes brought on by ESSA (2015) and Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), resulting in curriculum changes and shifts in instructional programs. Helping teachers make changes to their

practices required me to provide an ongoing support process that allowed for

communication, input, flexibility, collaboration, and personal reflection. These actions

guided my work as an administrator and staff responsible for carrying out the change and

empowering teacher leaders and classroom teachers to implement mandated curriculum

changes in their classrooms.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The target population under study included 200 elementary school teachers and

50 elementary school administrators. The participant sample included eight teachers and

seven administrators with experience implementing district-mandated shifts in the

curriculum. I used purposeful sampling to recruit and select participants. Purposeful

sampling supports the selection of participants who meet specified criteria (Creswell,

2009). Criteria for eligibility were current elementary teachers or administrators having

experience implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum in a mid-Atlantic

state who had at least 3 years of experience in their current role. Including elementary

teachers and administrators in the interviews provided insight into how teachers and

administrators perceive their responsibilities related to their respective roles. The

perspectives of teachers and administrators informed the understanding of support needed

to effectively implement district-mandated changes to the curriculum. Individuals were

invited to participate via email. Once a qualified individuals agreed to participate, they

received an informed consent form via email. Participants were required to return an

email stating their consent to participate. In some instances, I knew the participants as colleagues in the same school system.

Instrumentation

For this study, I used a semistructured interview protocol. Interviews are a standard method for gathering data in a qualitative study (Husband, 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The semistructured interview protocol using open-ended questions allowed me to ask follow-up questions that enabled the participants to share information that might only have been evident of their individual experiences but could further inform the study's outcome (Husband, 2020). I developed 11 open-ended interview questions were that allowed participants to dialogue regarding their experiences implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum. While open-ended questions may leave room for interpretation and misconception, using a semistructured interview format allowed participants to freely share their respective experiences and allowed for more analysis of varying perspectives of the phenomenon.

The interview questions were focused on how teachers and administrators experience the process of implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum and their perceptions of their responsibilities during the change implementation. The questions were developed based on the constructs of change theory, processing new information, thinking critically, and adapting to new information (Fullan, 1991). The constructs of the conceptual framework provided themes and served as the guide for developing the interview questions.

To ensure content validity, the interview questions were field tested with three educators to determine if any adjustments were required. The final 11 questions were deemed appropriate to provide a platform for participants to share their specific experiences. Framing the questions so there was room for reflecting on actual experiences implementing change in varying scenarios provided an authentic representation of participants' experiences. The interview questions focused on elementary teachers' and administrators' experiences with district-mandated changes affecting curriculum and their perceptions during those experiences. The 45–60-minute interviews took place through the Zoom virtual platform.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once I received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Number 12-14-21-0123931), I sent an email to invite individuals who fit the study criteria to participate. In that communication, I included the criteria for participating, the purpose of the study, and an explanation of the study. Interested individuals completed a brief survey to identify their position or responsibility in an elementary school, examples of experience implementing district-mandate changes to the curriculum, and how long they had been in education. Due to mandated restrictions by health officials because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, individuals had the option of participating in either a video or phone conference to complete the interview. All video interviews took place through a virtual communication tool, Zoom, and were recorded. Teachers and administrators received an invitation to participate based on their availability. Each participant received an email with the specific meeting link information for the interview.

The use of audio recordings during the interview assisted with completing the transcription. An analysis of the interview transcript captured important information that highlighted reoccurring or new perspectives relevant to the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Following the interview, participants received a follow-up email thanking them for their participation and encouraging them to contact me with any additional questions or information they would like to share.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis requires an organized method, protected time, elimination of researcher bias, and consistent reflection (Yin, 2018). I was responsible for the analysis of all data as the sole researcher for this study. Transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed and captured in a table. Coding of the data was accomplished using NVivo. Analysis of the data helped identify common themes that were evident. The data coding process was a schematic analysis of the data gathered from the interviews to identify any common themes through a priori coding and themes discovered while reviewing the interview transcripts. Additionally, coding the data helped to make sense of the data through summarization and comparison to identify best practices for effective implementation of mandated changes to curriculum (Yin, 2018).

According to Yin (2018), the coding process takes multiple cycles. The first cycle of coding helps identify common themes expressed by the participants related to each interview question. A second cycle of coding helped to develop a clearer understanding of the data by identifying relationships between the data collected from each participant. Additional coding allowed me to understand the relationships between the themes and the

participants' experiences. An analysis of the interview responses and how they related to the research questions, along with coding of the data collected, added to the validity of the findings, and ensured the study's credibility (Yin, 2018).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential in qualitative research to show that the findings are accurate (Burkholder et al., 2016). Achieving trustworthiness can be accomplished by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Yin (2018) stated evidence of these same premises affirms the validity and credibility of the study.

Credibility is established as the researcher understands various themes that may be identified during the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The identification of noticeable patterns, consideration of all possible outcomes, and consideration of contradicting information was necessary to make sense of how the participants saw and experienced the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). This information was collected through a review of the interview transcripts. The use of peer reviews by trusted and qualified colleagues, member checking of the transcripts by the participants following the interviews, and analysis of the gathered feedback helped to achieve the study's credibility. The benefit of these strategies also ensured the reliability of the data.

Transferability was established by ensuring relevance beyond the specific study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2018). This means the study applies to other individuals and organizations who may relate to the purpose of the study. To establish this transferability, the participants were represented by elementary teachers at different grade levels and administrators. Participants were employed in an elementary school and had experience

implementing a change in curriculum. Additionally, questioning to support the purpose and a description of the data gathered provided a basis for a broader understanding.

Dependability was established by ensuring the components of the study were aligned (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, Yin (2018) stated ensuring reliability allows that further research in the future discovers the same outcomes. Yin advised that ensuring a dependable study helps minimize errors and biases. To support dependability, I provided the study's alignment and conducted an accurate collection and review of the data. Utilizing data collection protocols and documenting my work throughout helped ensure the study's dependability.

Confirmability was established by avoiding observer bias (Burkholder et al., 2016). To avoid observer bias, I utilized notetaking and review of interview transcripts to focus on the experiences of the participants. Additionally, citing of relevant documented information helped avoid biases in the study findings. Participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and confirm the accuracy of their contribution. Lastly, practicing reflexivity and the use of peer reviews served as additional layers of confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

To apply ethical procedures to the study, I followed the IRB process for ensuring I comply with all ethical standards as identified by Walden University. To do this, I completed the Description of Data Sources and Partner Sites (Form A) to determine which forms were necessary for me to complete in the IRB process. Upon IRB approval, I collected and organized the information required by IRB to meet ethical standards.

To ensure ethical practices and fair treatment of the participants, I provided an invitation to participate and included an overview of the study to include the purpose, criteria for eligible participants, and confidentiality assurance. Once participants were selected, I provided them with consent forms to sign. The forms restated the study's overview and purpose, and the measures in place to ensure confidentiality. The exclusion of identifiers such as school districts, participants' identities, and other related identifiers ensured confidentiality. All the gathered data were secured and are only accessible by the me. After 5 years, all information gathered will be destroyed. All paper copies will be shredded, and all digital files will be deleted.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a description of the methodology and research design used for this qualitative case study. The study's purposeful sampling included 15 participants, eight teachers and seven administrators, who have implemented mandated changes to curriculum in a mid-Atlantic public-school district. I created a semistructured interview protocol that served as the interview process for the participants. In this study, I sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of teachers' and administrators' implementation of mandated changes to curriculum. The interviews were conducted in a virtual face-to-face platform. Accuracy of data collection was preserved through peer reviews, member checking, researcher reflection, and data analysis to assure trustworthiness. Ethical assurance was practiced by following Walden University's IRB guidelines. In Chapter 4 I will present the results of the data analysis in the form of the study's findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The problem I addressed in this qualitative case study was a lack of understanding regarding how teachers and administrators perceive implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. The study aimed to understand teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to the curriculum. This study's research paradigm was based on the interpretivist assumption, exploring people's subjective experiences and interpretations in their natural setting (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used a semistructured interview protocol. Interviews are a standard method for gathering data in a qualitative study (Husband, 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This process allowed me to ask follow-up questions and allows the participants to share information that might only be evident of their individual experiences and to further inform the study's outcome (Husband, 2020).

Education continues to evolve, and educators are expected to adapt to changes brought on by mandated changes to curriculum. This study's findings provide a clearer understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of how they effectively implement district-mandated changes to the curriculum, thus providing considerations for effective implementation. The research questions for this study were

RQ1: How do teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in the navigation of necessary changes during district-mandated changes to the curriculum?

RQ2: How do teachers and administrators claim they implement changes to their instructional practices when they do not directly align with their current beliefs?

In Chapter 4, I present the findings of this qualitative case study. The data were collected through one-on-one, semistructured interviews with teachers and administrators who had experience implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. The data were analyzed, and the results of that analysis are presented in this chapter along with context for the interview findings. The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions as they relate to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum.

In this chapter I describe the methods I used for collecting, recording, and analyzing the data. The results of this study may provide a clearer understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the process of effective implementation of mandated changes to curriculum and offer strategies for implementation. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results, a discussion of the evidence of trustworthiness in the findings and a review of change theory.

Setting

In this study, I reviewed the literature and found that changes to education, or education reform, often fail due to implementation issues. The population targeted for this study were elementary teachers and administrators who have implemented district-mandated changes to the curriculum. The selection criteria required that participants be current elementary teachers or administrators, have experience implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum in a mid-Atlantic state, and have at least 3 years of experience in their current role.

Demographics

I interviewed eight current teachers and seven current administrators who were had experience implementing district-mandated curriculum changes in a mid-Atlantic state and had at least 3 years of experience in their current role. Participants' careers in education spanned from 5 to 30 years, depending on their role (Table 1). Including elementary teachers and administrators in the interviews provided insight into how they perceived their responsibilities in their respective roles. The roles of teacher and administrator are the primary roles implemented at the school level.

Six of the seven teachers had served or were serving in leadership roles that required them to support colleagues with implementing change. Fourteen of the 15 participants had only worked in an elementary school. One participant had also worked in a middle school. Most of the participants mentioned that they felt taking on the pandemic and virtual learning as a change was the most difficult challenge to battle in their caeers because the situation was new for everyone and required stakeholders at every level to adapt.

Table 1

Demographic Information (Teachers)

Career characteristic	Range	Average
Years in education	5–25	16.6

Table 2

Demographic Information (Administrators)

Career characteristic	Range	Average
Years in education	15–30	21.4

Data Collection

I conducted a qualitative case study to collect data from interviews with 15 participants. I received IRB approval (Number 12-14-21-0123931) from Walden University on December 14, 2021. I recruited prospective participants through email invitation using my Walden University email address. Participants confirmed their consent via email by stating "I consent" before participating in the study.

Interviews were conducted over 2 weeks. Each interview was assigned an identifier following the format, Interview1, Interview 2, etc. Scheduling interviews was easy because the interviews were conducted over the winter holiday break and several snow days. All interviews were conducted via Zoom's virtual face-to-face platform due to COVID-19 restrictions. Using Zoom allowed me to schedule several interviews in a day because my physical location did not have to change. Interview questions were composed prior to the virtual face-to-face interviews. Though 45–60 minutes was allotted for each interview, the interviews lasted from 9 to 43 minutes. Interview 10 was the shortest interview, lasting only 9 minutes. The participant in this interview had the shortest career in education, just under 5 years.

The recording feature in Zoom was used to record each interview. I remained in my home office during the interviews with the doors closed to maintain confidentiality. Notes were taken during the interviews to capture information for accuracy. Transcription of the recordings was completed with NVivo, and each transcription was converted to a Microsoft Word document. The document was then shared with the participant to review and make any adjustments. After each interview transcript was completed, I reviewed it for accuracy and analyzed the data using thematic analysis coding procedures.

The semistructured interview design allowed me to establish trust and ask follow-up questions relating to participants' direct experiences. The interviews aimed to gather data from teachers and administrators who had implemented mandated changes to curriculum from which I could analyze the findings. The interview data provided information about teachers' and administrators' experiences implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in a qualitative study requires a researcher to synthesize and analyze information gathered during interviews through a structured process. After completing the transcripts and reviewing them for accuracy, I began the analysis of each transcript. The data were analyzed based on the constructs of change theory, processing new information, thinking critically, and adapting to new information (Fullan, 1991). A priori codes were established through change theory and incorporated in the interview questions. Coding is a representation of the data collected, describing the data in a specific word or phrase (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Five themes were identified through

coding and the review of transcripts (a) communication, (b) collaboration, (c) student centered, (d) support, and (e) adapting to the mandated change.

The first coding cycle (Yin, 2018) took place using NVivo. A priori coding was based on key elements of Fullan's (1991) change theory and major themes identified from the data collected. During the first cycle of coding, I read through each participant's transcribed response, my observations during the interviews, and the anecdotal notes collected. I used the highlighting feature in NVivo to begin identifying recurring themes noted in the responses to each interview question. During this stage, I interpreted implicit and explicit information gathered as it relates to learners processing new information, thinking critically, and adapting to new information. Throughout the transcripts, communication appeared as a recurring theme that was an important factor for teachers and administrators when it came to effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. Table 3 shows the results of the first cycle of coding through NVivo.

Table 3

First Cycle Coding: Codes Determined Through NVivo Coding

Interview questions	Codes
1	Information shared from top down (State, district, department, school leadership, teachers). Information shared in various meetings, newsletter, or systemic memo. At the school level, information shared during collaborative planning or staff meetings.
2	Collaboration amongst teams, school leadership unpacks the mandate before sharing schoolwide. School leadership determines what elements of the mandate will be implemented. Instructional leaders provide professional development. Most of the planning for the mandate is done above the school level. Professional development is offered, monitoring implementation, addressing concerns, input from staff, feedback from leadership, support for school staff
3	Teachers and administrators are responsible, school leaders provide direction, implementation with fidelity by teachers, monitoring by school and department leaders, additional work for teachers, meeting needs of students, effective communication, accountability, professional development, understanding how to make the change, preparation, knowing and understanding the purpose, timeline
4	Systems and structures based on district and then school, communication, collaboration, what is best for students, ensuring administrators understand the mandate, flexibility, culture, inconsistent messaging, support for those responsible, monitoring and feedback, line of communication
5	Communication, data analysis, reflection, student centered, collaboration, seeing the big picture, adapting to change, modeling expectations, understand in order to support, know your work, ownership and autonomy, creativity, identifying the relevance and implementing it, trust, asking questions
6	Reaction (excitement, or resistance), communication, identify non-negotiables, comfort, time/pace, collaboration, overwhelming, support, education evolves, input, feedback
7	Trust, collaboration, communication, flexibility, teacher buy-in, advocate, accountability, culture, perspective, understanding, process, time
8	Trust, information, communication, implementation based on relevance, student-centered, attainable, professional development, number of mandates, responsibility, closed to change, support, no choices, overwhelming, developing independence, constant change, consistency, understanding,
9	Understanding the why and how, not a one size fits all implementation, resistance to change, access to resources,
10	Clarity, professional development, reflection, teacher input, alignment, trust, student-centered, support, transparency, collaboration, planning, communication, time and pacing,
11	Flexibility, compliance, impact, professional development, constant change, access, information, monitoring, responsibility, why, stakeholders, challenges, monitoring, support, restrictions, and force, implementing and learning at the same time, organization

A deeper analysis of the information collected from the interviews was completed for the second coding cycle (Yin, 2018). I summarized the codes from the first coding cycle to provide a refined overview of the results. Within NVivo, I sorted the referenced codes to identify codes with highest occurrence. Next, I analyzed the codes based on their relevance to other ideas presented in the data. I then organized the codes into categories based on the data collected from the participants' respective experiences implementing mandated changes. In this stage, I reviewed the information gathered from the transcripts and color coded the different codes using the highlighting feature in NVivo. For example, quotes indicating communication were coded blue, quotes indicating collaboration were coded green, and so on. I used the same color coding for my notes. This allowed me to identify related ideas from different participant responses and determine triangulation.

A final analysis of the coding and categories was completed. During this stage, five common themes were identified across the data (a) communication, (b) student centered, (c) collaboration, (d) support, and (e) adapting to the mandated change. Table 5 shows the codes identified from the data and the overall themes. I recognized that participants were sharing similar ideas that related to the codes. For example, participants described how they prepared to communicate changes while others described how they would like to have changes communicated. Some participants also discussed how they have effectively communicated changes and how they determined what information to share, who to share information with, and a timeline for sharing the communication. The term *communication* was added to the codes based on the multiple references made by participants.

During the coding process, other codes became apparent such as student impact, student achievement, flexibility for implementation, and advocate for students. These terms were grouped under the a priori code student centered. The code student-centered is not a construct of change theory but is relevant to for changes in education since education reform is focused on student achievement (O'Brien, 2018). Another code that became apparent through the coding process was collaboration. Collaboration is considered important for effective implementation of mandated changes (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019; Smith & Robinson, 2020). Participants shared the importance of working together, sharing ideas, feedback, and looking for best practices. One participant shared how important it was knowing they were not the only one feeling uncertain about their work.

As I read the transcripts support was another code that became. Original a priori coding was professional development, teamwork, resources, and flexibility. Participants shared that effectiveness or ineffectiveness was a result of the level of support received from colleagues, school leaders, and district leaders. Some participants shared that professional development is important, but follow-through and flexibility are needed as well. Another code that became apparent through the coding process was adapting to the change. Whether the participant was describing the process they have implemented or how they would have liked the process to be implemented, implications of adapting to the change were expressed through terms like "perception," "receiving the information," "aligning the plan to current work," "reflecting," and "adjusting." Adapting to the change meant there was clear communication, understanding, reflection, and support of the

process. After organizing the codes and identifying categories based on the frequency and

descriptors included in the participants responses, I determined overarching themes. The

themes were determined by identifying their relevance to education reform and change

theory (Table 4).

Table 4

Second Cycle Coding: Themes Within and Across Coded Data

Codes	Categories	Themes
• Sharing information • Listening to stakeholders • Soliciting input • Purpose of the mandate • Trust • Flexibility	• Clear and concise communication • Understanding the mandate • Implementation plan	• Communication
• Student focused • Student achievement • Flexibility for implementation • Advocate for students	• Maintain a focus on students • Identify what works for students	• Student-Centered
• Working together • Sharing ideas • Planning • Looking for best practices • Feedback	• Planning • Teamwork • Alignment with current practices	• Collaboration
• Professional development • Understanding mandates at the leadership level • Teamwork • Advocating for teachers • Providing resources • Flexibility	• Planning • Professional Development • Input	• Support
• Receiving the information • Analysis of the mandate • Aligning the plan to current practices • Reflecting • Adjusting	• Perception	• Adapting to the mandate change

Results

The purpose of the study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions as they relate to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. The conceptual framework for this study was Fullan's (1991) change theory. Change theory focuses on the learner processing new information, thinking critically, and adapting to new information (Malik, 2016).

The research questions for this study were

RQ1- How do teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in the navigation of necessary changes during district-mandated changes to the curriculum?

RQ2- How do teachers and administrators claim they implement changes to their instructional practices when they do not directly align with their current beliefs?

The teachers and administrators who participated in this study shared they believe they both have the responsibility of understanding the district-mandated change to effectively implement the change. To implement change that challenge teachers' and administrators' current beliefs, participants of this study felt it was important to collaborate and share ideas. Five themes were identified from the results and findings of the study that align to the research questions and conceptual framework.

Theme 1: Communication

When communicating new information, it is important that the information is being conveyed effectively and is inclusive of input and feedback from all stakeholders. Participants discussed the importance of receiving clear and concise information promptly and having an opportunity to provide feedback and input. Participants shared

that most mandated initiatives are disseminated from above the school level. The interviewed administrators stated the importance of determining what to share and how. Participant #9 shared "Make sure the information is relayed accurately, and that people understand and have the necessary support." Many of the participants shared that accuracy and the timing of new mandates create resistance for teachers. Participants #9 and #15 shared that having input helps eliminate some of the resistance to change. Additionally, Participant #3 indicated the importance of giving stakeholders a platform to share their input and reflect on their understanding of the mandates helps to support effective implementation of the change. Participant #1, an administrator, also mentioned the importance of open communication, so that teachers are a part of the planning and the implementation process.

Teachers and administrators who participated in the study all felt it was the administrator's responsibility to effectively communicate the implementation plan and consider input from the school staff. Some of the administrators discussed how they determine what aspects of the mandate they will share with their staff and how they will share the change process. Participant #1 stated, "Communication is important because that is where you get the buy-in and engaging them in the process. If people aren't implementing it, then you know it was not received well." Effective communication not only provides a platform for teachers and administrators to be heard, but also helps support understanding, identify needs, and encourages effective implementation (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019).

Theme 2: Student-Centered

While teachers and administrators are on the frontline of implementation, effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum is often measured by how well students respond and show achievement (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Fullan et al., 2015). All 15 of the participants mentioned the influence the mandated curriculum changes have on students. Participant #10, a teacher, even suggested getting input and feedback from students. Participants #1, #4, #6, #12, #15 mentioned the importance of knowing what parts of the mandate will work for their respective students. It is not enough to communicate and understand the change, it is also important to know how to effectively implement mandated changes to the curriculum for the students. Many teachers built up resistance to implementing new mandates due to a lack of understanding regarding the mandate and because they believed the mandate must be implemented as shared. Participants in this study were articulate in conveying that they can implement the change more effectively when they can tailor a mandate to fit their school and students.

Theme 3: Collaboration

According to the participants of this study, collaboration includes listening to ideas, communicating expectations, being reflective and being flexible. Collaboration provides a platform for teachers and administrators, so they are not left feeling as if they are alone. Administrators who had experienced implementing change as a teacher stated they often felt they worked in silos, further supporting the gap in practice that has existed over time. Teachers shared that it is helpful to know they are not the only educators feeling unsure of their efforts. Participants also shared how collaboration helps them

process change more effectively, stating the collaboration provides an opportunity to talk

through their understanding and misconceptions related to the implementation of

curriculum changes. According to the teachers and administrators interviewed, not

everyone has been afforded the opportunity to collaborate around mandated changes.

Those who took the initiative to collaborate without leadership felt collaboration was

helpful. Participant #5 stated that consistent and ongoing collaboration provides a

supportive and collegial space for teachers and administrators to monitor the

implementation and adjust. Without collaboration, teachers are left to their own process

and often abandon the work if they are ineffective or are unsure of their effectiveness.

According to Participant #5, collaboration helps teachers and administrators see how the

new information aligns with current practices. Teams can determine if what they are

already doing meets the mandate's expectations and determine what changes are needed

to implement the change effectively. Theme 3 has a precise alignment to effective change

and collaboration. When teachers and administrators implement change as an

organization, they can support one another and manage the change collectively and more

effectively (Dewitt, 2018; Fullan, 2006).

Theme 4: Support

According to I13, support comes in many variations. Support from colleagues,

teacher leaders, program vendors, department leaders, and administrators helps teachers

and administrators align curriculum change implementation. Every participant indicated

support is necessary and may not look the same for everyone. In most cases, support

comes in collaboration and professional development. Support should be ongoing and

there should be opportunities for those teachers implementing the change to reflect and receive feedback. For administrators, supporting teachers is determined by the need of the teacher. This information comes from monitoring implementation through observations and providing opportunities for teachers to be able to reflect and share input and feedback. I6 specifically spoke to the importance of accountability for and the need for follow-up to ensure the change is in place. Support is a significant theme for this study. There is an expectation for teachers to receive support to effectively implement change (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019). Designing support depends on the teachers' understanding of the mandate.

Theme 5: Adapting to the Mandated Change

Participant #8 stated, "Sometimes I definitely have to use my discretion. The County may see it as urgent, but it doesn't align to what is urgent for us at that point. So I use my discretion." Participant #5 shared the importance of finding commonality between the new mandates and what is already being done. Participant #12 stated the importance of understanding that it is a mandate and "we will have to move forward with it," but also noted having an understanding that "it is not a one size fits all" approach. Participant #12 advocated that it is important to know how schools will move forward with the change, taking into consideration other initiatives and programs that may already align with the change. To adapt to the mandated change Participant #6 stated, "Though teachers may say they have been doing something a particular way, they may need to see and understand how to make the change." Organizations that learn together are more successful (DeWitt, 2018; Reese, 2020); however, adapting to the change is the

individual's responsibility (Reese, 2020). Theme 5 shows an alignment between implementation and adapting to mandated changes. There is a connection between what teachers and administrators already know and do, and what they need to know and now do. This is their ability to process new information, think critically, and adapt to new information (DeMatthews, et al, 2021; Malik, 2016).

Four of the five themes aligned specifically to constructs of the conceptual framework used for the study. The conceptual framework for this study is Fullan's (1991) change theory. While Theme 2, student-centered, is not one of the constructs of change theory, district-mandated changes, or education reform, are centered around increasing student achievement, making Theme 2 relevant (O'Brien, 2018). Student achievement is directly influenced by effective implementation of mandated changes (Adler-Greene, 2019; Dixon & Palmer, 2020). The other four themes (communication, collaboration, support, and adapting to the mandated change) are directly aligned to the constructs of change theory. Teachers' and administrators' previous experiences affect their perception of change (Fullan, 2002; García-Martínez &Tadeu, 2018; Kelly et al., 2018). When the perceptions of the teachers and administrators in this study are considered, there is evidence that they make meaning of their previous experiences to make sense of new curriculum. Table 5 provides the themes that align with the conceptual framework constructs for the study.

Table 5

Themes in Relationship to Change Theory

Constructs presented by	Communication	Student-centered	Collaboration	Support	Adapting to the

change theory				mandated change
Learner processing new information	X	X	X	X
Thinking critically	X	X	X	X
Adapting to new information	X	X	X	X

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, it is important to show that the findings are accurate (Burkholder et al., 2016). To achieve trustworthiness the researcher must establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility requires the researcher to follow the research design, data collection process, and analysis plan for the data collected. It is also important to identify common ideas that may be represented differently. To understand teachers' and administrators' perceptions of implementing mandated changes I conducted one-on-one, semistructured, virtual, face-to-face interviews with teachers and administrators who met the criteria for the study. Each interview was recorded within the Zoom platform. Next, all interviews were transcribed using NVivo. Each participant received an emailed copy of their transcribed interview for member checking (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Triangulation was accomplished by identifying codes across all 15 interviews. I analyzed the data and identified themes presented by the participants.

Transferability was established by identifying the details of the study's setting and context and providing a detailed description of the research design that guided the study.

Establishing transferability help identify how the study's findings relate to other stakeholders who are experiencing the same phenomenon. The 15 participants were selected through purposeful sampling and were representative of teachers and administrators who have implemented district-mandated changes to curriculum. The participants provided detailed accounts of their experiences implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum to support transferability of the study findings.

Dependability was achieved by ensuring the research design provided a strong foundation for collecting data (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The process for collecting data for this qualitative case study included collecting data that aligned with the research questions. Member checking was completed by sending each participant a copy of their transcript for review.

Confirmability was achieved by noting and understanding my personal beliefs and biases regarding implementing mandated changes to the curriculum (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Having had the experience of implementing mandated changes to curriculum as a teacher and as an administrator, it was important to ensure I did not allow my perceptions to influence my interpretations of the data. To eliminate researcher bias, I solely relied on the interview questions and only asked follow-up questions if additional clarity or further discovery could be provided during the interviews.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I summarized the interview process results and participant responses. The purpose of the study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions as they relate to their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-

mandated changes to curriculum. An analysis of the data revealed five themes that supported the conceptual framework for this study and answered the following research questions:

RQ1- How do teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in the navigation of necessary changes during district-mandated changes to the curriculum?

RQ2- How do teachers and administrators claim they implement changes to their instructional practices when they do not directly align with their current beliefs?
The teachers and administrators who participated in this study shared they believe they both have the responsibility of understanding the district-mandated change to effectively implement the change. To implement change that challenge teachers' and administrators' current beliefs, participants of this study felt it was important to collaborate and share ideas. This study may provide a clearer understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of effective implementation of district-mandated curriculum changes, thus providing effective implementation strategies.

In Chapter 5, I will share the interpretation of the findings and implications of the study. I will also provide the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research on the topic of this study. Lastly, I will identify the possible influence of positive social change this study provides.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Previous research on implementing mandated changes in educational settings focused on rapport, teacher buy-in, and supporting teachers (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016; Fullan, 2000; Hartge et al., 2019; Reid, 2021). There has been minimal research addressing perceptions teachers and administrators have regarding the process of implementing changes to curriculum that affect instruction. Although there is a dearth of information regarding teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the change implementation process, those studies that did address implementation focused on increasing teachers' self-efficacy (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Soini et al., 2016). This study aimed to address the gap in how teachers and administrators perceive implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum.

Analysis of current teachers' and administrators' perceptions of effective implementation of instructional changes was conducted to help determine teachers' and administrators' needs when implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum. This study's outcomes provided school-based administrators with strategies to effectively support teachers during instructional changes in curriculum. Changes to the curriculum are inevitable in education; administrators' responsibilities are to support teachers and build their efficacy to facilitate effective instruction. Educators are accountable for providing effective instruction to support student achievement (Fullan et al., 2015).

Although researchers such as Spiro (2013) suggested how to support teachers during curriculum changes through professional development, the findings of this study

provided an understanding of the perceptions of teachers and administrators during district-mandated changes to the curriculum and how to effectively implement change. Research indicates that administrator and teacher roles are critical to ensure effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. Administrators influence and facilitate the change while teachers directly influence student achievement through effective instruction (Mei Kin et al., 2018). This study aimed to understand further the perceptions of teachers and administrators relating to implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum that can affect instruction. By understanding teachers' and administrators' perceptions, district leadership may provide teachers and administrators with better strategies to support the process of effective implementation of curriculum changes which, in turn, will support student achievement (Dixon & Palmer, 2020; Meyers & Smylie, 2017; Olivier & Huffman, 2016).

According to Fullan (2020), systems do not improve unless leaders at all levels are engaged in system improvement. According to the participants in this study, there are inconsistent practices involving all stakeholders, particularly teachers and even administrators in planning for implementing mandated changes. According to some of the participants of this study, this lack of involvement causes resistance and a breakdown in the process of implementing the change.

There were 15 participants in this study, eight teachers and seven administrators. Participants implemented mandated changes to curriculum in a mid-Atlantic public-school district. The teacher participants have careers in education spanning 5–25 years. The administrator participants have careers in education spanning 15–30 years. The

conceptual framework for this study was Fullan's (1991) change theory, which has three constructs, the learner processing new information, thinking critically, and adapting to new information (Fullan, 2020; Malik, 2016). Data were collected and analyzed using a priori codes of each of the three constructs.

Five themes emerged from the key findings of the study (a) communication, (b) collaboration, (c) student centered, (d) support, and (e) adapting to change. The findings support existing literature that has addressed the importance of how teachers and administrators perceive the process of implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. The research questions were answered through the research and grounded through the conceptual framework in Fullan's (1991) change theory. Findings may influence positive social change by identifying the importance of collective efficacy among teachers, administrators, and district leaders to support effective implementation of mandated changes to curriculum.

Interpretation of the Findings

Findings were consistent with previous studies that have shown taking an organizational approach and working together to support one another and manage change cooperatively is more effective (Coban et al., 2019). The findings were consistent with Ni et al. (2018), who indicated that having multiple perceptions helps to cross-validate the perceptions of everyone involved. Drago-Severson et al. (2018) found that teachers' and administrators' perceptions are based on their previous experiences, and these perceptions, in turn, influence how they manage and implement changes to instruction.

In this study, I aimed to understand teachers' and administrators' perceptions when implementing mandated changes to the curriculum. District-mandated changes to the curriculum are an inevitable part of education reform efforts to increase student achievement (Ambusaida et al., 2021; O'Brien, 2018). Effective implementation of these changes requires understanding how those responsible for implementing the change perceive the process. This understanding helps district and school leaders create effective plans of implementation. This study confirmed that if collaboration and communication exist during planning and implementation, teachers and administrators can effectively implement mandated changes to the curriculum. Additionally, when it is determined how the change fits in their instructional practices and programs, teachers and administrators are better able to process and implement the change.

Effective curriculum implementation begins with teachers and administrators understanding what is required and how the change fits into their current practices (Nevenglosky et al., 2019). As suggested by Fullan's (1991) change theory and Senge's systems theory (Senge et al., 1999), curriculum implementation is a team effort in which teachers and administrators understand, accept, and adapt as a team (Kretchmar, 2021; O'Brien, 2018). The participants of this study all confirmed the need for more input from teachers and administrators, more feedback for teachers and administrators, effective communication, and an effective timeline for planning and implementation.

This study's findings provide a platform for district and school leaders to consider the overall change process in individual schools. The interviewed teachers and administrators expressed that they interpret mandated changes to be implemented the way

they are presented. While some of the teachers and administrators interviewed expressed effective implementation of mandated changes to the curriculum, they also shared their analysis of the mandate and how they determine what will work for their students and their staff, respectively. Teachers and administrators who shared they were able to modify and adapt the mandated changes to the curriculum to fit their schools' or students' needs shared they were more effective at implementation. Administrators who participated in this study shared that they made decisions about what would and would not work for their school's demographics. Two administrators shared how implementation had been effective for them when they met with school teams ahead of implementation to plan next steps. This study revealed that schools can effectively implement change if there is consideration and input from everyone responsible for implementation.

According to the participants of this study, effective implementation of mandated changes includes communication, collaboration, input, feedback, planning, and professional development. Participants also believed including teachers and administrators in the planning for implementation is important. This study contributes to social change by identifying the importance of collective efficacy among teachers, administrators, and district leaders to support effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019).

Theme 1: Communication

All participants shared communication as an important factor influencing effective implementation of mandated changes to curriculum. Communicating

expectations for implementation, timely communication of the mandate, allowing teachers and administrators the opportunity to communicate their understanding and misconceptions, and engaging in reflection and feedback were all types of communication participants felt were inconsistent in their experiences. Participant #4 shared it can be frustrating when trying to implement a mandate and not fully understanding what to do. Participant #4 also stated it is important to be on the same page. Participant #1 stated it is just as important to explain the mandate as it is to state what the mandate is and why the change is needed. Participant #1 further stated the importance of having conversations about the adjustments being made and how the adjustments fit into current practices. Many of the administrator participants shared the importance of being a resource and allowing teachers and other staff opportunities to come to them for support. Taking the time to hear concerns, talk through solutions, share strategies, and process the change were all included in responses from the 15 participants. According to the participants interviewed, having a voice in the implementation plan is just as important as receiving the information.

Theme 2: Collaboration

Collaboration being a necessary part of sustaining effective student improvement, I noted the significance of the participants' comments about working together and sharing ideas. Learning systems rely on the expertise and support of each of its parts to succeed. Teachers who participated in the study expressed appreciating the opportunity to work together and knowing they were not the only ones who needed to share their understanding of the process of implementing the mandated change. I10 stated how

having a team supports having feedback. I1 stated that having team discussions about the work contributes to the work that goes into supporting the mandated change. Adapting as a team is a pivotal part of effective change within a system (Kretchmar, 2021; O'Brien, 2018).

Theme 3: Student Centered

Historically, student achievement is at the core of systemic change (Fullan et al., 2015; O'Brien, 2018). Mandated changes are influenced by reform efforts to increase student achievement. Participants in this study mentioned the students are their focus when determining how to effectively implement district-mandated changes to curriculum. According to several participants, not all mandates are effective for their students. Teachers and administrators who participated in this study shared how they found it effective to consider what has been working for their students and how the changes fit into that work. While one participant indicated they just do what they are told to do, others stated they find a balance and do what they know will work for their students.

Teachers and administrators wanted to know how the changes would benefit students and the impact on student learning. Recognizing that students are different and require different resources, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to education reform. While decisions influencing education reform are often made at the federal and state levels, those who are working directly with students must know the students and their needs and the academic expectations of the mandate. Participant #7 stated that effective implementation of the mandates means knowing that not all students are on the same level and spoke of "using the parts that are best for your students." Implementation may

look different in different schools and different classrooms. Teachers are responsible for what students are learning. If the goal is student achievement, then it is necessary to determine how to best implement the mandate for students. Additionally, Participant #2 stated when the change makes sense for students, teachers must avoid resistance and can do the work if given the opportunity to see why the change is needed and how students begin to engage in learning.

Theme 4: Support

Most of the participants spoke about the importance of having support. Support in the form of coaching, modeling, professional development, opportunities for check-ins, and feedback were all mentioned during the interviews. While administrators are responsible for facilitating the district-mandated change, teachers are responsible for implementation. Effective implementation is a challenge if support is not present. Previous researchers focused on supporting teachers with professional development when implementing mandated changes. The findings of this study indicate that professional development is not the only support needed. Participants in this study spoke about supporting one another, receiving feedback, having opportunities to reflect on their implementation practices, and having opportunities to talk through the implementation plan. Two participants also mentioned the need for support for administrators. As indicated by the participants of this study, support continues to be an important factor influencing effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum.

Theme 5: Adapting to Change

Resistance is common among teacher when presented with district-mandated changes to curriculum (Chimbi et al., 2021). Some teachers who participated in this study felt they had no choice when a district-mandated change was presented and recognized they had to adapt. Administrators who participated in this study shared the importance of supporting teachers when adapting to change. Some of the teachers and administrators interviewed talked about providing professional development to offer teachers opportunities to reflect and discuss how to monitor implementation. When adjusting to change, reflection and monitoring the process supports the ability to adapt. Because teachers and administrators know they must implement the district-mandated change to curriculum, they make a way to get the work done, but as shared by several participants, adapting takes time and effort.

Teachers and administrators must identify their disorienting dilemmas to effectively implement district-mandated changes to curriculum (Christie et al., 2015; Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). During this process, teachers and administrators align new information with their prior experiences, taking the time to reflect on effective practice, analyze what is working and what is not working, question why the implementation is or is not working, and engage in problem-solving to support effective implementation of the change (Kretchmar, 2021).

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations that arose from this study. This study was limited by the interview sample size, localization of the participants, methodology, and

participant and researcher bias. First, the sample only included interviews of 15 participants, eight teachers and seven administrators who had implemented mandated changes in a mid-Atlantic state public elementary school. In comparison the interviews provided an opportunity for participants to share their individualized experiences and perceptions of implementing change, although the context varied for some. Depending on how changes were communicated, participants had different perceptions of the implementation process.

The second limitation of this study was the sample only included teachers and administrators who had implemented change in an elementary school. Excluding the perceptions of middle and high school teachers and administrators confines the findings to elementary schools and is not representative of every level. The third limitation of this study is the methodology. Choosing a qualitative study did allow the interviewer to ask specific questions but using a survey would have gathered quantitative data on participants understanding, familiarity, and experiences implementing district-mandated changes to curriculum. Utilizing mixed method would have increased the breadth and validity of the findings by providing specific statistical data along with (Xiao, 2021)

The fourth limitation of this study is possible participant and researcher bias. Some participants had experienced district-mandated changes to curriculum many times in their career and may have adopted a mindset about implementing change in schools. Some participants shared their experiences as being effective while others shared that they faced challenges influencing their perception of effective implementation. One participant indicated they just do what they are told. Additionally, some participants may

have shared experiences based on current circumstances which may be different from their previous experiences. Although all participants were encouraged to share specific examples and details of their experiences throughout the interview process, they may have shared experiences they felt I wanted. As the sole researcher, I took intentional steps to ensure data were analyzed and accurately represented the participants' shared experiences. All participants were asked the same interview questions. To gather specific details, clarifying questions were asked. Each participant received an emailed copy of their transcript for member checking to review and validate my interpretation of the responses collected during the interviews.

Recommendations

There are three recommendations for further research grounded in the strengths and limitations of this study. The first recommendation is expansion of the data to include teachers and administrators in middle schools and high schools. Considering education reform affects schools at every level, including the input of teachers and administrators at the middle and high school levels would support input from teachers and administrators who implement district-mandated changes at every school level. Since the instructional programs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels have varying instructional programs, including teachers and administrators at all three school levels would provide additional data to help support effective implementation for all school levels.

The second recommendation is expansion of the data to include how administrators facilitate implementation of district-mandated changes. Some administrators in this study shared that they determine what to implement and how to

implement it based on their individual schools. Some of the teachers interviewed also shared they determine how to fit the change into their current practices. While some of the participants shared how they are often confused by the change or feel they must implement the change as is, knowing they have the autonomy to modify or adapt the change to fit their students may support effective implementation. Expanding the research on how administrators implement change in their respective buildings may increase the understanding of what is needed to support effective implementation.

The third recommendation is to identify the influence specific district-mandated changes to curriculum have on student achievement. Since district-mandated changes to curriculum are influenced by federal and state guidelines with the intentions of improving student achievement, it is necessary to determine how mandated changes align with current successful practices across different schools. It would also be helpful to identify if the mandate supports student achievement and how the mandate supports student achievement.

Implications

The implication for positive social change that this study may influence is effective implementation of district-mandated changes that lead to student achievement. This study may help to close the gap in understanding of the perceptions of teachers and administrators when implementing district-mandated changes to the curriculum. The first implication for change is for individuals responsible for creating district-mandated changes to curriculum to consider strategies that support the inclusion of teachers and administrators. All educators engage in implementing district-mandated changes to

curriculum. Not all educators feel they are a part of implementing change but rather feel the changes are presented as something else they must do.

Creating opportunities for collaboration and collective input when planning to implement district-mandated changes supports effective implementation (Davis & Boudreaux, 2019). When teachers and administrators are included in planning for implementation, they can better align the work to their current practices. The process also provides opportunity for input, reflection, and feedback. School teams can determine what best meets the needs of their students and the capacity of their staff.

This research study contributes to the existing body of research on the effective implementation of education reform and district-mandated changes to curriculum. Five overarching themes relating to change theory were identified in the data collected by this study, communication, student-centered, collaboration, support, and adapting to the mandated change. The results of the research study support that there is a need to understand how the change aligns with current practices for effective implementation to occur. Teachers and administrators can effectively process change and create a plan of implementation that best meets the needs of their school and staff capacity when there is communication, input, and support. It is recommended that when systemic mandated changes are presented to school administrators, administrators consider effective communication, support through collaboration and professional development, and opportunities for input and feedback. When teachers and administrators engage in systemic changes, new information is processed. During this process the teachers and administrators need an opportunity to think critically and align the new information to

their current beliefs and practices. Effective implementation will depend on teachers and administrators being an active part of the process through input, communication, and support.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study presented data on teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their responsibilities in effective implementation of district-mandated changes to curriculum. Teachers and administrators recognize that district-mandated changes to curriculum are an inevitable part of education, they also agree that how mandates are implemented depend very heavily on how mandates are communicated, input from teachers and administrators, how teachers and administrators are supported, and how the change is processed (Fullan et al., 2015; O'Brien, 2018). For teachers and administrators to effectively process new mandates they would like to have more direct involvement in the implementation plan. This would allow them the opportunity to take in the new elements and see how they fit into current practices, a concept also known as disorienting dilemma (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). During this process, teachers and administrators align new information with prior experiences, consistent with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997).

This study also revealed that mandates are given without gaining input from stakeholders who must implement them. This makes the process much harder. As the mandates are being shared and monitored, teachers and administrators implementing the change are also trying to make sense of the work. This leaves very little time for teachers and administrators to collaborate, plan for implementation, and adapt to the new

information. Administrators advocate for teachers and are often able to determine how to implement the changes in their respective schools, but this is not a consistent practice across schools. With the information presented in this study, district leaders and those who initiate mandates for schools to implement should consider the how to communicate, support, and monitor mandates. It is also clear that input from teachers and administrators should be considered when disseminating district-mandated changes to curriculum that directly influence instruction. Input creates voluntary collaboration. Collaboration creates cooperative and collective efficacy. Collective efficacy amongst teachers and administrators fosters a learning system where educators are more apt to be open to implementing change and can implement the change effectively.

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Appendix A: Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions and Conceptual

Framework

Table displays each interview question with alignment to the research question and

constructs from the conceptual framework.

Interview questions	RQ 1: How do teachers and administrators perceive their responsibilities in the navigation of necessary changes during district-mandated changes to the curriculum?	RQ 2: How do teachers and administrators claim they implement changes to their instructional practices when they do not directly align with their current beliefs?
1. How are new mandates shared in your school?		X
2. What processes are in place for implementing new mandates?		X
3. How do you perceive the responsibilities of teachers and administrators during mandated changes in your school?	X	
4. In what ways are norms established when implementing new mandates?		X
5. How have you worked to creatively challenge existing processes or practices that influence effective implementation of mandated changes to curriculum?		X
6. How are the perceptions of staff	X	X

identified and addressed when implementing mandated changes?		
7. What administrator leadership characteristics do you believe supports the success of implementing mandated changes?	X	
8. How would you describe your experience(s) implementing mandated changes to curriculum?		X
9.What challenges did you face when implementing mandated changes?	X	X
10. If you experienced challenges, how did you address them?	X	X
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences implementing mandated changes to curriculum?	X	X