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Teacher Perceptions of the Value and Motivation to Complete Professional Development

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Teacher Perceptions of the Value and Motivation to Complete Professional Development

by

Andrea P.V. Dorsey

MA, Marymount University, 2002

BS, Marymount University, 2001

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2023

Abstract

There are inconsistent completion rates of professional development among elementary school teachers in a school district in the rural southeast. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete the professional development that is offered. The study was guided by Knowles' theory of andragogy of how adults learn and Eccles' expectancy value theory of motivation. The first research question explored how elementary teachers in a rural school district described the value of professional development offered to improve teaching. The second research question addressed how teachers described their motivation to complete the professional development that was offered. Purposeful sampling was used to select 10 teachers for semistructured interviews. Structural coding was used to discover patterns in participants' interview responses. Results revealed that professional development held value for the participants when the learning was connected to a classroom need, provided resources, and could be immediately implemented. Teachers were motivated to complete professional development when it was structured to support their teaching and student learning. The results and recommendations were compiled into a position paper to present to district leaders to inform future professional development. Positive social change may result from teachers being provided with improved professional development that results in better completion rates, resulting in improved teaching.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project study to my family and friends. Thank you for your support, patience, and flexibility during my years of coursework. Your love and encouragement have been vital to my success, and I am so appreciative. Specifically, I dedicate this to my mother and son. Mom, you are my best friend, and I thank you for being the best example of a Christian woman and showing me how to navigate this world. You were right, God doesn't make junk; look at me go. Last but not least, I dedicate this to my son. You are my greatest joy, and I am proud of the man you have become. Thank you for being so supportive throughout my educational journey. I love you more than you will ever know.

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I would like to thank God for blessing me with all the wonderful people in my life and allowing me to complete this part of my educational journey. I am also grateful for and want to thank Dr. Karpel, my committee chair, who shared her knowledge and provided guidance through all my iterations so that I could reach this important milestone. Your words of encouragement and patience meant so much that thank you does not seem enough to express my gratitude.

I also want to thank Dr. Lupo (committee member) for your time, guidance, and patience throughout the dissertation process. Lastly, I want to thank the Walden community and staff that support learning by providing services to the students. Your services and support helped me through many courses and throughout my doctoral journey. Collectively you are invaluable.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Professional development has long been a part of teaching and can enhance teacher knowledge and skills that translate into improved student outcomes; however, schools administrators are challenged with teacher interest in professional development (Boström & Palm, 2020; Garrett et al., 2021). Likewise, there are challenges for teachers that are required to participate in professional development. Three issues are engagement, relevance, and time to participate (Bowman et al., 2020; Powell & Bodur, 2019). Furthermore, providing ill-aligned professional development and training can lead to dissatisfaction (Parsons et al., 2019; Powell & Bodur, 2019). According to Chaipidech et al. (2022), teacher professional development should closely resemble that of differentiation for students to be effective. Professional development deemed satisfying is more likely to be completed (Dunn et al., 2018; Ebner & Gegenfurtner, 2019).

The problem examined through this study was that a school district in the rural southeast provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. The district, located in the rural southeast, is composed of three public elementary schools. There are 1,894 students, 147 teachers, six school administrators, and eight instructional coaches. Two of the three elementary schools were Title I with all three having a minority enrollment of 15% and were all fully accredited. The district's available data for the 2021-2022 school year revealed that of the 134 teachers, 107 (79.85%) did not complete

the two mandatory professional development sessions. There were 67 (50.00%) teachers who registered for at least one voluntary professional development session and did not complete the session. However, 119 (88.81%) completed some amount of voluntary professional development. The gap in practice was that the district of interest was providing professional development with inconsistent completion rates for unknown reasons. This study extended the existing literature on teacher professional development by specifically examining perceptions of teacher's value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Fischer et al., 2018; Harper-Hill et al., 2022).

There has been much research regarding teacher professional development and its link to increased student outcomes. Still, there was less regarding teachers as learners and what motivates them to participate in and complete professional development (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018). According to Fischer et al. (2018), many districts face challenges in providing high-quality, relevant professional development even though effective teacher professional development is a primary way to increase student outcomes. The lack of research on developing quality teachers could be detrimental to students' learning (Sprott, 2019). Moreover, the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to professional development is not changing classroom practices and opposes the call for the transformation of classroom practices (Noonan, 2022; Parsons et al., 2019; Passmore & Hart, 2019). Therefore, the inability to provide professional development that teachers are motivated

to complete could jeopardize teachers' ability to gain the skills and knowledge needed to improve classroom practices and impact student outcomes.

Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivated them to complete the professional development that is offered. Principals at the study site were challenged with providing professional development that teachers consistently complete.

When speaking with the district's elementary building-level principals, it was revealed that providing teachers with professional development that they completed and met their needs was the biggest challenge. One administrator stated, "I think the biggest challenge is just trying to make sure that you're giving everybody what they need" (Admin 01, personal communication, March 2022). Likewise, another administrator stated that it was important to have professional development that was differentiated, engaging, and useful which makes it complicated since there are so many different needs (Admin 02, personal communication, March 2022). Subsequently, Admin 02 (2022) stated, that completing professional development "take[s] time away from their classroom… [and sometimes] they don't see the value" which could very well be a real issue. Administrator 02 added that it was important to "[make] sure it is something that's engaging, that they feel that will be helpful for them and be able to use [it] moving

forward… that's what's complicated. We have so many different people at different places."

The administrators perceived that participation in professional development would increase if the teachers could access learning when it fits in their schedule and teachers were offered choices in their learning. Admin 01 (2022) stated that the online options offered were "flexible to [the teacher's] schedules, and they can kind of choose what they want [and] need." However, the principals favored having participation mandatory but allowing the teacher to choose the learning opportunity unless the administrators felt a need to direct the teacher towards a certain option.

> [If] it's mandatory that they've got to choose something, then it's better than if you've given them an option. Because if you give them an option, whether they want to do it or not, there's a small percentage, I think they will do it and then a percentage that may not, but I think it's good to give them different things that they may have an interest in because then they'll be more engaged in it. (Admin 02, personal communication, March 2022)

Similarly, it was stated that "if it doesn't apply to them, or if it's not something that they feel is useful, [and] that they can use right away, then that it is likely that they may not participate" (Admin 01, personal communication, March 2022). Overall, administrators wanted professional development that reflects what the teachers need to help them grow professionally and increase student achievement.

The problem examined is not unique to this school district. According to Boström and Palm (2020), many schools are challenged with teachers' interest in professional development. Likewise, districts are challenged in providing relevant, high-quality learning opportunities even though the primary way to increase student achievement is through effective professional development (Fischer et al., 2018). This study could benefit school administrators, teachers, and students from the district of interest as well as other districts.

This study addressed a local problem in a school district using a basic qualitative approach. The conceptual framework used to guide the study was based on Knowles' (1980) work in andragogy and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work with expectancy value. Participant semistructured interviews were used to provide information regarding teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development offered to improve teaching and what motivated them to complete.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used to examine the problem:

Adult learning: It is where adults engage in systematic and sustained educating activities (different than the way children learn) to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values (Merriam & Brockett, 1997).

Engagement/Participation: A physical, emotional, and cognitive involvement in specified event, activity, or tasks with expected outcomes (Roberts, 2021).

Expectancy value: A theory that choices are motivated by a combination of expectations for success and subjective task value in specific domains (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Fully licensed: Indicates an educator holding a post collegiate professional license or a postgraduate professional license (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], n.d.b).

Instructional practices: Is how information is presented, delivered, received, and experienced by students (Roberts, 2021).

Motivation: Distinguished reasons emanating from individual's interest and values to engage in teaching and learning, internal or external desire to engage with the teaching profession as indicated and influenced by contextual factors (Roberts, 2021).

Professional development: "Any program, activity, or training aimed at improving instructional practice regardless of the structure" or mode (Osman & Warner, 2020, p. 1).

Significance of the Study

Exploring elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete is significant in several ways. This study is significant in that teachers' participation in professional development is positively associated with classroom practice (Fischer et al., 2018). Likewise, teacher training is crucial for improving teachers' skills, which improves student learning (McCray, 2018). A better understanding of the value of professional development as described by elementary teachers could improve participation in learning

opportunities offered, thereby changing classroom practices and increasing student outcomes. The district of interest would benefit from understanding teachers' perceptions of and motivation for the completion of professional development in order to improve offerings. This study extended the existing literature on teacher professional development by specifically examining perceptions of and motivation for teacher completion (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Fischer et al., 2018; Harper-Hill et al., 2022).

Positive social change could result when the district has a better understanding of teachers' motivations as related to professional development, which will support and maintain the highest quality of instruction and services for students (Baird & Clark, 2018). This study would be useful to school administrators, teachers, and students. School administrators may find this study useful in identifying specific ways to improve the delivery and value of professional development. Additionally, with the awareness of the teachers' perceptions, each group could provide learning opportunities that increase professional development completion. Moreover, school administrators within the district are fiscally responsible for budgetary items, including professional development (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Consequently, this study could be useful in properly allocating human and capital resources when planning for teacher professional development. Teachers may find this study useful because, as adult learners, their experiences help to shape future actions, which may improve both completion of professional development and student outcomes (Fischer et al., 2018; Hutchison et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers may have a better understanding of what motivates them to

complete professional development (Palermo & Thomson, 2019). Students would benefit

from this study since it has been found that involvement in professional development can

influence and transform classroom practices (Fischer et al., 2018; Sprott, 2019).

Ultimately, the hope is to understand what motivates teachers to complete professional

development which will result in changes in practice leading to increased student

outcomes.

Research Questions

The problem addressed through this study is that a rural southeast school district

provides professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom

instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. The aim of this

qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of

professional development to improve classroom instruction and their motivation to

complete. The overarching research questions for this study aim to determine:

RQ1: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of

professional development offered to improve teaching?

RQ2: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their

motivation to complete the professional development that is offered?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework includes one or more theories and other concepts and

guides how ideas relate to and provide insight to the research (Kivunja, 2018). Teacher

professional development has been studied from many angles and is complex due to many influencing factors such as teachers' values, perceptions, and motivations (Sprott, 2019). To support the complexities of professional development, a conceptual framework was utilized to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivated them to complete. The theories that support this study include Malcolm Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy which focuses specifically on how and what motivates adults to learn and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) expectancy value theory which focuses on components that support motivation, effort, and consequences.

The first theory of the conceptual framework to understand why and how adults learn is Malcom Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory of andragogy. Andragogy, or adult learning, grew from the pedagogical learning model where the teacher was the one to control the learning (teacher-directed) to a model where the learner is more self-directed (Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015). The andragogical model contains assumptions that are different from the pedagogical model, which was based on how children learn. Adult learning theory includes six non-linear assumptions about adult learners. These assumptions are "(1) the learner's need to know, (2) self-concept of the learner, (3) prior experience of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation to learn" (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 4).

Knowles' (1980) assumptions of the adult learner provided insight into the orientation, readiness, and motivation of teachers to participate and complete professional

development offered by the study site. Adult learners are motivated to learn about topics that are of interest and therefore need to know what and why they are going to learn something and decide the value of the activity (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018). Adult learners have knowledge from life experiences that add to their sense of self-concept of the learner, and they tend to be self-paced and independent (Chaipidech et al., 2022). Likewise, adults have a readiness to learn what they feel they need to know and want to immediately apply what they learn (orientation to learning) (Knowles et al., 2015). Adults have higher internal motivation to learn, which is different from children who demonstrate a higher external motivation to learn (Chaipidech et al., 2022; Colburn et al., 2019; Knowles et al., 2015).

The adult learning framework was relevant to this study because the target demographic is adult learners in the context of professional development. The theory suggested reasons why adults may make decisions of what, when, and how they will participate in learning, and as related to this study, professional development. Moreover, professional development planners may use Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory to gain insight on how to provide professional development opportunities to best meet the needs of the adult learners, thereby improving engagement in and completion of professional development activities (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Colburn et al., 2019).

The second theory that will be used in the conceptual framework to understand motivation is the expectancy value theory. Expectancy value is widely credited to Eccles and Wigfield (2002) and contains two major components (expectancy and value) which

support motivation. According to Eccles and Wigfield, expectancy is related to how confident a person is in successfully completing a task. The authors further posited that value is associated with the task and its value to the individual (e.g., is it important, is it worth completing, is it enjoyable, is it related to life). Task values have four categories (a) attainment value, (b) intrinsic value, (c) utility value, and (d) cost (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Eccles and Wigfield stated that attainment value is how important it is to complete the task and can be linked to a person's sense of self. Intrinsic value is how much the person enjoys the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Utility value is how useful the task is in the life of the person completing the task. Utility value can be linked to present or future usefulness (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). According to Eccles and Wigfield, cost is an essential part of value. It is the loss of one choice over another. The opportunity cost could be monetary, emotional, effort, time, or another activity (Palermo & Thomson, 2019).

Several authors have found that Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) expectancy value theory provides insight into professional development. Palermo and Thomson (2019) found that teachers who participated in professional development expected to learn and were more confident when implementing classroom changes. Additionally, teachers stated they were intrinsically motivated to attend sessions to support student outcomes (Palermo & Thomson, 2019; Yoon & Kim, 2022). The four categories of values have been studied to understand why teachers attend professional development. Andersson and Palm's (2018) study revealed that, with formative assessments, teachers' attainment value

had an impact on changes in the classroom. The teachers in the study realized the

principles of professional development increased their ability to support students in

taking more responsibility for their learning (Andersson & Palm, 2018). In another study,

over half of the teachers spoke about intrinsic reasons for implementing changes from

professional development in their classroom (Boström & Palm, 2020). Backfisch et al.

(2021) found that teachers with high utility value were able to better incorporate skills

learned from professional development in the classroom. Osman and Warner (2020) used

expectancy value theory to understand the relationship between what a teacher perceives

they have to give up to participate in professional development and the outcome of the

choice. The expectancy value theory provided clarity to this study since it emphasizes

that individuals are more motivated to engage in or complete a task when they see it as

relevant. The phenomenon of this study was exploring motivation to complete

professional development to improve teaching.

The conceptual framework presented grounded the study and provided

understanding into perceptions about value and motivations for completion of

professional development for teachers. Both Knowles' (1980) work in andragogy and

Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work with expectancy value provide insight into how adults

learn and what they need to learn, including motivation and effort, and both theories have

been widely used in the field of education and professional development (Andersson &

Palm, 2018; Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Boström & Palm, 2020; Colburn et al., 2019;

Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Osman & Warner, 2020; Palermo & Thomson, 2019; Parsons

et al., 2019; Thatcher Day, 2021). The research and use of both Knowles and Eccles and Wigfield's, theories guided the understanding of the learning needs and motivations for completing professional development.

Review of Broader Problem

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete the professional development that is offered. In this section, I reviewed research related to teacher professional development, their perceptions about the value of professional development to improve teaching, and what motivated them to complete. The last section summarizes what is known and not known in the discipline, how the study filled the gap in the practice, and extend knowledge related to elementary teacher professional development.

The search strategy to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete consisted of researching terms related to the problem and purpose in addition to the conceptual framework of the study. Walden University's Library, Thoreau, which is a multi-database search tool, was utilized to access databases such as, EBSCO-host, ERIC, ProQuest Central, and Sage. Additionally, Google Scholar was used to supplement the search for recent scholarly articles. The key search terms I used were; *Knowles*, *adult learning theory*, *andragogy*, *Eccles*, *expectancy value theory*, *value of professional development*, *professional development*, *voluntary professional development*, *mandatory*

professional development, *licensure*, *professional development requirements*, *professional development learning*, *teacher education*, *elementary teacher*, *teacher motivation*, *online professional development*, *modes of professional development*, *K-12*, *classroom instruction*, *improved teaching*, *teacher participation*, *perception*, *and completion*.

 The problem on a larger scale is that districts are challenged with providing aligned, high-quality, relevant professional development that lessens the barriers adults face with regards to time, engagement and relevance (Bowman et al., 2020; Fischer et al., 2018; Powell & Bodur, 2019). Ebner and Gegenfurtner (2019) found that professional development that is satisfying to teachers is more likely to be completed. Moreover, when teachers participate in professional development it leads to increased teacher skills, enhanced teaching practices and student achievement (Boström & Palm, 2020; Garrett et al., 2021; Sprott, 2019). Conversely, the inability to provide professional development that teachers are motivated to complete could jeopardize teachers' ability to gain the skills and knowledge needed to change classroom practices and impact student outcomes (Noonan, 2022; Passmore & Hart, 2019; Sprott, 2019). These issues were also experienced at the local level in a rural southeast district that provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates are inconsistent. This study aimed to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete.

Professional Development

Professional development is essential to changing or enhancing classroom practices and improving student achievement (Fischer et al., 2018; Sprott, 2019). However, districts are challenged in providing professional development that teachers complete which impedes changes in classroom practices (Boström & Palm, 2020; Fischer et al., 2018). According to Barrett and Pas (2020), there are multiple levels (federal, state, region, district, and school) involved in providing and funding professional development which can confound the goals and the what, how, and when of professional development activities.The cost of providing professional development was also a challenge for districts. In Barrett and Pas' study, they examined two popular types of professional development, the traditional workshop and the coaching model. They found that although the coaching model was slightly more expensive ($400-$2,000 per teacher) than the workshop ($600-$1,000 per teacher), the cost may influence the choice of the type of professional development offered over what is more beneficial for the growth of teachers. Additionally, the call to personalize professional development to meet the needs of the teachers could put a strain on available resources (McCray, 2018; Passmore & Hart, 2019).

As for teachers, there are many reasons they engage in and complete professional development, and many modes in which they participate. Some professional development is mandatory, and some is voluntary. Teachers may participate in professional development to maintain their teaching credentials, personal growth, or to improve

classroom practices. Although teachers understand the need for mandatory professional development, they are less likely to perceive the experience in a positive way which may result in compliance issues (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Fischer et al., 2018). Conversely, teachers will voluntarily participate in professional development. Avidov-Ungar (2020) stated that teachers with more years of experience participated in professional development for personal growth over any other reason whereas, less experienced teachers looked to improve classroom practice. Likewise, Noonan (2019, 2022) found that teachers will participate in professional development that is related to their content in order to improve their skills and classroom practices.

Likewise, there are a variety of modes of delivering professional development such as face-to-face, blended, and online, which can be facilitated or self-paced. While several studies mentioned less satisfaction or engagement with certain modes of delivery (Bana & Cranmore, 2019; Ebner & Gegenfurtner, 2019; Harper-Hill et al., 2022; Parsons et al., 2019), what was missing from the research was if any of the modes of delivery result in an increase or decrease in completion rates. Professional development has been the topic of many studies, but more research is needed on teachers' value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Boström & Palm, 2020; Harper-Hill et al., 2022; Palermo & Thomson, 2019).

Elementary Teachers

This study focused on elementary teachers and their perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivated them to complete it.

In the division of study, elementary teachers teach grades preschool (PK) to grade five.

All teachers in the state are mandated to maintain a current state issued license. Licensure

requires teachers to document the number of hours and type of professional development

in which they participate. Teachers must participate in 270 hours of professional

development within each 10-year renewal cycle (VDOE, 2022). Any educator who does

not comply with the laws and regulations may be dismissed (LIS, n.d.). Likewise, schools

are funded through state, local, and government funds based on a formula that includes

teacher to student ratios and schoolboards are, by law, to place licensed teachers in

positions in which they are qualified to teach, which must be certified each year by the

superintendent to maintain compliance (LIS, n.d.; VDOE n.d.a).

 In the division of interest there were three elementary schools, and the teachers

were responsible for teaching the state and district standards along with any supplemental

school curriculum. Two of the division's elementary schools were Title I. The division

had a total of six school administrators, six instructional coaches, 147 elementary

teachers, serving 1,894 students. Although the number of years of experience and

longevity within the schools were not known, the National Center for Education Statistics

(n.d.) conducted a survey in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education covering

the school year 2017-2018 and found that the average years of teaching for an elementary

teacher was 13.7 and the average years of at the same school was eight (Taie et al., 2020).

 According to Taie et al. (2020), approximately 99% of all public school teachers

participated in some type of professional development. Srinivasacharlu (2019) spoke of

the importance of teachers in the larger role of preparing students to become the citizens

of the world. Moreover, Srinivasacharlu posited that teachers should be ever learning and

crafting their skills by growing professionally in order to be effective agents of change in

the world. This study focused on elementary teachers and their perceptions of the value

of professional development to improve teaching and what motivated them to complete

it.

Perception of Value

The first research question to be explored in the current study was how teachers

describe the value of the professional development offered to improve teaching.

According to Noonan (2019), professional development activities can vary in design, and

technology has expanded the delivery options, which could affect teachers' perceptions

and value of the learning activity. Additionally, Parsons et al. (2019) stated that teachers

who participated in online professional development did so for various reasons, with the

top two being that it was more convenient, and that it was not offered in any other format.

Parsons et al. added that most teachers found online professional development useful and

could apply what they learned in the classroom. Furthermore, Ebner and Gegenfurtner

(2019) examined learning delivery modes (face-to-face, webinar, or asynchronous online

learning) and found that no specific mode was linked significantly to an increased value

of the experience.

According to Parsons et al. (2019), teachers also engaged in professional

development because it was mandated that they do so by the school or district. Appova

and Arbaugh (2018) stated that many of the professional development activities mandated by the school or division were perceived by teachers as being unrelated to what they do in the classroom or did not necessarily help them become better teachers. In addition, many teachers perceived the professional development provided to them was not a learning opportunity but an exercise in compliance (Noonan, 2022). Appova and Arbaugh posited that teachers perceived mandatory professional development, even when job embedded or online, as a school accountability or compliance activity. Powell and Bodur (2019) examined embedded online professional development. They found that teachers' perception of the experience was mixed and that the design of the material, not being personalized enough, or not was not applicable to their classroom practices. More importantly, the experience was perceived as unfavorable due to the time it took away from other classroom duties such as lesson planning (Powell & Bodur, 2019). Additionally, teachers who do not value the activity would not be motivated to grow in their teaching practice (Power & Goodnough, 2019). Moreover, research found that mandatory professional development was not beneficial and did not produce lasting change in classroom practices (Parsons et al., 2019; Power & Goodnough, 2019). Since teacher knowledge and increased student achievement are found to be in a positive relationship with professional development, developers of these activities should provide a choice of topics supporting classroom practices and offer different modes of delivery (Fischer et al., 2018; Garrett et al., 2021; Yoon & Kim, 2022).

Dunn et al. (2018) explained that teachers' attitudes towards professional development and behavioral control had a positive effect on teachers' behavioral intention to participate. Moreover, Bowman et al. (2020) found that continued exposure to skills through professional development increased teachers perceived value and classroom use of skills learned. Passmore and Hart (2019) concluded that teachers would participate voluntarily in professional development because their development is linked to their identity as a person. Teachers' personal identities change with experience and affect their values and perceptions of professional development needs (Bowman et al., 2020; Noonan, 2019). Imants and Van der Wal (2020) posited that through teacher agency, which is linked to how teachers perceive themselves and their ability to direct their learning, professional development can have a greater impact on classroom practices and student learning.

Moreover, teachers engage in professional development to improve classroom practices leading to improved student outcomes (Baird & Clark, 2018; Bana & Cranmore, 2019; Fischer et al., 2018; Palermo & Thomson, 2019). In several studies, professional development that met the need of the teachers was linked to improved teacher knowledge and student achievement (Fischer et al., 2018; Garrett et al., 2021; Hutchison et al., 2021; Roth & von Unger, 2018; Yoon & Kim, 2022). According to Garrett et al. (2021), there was a significant impact on student learning that was linked to targeted teacher professional development. Likewise, Baird and Clark (2018) examined literacy and math

professional development models and classroom practices and found a positive impact on student achievement.

It is important for professional development planners to provide a variety of topics that support all aspects of instructional practices since most schools have teachers with various levels of experience and teach a variety of content (Power & Goodnough, 2019; Yoon & Kim, 2022). Teachers who positively perceive the value of professional development activity are more likely to participate, complete, and change their teaching (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Sprott, 2019).

Motivation and Completion

Many studies have examined what motivates teachers to complete professional development (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Boström & Palm, 2020; Harper-Hill et al., 2022; Palermo & Thomson, 2019). According to Harper-Hill et al. (2022), there are interrelated teacher characteristics, such as self-efficacy and agency, which can play a part in the motivation to participate and complete professional development. Teachers' participation and completion may differ based on delivery mode and the topic of professional development, but most participate with the aim to increase knowledge for themselves and their students (Parsons et al., 2019; Rutherford-Quach et al., 2021; Yoon & Kim, 2022). According to Ebner and Gegenfurtner's (2019) meta-analysis, face-to-face learning is slightly better than the online learning environment in higher education and professional learning context. However, with this type of professional development, there are constraints. For example, face-to-face professional development lacks flexibility in

place, time, and the ability to review materials at a later time (Ebner & Gegenfurtner, 2019; Jones & Dexter, 2018). The traditional one-size-fits-all also lacks the flexibility in the mode of delivery which could increase participation (Jones & Dexter, 2018; Talakoub, 2020). Therefore, Ebner and Gegenfurtner recommended that professional development planners use the mode that best matches the needs of the teachers and is flexible enough for participants to complete. It is recognized that providing teachers with professional development that is perceived to have value can be challenging; however, the traditionally used one-size-fits-all mode can have a negative impact on teaching practices (Noonan, 2022).

Teachers are also motivated to complete professional development because it is required by the state to remain licensed. Teachers must keep their credentials up to date by providing proof of professional development activities (Putman & Walsh, 2021). The Board of Education in 2018, due to the passing of House Bill 1125 and Senate Bill 349, doubled the duration teachers could hold a license before renewing (VDOE, n.d.b). The change likewise increased the number of professional development points required to renew (VDOE, 2022). Additionally, teachers are required to complete various other training to be eligible to recertify. These trainings include Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition and Intervention, Emergency First Aid, CPR, and AED Training or Certification, Dyslexia Awareness Training, Cultural Competency Training, and may include the Virginia History or State and Local Government Modules (VDOE, 2022). Teachers may also participate in and complete professional development because it is

mandated by the school or district (Parsons et al., 2019). As stated by Gorozidis and Papaioannou (2016) in Power and Goodnough (2019), self-controlled motivation was "positively associated with teacher's intention to participate, whereas controlled motivation was not" (p. 281). Similarly, Parsons et al. (2019) stated that teachers who were required to participate found professional development less beneficial than those who participated willingly.

It was postulated that since learning and a person's identity are weaved together, when professional development is offered, it should permit choice and voice to promote participation (Boström & Palm, 2020; Dunn et al., 2018; Passmore & Hart, 2019). Likewise, teachers engage in learning opportunities to reach personal goals (Dunn et al., 2018; Osman & Warner, 2020). McCray (2018) posited that another way to increase participation and completion would be to design and provide professional development that aligns with the teachers' personal goals.

Palermo and Thomson (2019) found that providing teachers with professional development activities that were based on an understanding of teachers' values, expectations, and motivations for attending would lead to improved classroom teaching. According to Sprott (2019), motivation is complex but can provide insight into how to change professional development to increase teachers' value of the learning and influence their motivation to complete it.

Conclusion

Even though effective teacher professional development is the way to change or enhance teaching and increase student learning, many districts face challenges in providing high-quality, relevant professional development that teachers desire to complete (Fischer et al., 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivated them to complete the professional development that is offered. There is much research on professional development (Bana & Cranmore, 2019; Garrett et al., 2021; Noonan, 2019), but there was less on teachers' value of professional development and what motivated them to participate in and complete it (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Palermo & Thomson, 2019). This study extends the existing literature on teacher professional development by specifically examining elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete the professional development offered.

Implications

The implications of this study shed light on teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching in the district of interest and their motivations for completion. Rutherford-Quach et al. (2021) found that the intention to participate in professional development led to higher completion rates, along with increased knowledge based on the types of supports teachers received. Moreover, Roth et al. (2019) found that teachers who acquired or enhanced skills during professional

development changed teaching and improved student outcomes. With a better understanding of teachers' perceptions and motivations, the district of interest should be able to improve the consistency of professional development completion rates and improve classroom teaching and student outcomes. The study may further help districts with similar challenges better understand teachers and completion rates, and change professional development to better meet their teachers' needs. Likewise, the study would further research in the area of elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and the motivation to complete it.

The project deliverable, as required by the EdD project study checklist (Harris, n.d.a), could be an evaluation report or professional development curriculum and materials. As informed by the research, the project deliverable chosen could support the future direction for professional development at the study site. The recommendations could include suggestions on how the district of interest could improve the completion rates of professional development to improve classroom teaching based on the teachers' perceptions of the value of the professional development offered.

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

The literature review in section one highlighted the conceptual framework chosen to guide the study, what was known and not known about teacher professional development, teachers' perceptions about the value of professional development to improve teaching, and what motivated them to complete it. There are many reasons teachers participate and complete professional development. These reasons include that

they are required to participate, they are motivated to participate to further their personal goals, or to enhance their skills to improve classroom practices and student outcomes (Boström & Palm, 2020; Harper-Hill et al., 2022; Parsons et al., 2019; Passmore & Hart, 2019). Moreover, schools and districts are challenged to provide quality learning activities that meet the needs of the teachers and have inconsistent completion rates (Fischer et al., 2018; Sprott, 2019).

There are many theories that could support a conceptual framework to understand teachers' perceptions about professional development. However, a conceptual framework incorporating Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) expectancy value theory was used to guide the study. Knowles' assumptions about the conditions adults made decisions about their learning, coupled with Eccles and Wigfield's theory about what motivates people to seek or avoid learning can help researchers gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development and what motivates them to complete the professional development offered.

In section two, the methodology for the study is presented. This includes the research design chosen, the approach, and how the research design aligns with the problem and research questions. The section also includes the criteria for participant selection and the justification for the type and number of the sample. The procedure for accessing participants and a researcher working relationship are also discussed. The data collection method, instruments, and sources are likewise included. The system for how

and when information was collected, and the role of the researcher are also explained.

The procedure for analyzing the information collected, including the coding strategy, are

discussed. Additionally, procedures for assuring accuracy, credibility, and discrepant

cases are identified. Lastly, the limitations of the study are discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

In this section, the research design and how it is derived logically from the problem and guides the research questions are described. A description of the qualitative tradition and justification for the research design are also discussed. The participant procedure, data collection and analysis are also covered. My study aimed to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and the motivation for completion; therefore, a basic qualitative design was chosen to best answer the research questions.

Justification of Research Design

Exploring and gathering information on elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivations to complete lends itself to a basic qualitative study design. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated qualitative research aims to make meaning from the lived experiences through systematic processes that utilize interpretation. Likewise, qualitative researchers look to understand how people interpret their experiences and how it shapes their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A basic qualitative study is chosen because it is more flexible when looking to explore how people interpret their experiences, construct their worlds, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences (Keen, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A basic qualitative design is the best choice for exploring teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development and their motivations to complete.

A quantitative design was not chosen because quantitative research looks to find relationships through data, in the form of numbers, to answer questions between variables (Burkholder et al., 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, quantitative design would not be appropriate because this study does not seek to find a causal relationship, but explores perceptions of lived experiences. Likewise, a mixed method design, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative designs, was not chosen. According to Burkholder et al. (2020), mixed methods are generally used when the research questions cannot be answered by the other two designs alone. Since my study explored the lived experiences of teachers through their own words and is not trying to explain a causal relationship, a qualitative design was best suited to answer the research questions.

Like design methods, evaluations take many forms (goal-based, outcomes based, formative, or summative). For this study, a summative evaluation was considered since the findings were to be shared at the end of the study with the stakeholders. Summative evaluations look to see how the information collected (e.g., interviews) relates to the program (Lodico et al., 2006). Additionally, according to Burkholder et al. (2020), summative evaluations can have an impact on the future of a program, or the stakeholders involved. However, it was decided that the project deliverable would be recommendations to edit the professional development procedures and plan based on the of the study. Therefore, a formative evaluation was the most appropriate method of evaluation.

Participants

Researchers, no matter the design of the study, select participants for their research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the two main ways to gain participants for a study are probability (random) and non-probability (non-random) sampling. Random samples would give everyone the same chance of participating whereas, non-probability not everyone in the population has the same chance of being selected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study non-random sampling was utilized since I was only looking to explore the perceptions of the elementary teachers within one rural division.

Some types of non-probability sampling include convenience sampling, purposeful sampling, and snowball sampling. According to Burkholder et al. (2020), convenience sampling is used when a specific trait or characteristic is being studied and purposeful sampling is used based on the needs of the study, such as an experience. Whereas snowball sampling is when a researcher finds a few participants and then the participants refer others to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study, purposeful sampling was chosen because I was seeking teachers that had specific criteria and experiences with professional development at the study site.

Sample Frame

The population consisted of teachers in PK to grade five in a rural southeast school district. The sample frame for this basic qualitative study consisted of 147 elementary teachers in one district with three elementary schools. The grade level band of

the teachers was PK to grade five. All teachers were full-time and were certified by the

state. For the purposes of this study, participants were teachers who have taught in the

division of interest for at least six months, are fully licensed for the grade level in which

they teach and hold a post collegiate professional license or a postgraduate professional

license. Teachers who are provisionally licensed, teach grades other than PK through fifth

grade, are less than full time, or have been with the district of interest for less than six

months were ineligible to participate. The sample frame was chosen since the purpose,

problem, and research questions of the study are related to exploring the perceptions of

elementary teachers.

Sample Size

In qualitative research, there is no set sample size, but researchers need to

determine how many participants will be needed to adequately answer the research

questions and to reach saturation (Burkholder et al., 2020). Likewise, there should be

enough participants with the characteristics to be investigated to achieve the goal of

gaining a multi-perspective understanding of the topic and thoroughly answering the

research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Hennink and Kaiser (2022) found through

meta-analysis, that studies using homogenous groups with a narrow focus achieved

saturation with nine to 17 interviews. However, the authors reiterated that qualitative

studies do not have a set number of participants to be considered credible and that the

number of participants along with the characteristics of individual studies should be used

to estimate the sample size. For the planned research design, the first 10 eligible participants were selected from the study site using purposeful sampling.

Purposive sampling was employed since the study looks to collect data from participants who had in-depth knowledge and experience with the phenomenon being explored. Purposive sampling also allows a researcher to collect information from participants who could best answer the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The number of participants would have increased if saturation is not met with the originally planned number of participants. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that when no new meaning or themes can be derived from the data the researcher has reached saturation, which would include finding enough recurring concepts to sufficiently answer the research questions.

Sample Selection

In phase one of sample selection, with permission from the superintendent, I solicited teachers for participation through the division's email system. The email contained an invitation to participate, (Appendix B), and a Google Form link to confirm interest and collect the preferred contact method (Appendix C). A follow up email was sent seven days after the initial email (Appendix D). After seven more days, I did not recruit 12 to 14 interested participants, so phase two started. I aimed to interview 10 participants but planned to recruit 12 to 14 participants so that if for any reason a participant left the study, I could then contact an alternate participant.

In phase two of sample selection, with permission of building administration, I hung a flier in each of the mailrooms of the elementary schools (Appendix E). The flier remained in the mailrooms for 10 days. The flier had information about the study and tear off tabs with my email and phone number. Once participants email or call me indicating their interest, the digital informed consent was signed. If phase two had not been needed, the flier would have been deleted from the final study appendices.

After the close of the recruitment process, all participants were contacted by their designated email or phone number for introductions, to go over processes, and to answer any questions. Participants up to number 10 received an interview date and time, outside of contract hours. Any interested participant beyond number 10 was informed that they would be an alternate and would be contacted again if they are needed. If at any time a participant declined to participate, then the next alternate from the list would be used so that the sample size remained constant.

At the completion of the interview process, each participant received a $20 Amazon gift card as a thank you gift for participating. Participants were asked to designate an email or physical address where they would like the gift card sent. According to Zand (2019), it is acceptable to give participants a thank you gift in the form of a gift card as long as the participants and gift amount are taken into consideration. The gift card should be to a place where most participants would normally shop and not be an amount that would influence participation (Zand, 2019).

Protection of Participants

The protection of participants has been a law since the early 20th century which started with the Nuremberg Code (Burkholder et al., 2020). The principles of the law were that researchers were to take certain precautions when conducting studies to prevent harm to the participants. These precautions included "voluntary informed consent, avoidance of harm, assessment of risk, right to withdraw, and the researcher's responsibility to terminate an experiment if its continuation might pose harm to the participant" (Burkholder et al., 2020, p. 199). To follow ethical procedures, each participant received an informed consent form (Appendix F). The consent form contained the purpose of the study, the procedures for participating, the voluntary nature of the study, and the potential risks and benefits of participating. Additionally, prior to interviews, I verbally informed each participant that they may end the interview at any time, for any reason. I informed participants that all names were removed and replaced with random numbers to protect each participant's identity. All electronic information will be kept in a 12-character password protected Google Drive folder. All documents, tapes, transcribed interviews will be kept in the password protected Google Drive folder for 5 years after completion of the study. After 5 years, I will destroy all documents, tapes, and files associated with the study.

In addition to the consent form, an interview protocol was established (see Appendix G). A protocol added consistency between interviews and of the collection of information but allowed for open conversation between the interviewer and participant

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocol created contained a script that included the purpose of the study and restated how participant's privacy was to be protected through the removal of any identifiable information, such as their name. The protocol also contained that participants could withdraw from the study at any time and how to withdraw. Likewise, the protocol reviewed how data would be protected such as the use of password protected folders. Furthermore, the protocol reminded participants of the expectations following the interview and that they would have an opportunity to correct the transcribed information so that they were not misinterpreted.

When conducting qualitative research interviews, it is important to develop a researcher-participant working relationship with participants. Although I have worked for the district of interest for 14 years, I currently do not have, nor have I historically had a reporting relationship with the participants. A researcher-participant relationship was formed when interviews were scheduled. At that time, I informed participants that interviews were confidential. Additionally, I reminded participants that a number would be used in place of their name. These steps were taken to establish trust with the participants. To further support a trusting working relationship and add transparency in the participation process, the consent form was reviewed at the time of the interview and participants were offered a paper copy (see Appendix F). Reviewing the consent before the start of the interview also added to the participant's comfort and trust level. The consent included the purpose of the study, the expectations of the participants, the procedures, the potential harm, participant's privacy including de-identification of data,

the right to be removed from the study, and that they will receive a thank you gift.

Furthermore, all Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines were followed and the IRB

supplied a reference number (02-14-23-1051189) for the study. The Walden IRB ensures

that all research complies with U.S. regulations and the university standards of ethics

(Harris, n.d.b). Utilizing established qualitative interview strategies, and following the

IRB process, supported researcher-participant relationships and participant protections.

The risks and benefits of participating in the study were addressed through the

consent form and reviewed before the start of the interview. The statement reads, "being

in this study could involve some risk of minor discomforts that can be encountered in

daily life, such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study

would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing" (see Appendix F). Other measures were put

in place with regards to data security and the removal of identifying information such as

their name.

> Data will be kept secure by the use of (1) a 12-character password-protected Google
>
> Drive folder, (2) by the use of random codes in place of names, and (3) by storing
>
> names (when necessary) separately from the data. Data will be kept for a period of
>
> at least 5 years, as required by the university. (Appendix F)

The informed consent also contains details regarding the confidentiality of

participants and stated, "Your identity will be kept confidential within the limits of the

law" (Appendix F). Likewise, all participant names will be replaced with unique numbers

to protect their identity after the initial contact. The room secured for the interviews and

the time of day the interviews took place were also an added a layer of confidentiality to

protect the participants. Other confidentiality measures in the consent were that the

researcher would not use their personal information for any purposes except for the study.

Lastly, the informed consent stated that if the researcher shares information with another

researcher, there would be no identifying information shared.

Data Collection

Interviews are one of qualitative research's main forms of data collection.

Interviews provide rich information from those whose lived experiences are aligned with

the topic of study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The three types of interview formats are

structured, semistructured, and unstructured. Structured interviews have predetermined or

very limited answer choices to keep which can support uniformity across participants

(Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Semistructured interviews allow for questions to be used as

guides but allow for participant differences and for additional themes to emerge.

Unstructured interviews are the least restrictive and have no preset questions or format

(Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Other data collection methods include

memos, journals, and other artifacts. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that memos can

contain a plethora of information captured by the researcher, such as observations,

thoughts on interactions with participants, field work notes, and more. Journals are used

throughout a study and capture a researcher's ideas, thoughts, can aid in researcher

reflectivity, and can be a place to make note of additional questions. Artifacts can also be

a source of information in qualitative research. Artifacts may be items such as official

documents, websites, test scores, or other media and can provide the research with

context and history of an organization (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Data Collection and Justification

Since this study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of

professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete

professional development, audiotaped semistructured interviews were chosen as the data

collection tool. According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), semistructured interviews are an

appropriate tool to collect the lived experiences of participants in a qualitative study.

Roberts (2020) concurs and further stated that semistructured interviews provide focus

and structure to the interviews.

The day and time of the interviews were scheduled with the participants, outside

of contract hours. However, before interviews were conducted, a prearranged secure,

windowless conference room was reserved within the building with permission of the

building administration. Prearranging a secure room reduced disruptions and supported

the anonymity of the participants (Burkholder et al., 2020).

Sixty-minute semistructured, in person, audiotaped interviews supported the

researcher in guiding the conversation but did not confine the participants in how they

shared their lived experiences and perceptions, allowing them time to provide rich in-

depth information. A self-developed interview protocol (Appendix F) was used to guide

the interview process. The audio of each interview was captured on a mobile device set

between the participant and the interviewer. The audiotape of interviews acted as a

resource for later review and transcription. The audio files were transcribed using Otter.ai software (Liang & Fu, 2016) for participant checking. Participant or member checking is often used in qualitative studies to ensure accuracy of the participants' experiences and adds to the quality of a study (Motulsky, 2021). The transcribed audio files were provided to participants within five days to ensure the accuracy of their statements, thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences. Any corrections needed could have been made to the satisfaction of the participant, but no corrections were requested.

Memos and a researcher's journal were used during the study. Memos were used during the interviews to document thoughts, reactions, body language or questions for follow up. Memos, according to Burkholder et al. (2020), are used during the collection of data and are written notes the researcher makes to themselves. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that data collection memos can be used to capture specific questions and concerns and can be used throughout the study. Additionally, a researcher's journal, which is commonly used in qualitative research, was utilized. The journal was a place to record the researcher's thoughts feelings, struggles, possible codes, and aided in reflexivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Instruments and Sources

The interviewer is the primary collection tool used in qualitative research because the researcher is conducting the interviews. Semistructured interviews using a self-developed protocol (see Appendix G) was utilized to support the research questions in exploring the phenomenon. Interviews are predominantly used in qualitative research and

can provide rich information (text, voice, and video) for analysis (Burkholder et al., 2020). Semistructured interviews aided in supporting the research questions of the study while also affording the ability to explore individual participants' experiences with more depth or clarification of the experiences (Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). See Table 1 for the research questions and the related interview questions.

Table 1

Research Questions and Related Probes

Research Question	Interview Questions
RQ1: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of professional development offered to improve teaching?	Each year, how do you learn about professional development (PD) related to your teaching position? How would you define PD? Can you describe what a valuable PD experience would result in for you? **Probe:** Do you feel there are characteristics of PD that you value more than others? How so? **Probe:** Are there challenges to finding value in PD? If yes, explain. **Probe:** How can value be increased for PD? Can you describe the value of PD to teaching? **Probe:** How can PD improve teaching? **Probe:** Can you share with me a PD you completed that helped improve your

Research Question	Interview Questions
	teaching? **Probe:** Are there other strategies that you have used to improve your teaching? If yes, please explain. What should an effective PD session include to improve teaching? **Probe:** What changes to the current PD should be made to improve teaching? **Probe:** How should teachers improve their teaching? What should an effective PD session include to improve student learning? **Probe:** What changes to the current PD should be made to improve student learning? **Probe:** How should teachers improve student learning? Do you have any additional comments you would like to make regarding the value of professional development to improve teaching?
RQ2: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their motivation to complete the professional development that is offered?	To the best of your ability, can you describe how your school or the district determines which PD opportunities to offer? **Probe**: How do you feel about participating in the PD that is offered? **Probe**: Does the school or district provide any support(s) or resource(s) for you to participate in the PD that is offered? If so, can you describe them?

Research Question	Interview Questions
	How do you decide which PD to attend? **Probe**: Can you describe what would make you want to choose one PD option over another?
	Can you describe a time when you completed a PD activity? **Probe:** Were there specific reasons that motivated you to complete? **Probe:** How did you feel after completing the PD?
	Can you describe a time when you were not able to complete a PD activity that you started? **Probe:** Were there specific reasons you did not complete the PD? **Probe**: How did you feel about not completing the PD?
	How does the time of year impact your motivation to complete PD? **Probe:** Are there certain times of the year that PD should not be offered?
	How does the mode of offering (in-person, online, etc.) impact your motivation to complete PD? **Probe:** Can you describe your preferred mode for PD?
	How does the length of the PD impact your motivation to complete PD? **Probe:** Have there been times when the PD was taking too long to complete?

Research Question	Interview Questions
	Do you have any additional comments you would like to make regarding motivation and the completion of professional development?

Data Generation

Once the participants were solicited and signed the digital consent form, participants were contacted for introductions, to go over processes, to answer any questions, and set up a date for an interview. Prior to the interviews participant names were replaced with random numbers for confidentiality. For this study I looked to recruit 12 to 14 participants. The first 10 participants were interviewed. However, if for any reason a participant left the study, I could then contact an alternate participant so that the sample size remains constant. The original participant information was stored in a separate 12-character password protected Google Drive folder for security purposes.

In person interviews were held in a prearranged, secure location and were audio taped using a mobile device. Researcher memos were used during interviews to collect information that may not have been captured in the audio (e.g., physical actions, facial expressions, or follow up questions). Audio files were transcribed using Otter.ai software. All audio and transcribed files were kept in a separate password protected Google Drive folder using a naming convention that included the participant's number. The method and design outlined were best suited for exploring elementary teachers' perceptions of the

value of professional development to improve teaching, and their motivation to complete

the professional development that was offered.

Access to Participants and Role of the Researcher

Access to participants was gained through the use of a letter of invitation

(Appendix B). The letter of invitation included a link to a Google Form which was sent

through the division's email system with permission from the superintendent (Appendix

C). The goal of 10 to 14 participants was not reached, so phase two included a flier

posted in the mailroom for 10 days with permission of building level administration

(Appendix E). The researcher has worked for the division for 14 years but currently or

previously has had no reporting relationship to participants. Some challenges that may

have needed to be addressed were the number of participants, researcher bias of the topic,

and the generalization of the findings.

The role of the researcher as an interviewer versus a fellow employee could have

caused some teachers to either not want to participate or not to honestly answer questions

related to their value of professional development to improve classroom teaching and

their motivations to complete what is offered to the depth needed for the study.

Furthermore, since interviews could take time out of a teacher's already busy schedule, it

may have been challenging to get enough participants to reach saturation. However, to

minimize the impact on the teachers' time, I considered potential scheduling conflicts and

the time of the year along with scheduling interviews outside of contract hours.

In qualitative studies, participants and the researcher are coconstructors in the process of meaning making (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In this regard, researcher bias needed to be identified so that procedures could be put in place to minimize the impact on credibility. In this sense, I recognized that I am a teacher within the district and have experience with professional development. I minimized the impact of my personal bias by maintaining a research journal for reflections throughout the study. I also used a self-developed interview protocol that included semistructured interview questions. Likewise, to distance my working relationship in the study interviews were conducted outside of contract hours. Additionally, I practiced interview techniques such as using neutral facial expressions and minimizing body movements. Moreover, interviews were audiotaped to ensure accuracy of the information given by the participants and memos were used to capture additional thoughts, feelings, and any follow-up questions.

Another challenge was the generalization of findings of the study. Since the study took place in the rural southeast, the findings may not be the same in other areas. Likewise, the sample was comprised of elementary teachers who may not have the same perceptions as secondary teachers in the same district. However, the methods of securing participants, data collection and the process for analyzing information could be generalized to other research studies.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making meaning out of data, which can take many forms (e.g., documents, images, conversations, and audio), that is collected during

research (Lester et al., 2020). Data analysis is not a straightforward process but generally starts with examining the data and ends with a summation of the interpretation (Seers, 2012). In this section, how and when the data were analyzed is presented. Evidence of quality is also discussed. This includes dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, data saturation, reflexivity, and discrepant cases.

Data analysis started once the first interview was completed. The audio files of each interview were transcribed using Otter.ai software (Liang & Fu, 2016). The software transcribed verbatim the audio, including timestamps, and the speakers. A second transcription was done to ensure accuracy of the interviews. A copy of the transcript was sent to the participant via email or mail for fact checking. Participants were given seven business days to note any corrections or edits and return the transcript. There were no requests for adjustments (corrections, comments, clarifications) to the transcripts.

All transcripts were read by the researcher and compared to the corresponding memos while documenting all reflections in the researcher's journal or directly on the transcripts with highlighters. Likewise, during review of the transcripts any significant patterns were documented. Patterns, according to Saldaña (2021), are a repetitious use of words, phrases or concepts that form "stable indicators of humans' ways of living and working to render the world more…predictable" (p. 8) which adds to the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Coding

One type of data analysis in qualitative research is coding. Codes (words or phrases) are assigned by the researcher to identify themes, patterns, or categories which aid in making meaning and theory building (Saldaña, 2021). The codes are actively constructed by the researcher and can change as the analysis evolves (Lodico et al., 2006; Saldaña, 2021). Coding according to Lodico et al. (2006), is a "process of data analysis that involves examining many small pieces of information and abstracting a connection between them" (p. 305). According to Saldaña (2021), there is no one way to code and coding methods are not necessarily mutually exclusive but can flow from one to another as data becomes more solidified.

While rereading the transcripts, structural coding was used, and the transcripts were coded against a list of topics derived from the research questions. Saldaña (2021) stated that structural coding is appropriate for data from semistructured interviews and uses a phrase of the topic of interest and allows the researcher to examine foundational patterns. After the initial coding, the information was reexamined, one research question at a time, to create sub codes. Sub codes can help identify nuances, interrelationships, or other characteristics to emerge (Saldaña, 2021). Any additional themes will be noted as the rounds of coding occur. Themes are codes and categories that align with a concept important to the research questions and put into context, but discrepant information may also be found (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Any discrepant cases would have been reexamined to determine if there are differences between them and the other

participants' experiences. Possible reasons for the discrepant cases would have been discussed, but there were no discrepant cases.

Evidence of Quality

Qualitative studies aim to provide an in-depth description and interpretation of participants' experiences, thoughts, and feelings. To ensure the research is of good quality certain criteria must be present. The researcher must ensure the descriptions and analysis are the reality of the participants and their experiences. The criteria used to determine the quality of the evidence are dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, data saturation, reflexivity, and discrepant cases.

Dependability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), dependability is when a study has research procedures that are documented and reliable. Dependability can be demonstrated when the researcher documents the process and procedures that were used to collect and analyze the information collected and can be repeated with similar findings (Lodico et al., 2006). In this study, to ensure dependability, I fully documented the research-based methods used to collect data and analyze data to answer the research questions. Evidence was gathered through semistructured interviews from 10 participants utilizing a basic qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). All participants were elementary teachers from the district of interest and were audio recorded using a mobile device. Interviews were transcribed twice using Otter.ai software (Liang & Fu, 2016) to ensure accuracy and structural coding was used to analyze the data which allowed for themes to emerge.

Saldaña (2021) posited that structural coding is an appropriate method to interpret semistructured interview data.

Credibility

Burkholder et al. (2020) stated that credibility is achieved when the data that is collected matches the data needed to answer the research questions and that the findings are "believable given the data presented" (p. 91). To ensure accuracy and credibility, member checking was utilized. Likewise, interviews were audiotaped utilizing a mobile device and each participant received the transcript of the interview to review to ensure trustworthiness. Participants were asked to make any corrections needed to reflect their experiences and descriptions shared during the interview. Interview memos and a research journal were used throughout the study. The description and possible explanations for negative cases could also be used to aid credibility, but the results did not reveal any negative cases.

Transferability

The purpose of qualitative research is not to transfer to the general population or use statements of truth that can transfer to another population but does have to have some transfer ability beyond the immediate study (Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). According to Burkholder et al. (2020), the transfer of a qualitative study to another situation or sample is the responsibility of the person in the other situation. However, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide enough descriptive information so that the reader can make informed decisions regarding the application of the findings (Burkholder

et al., 2020). In this study, the use of reflexivity throughout the study using the

researcher's journal and the thick description of population, sample, and procedures

supported transferability. Likewise, including participants from multiple schools added to

what Burkholder et al. called maximum variation which diversified the sample.

Confirmability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), confirmability in qualitative research is the

ability to create verifiable study processes and procedures so that other researchers would

arrive with similar conclusions when examining the data. To achieve this, the use of

triangulation and reflexivity strategies, documented processes, and the recognition of

researcher bias must be included in the study (Burkholder et al., 2020). Confirmability

strategies were documented in the way the participants are chosen (purposeful sampling),

the self-created protocol utilized for the interviews, and the way the data was collected

(60 minute face-to-face, in-person, audiotaped interviews) and analyzed (structural

coding). Likewise, researcher bias was also discussed within this paper with regards to

the employment place, number of years employed, and lived experiences that were

similar to the participants.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is reached when no new themes, gaps, or information is able to be

collected (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Saturation is indicated when the recurrence of

information is seen. The design of this research project included 10 participants and 60-

minute interviews. If saturation had not been met, then additional participants would have

been interviewed until enough recurring concepts were seen whereby saturation would

have been met.

Reflexivity

As stated by Berger (2015, p. 220) in Dodgson (2019) reflexivity is putting the

"lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness

within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being

studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation" (p. 221). In

this study, reflexivity was demonstrated through the use of interview memos, the use of a

researcher's journal, and documented procedures. Memos were used during the

interviews to document thoughts, reactions, body language or questions for follow up. A

researcher's journal was used throughout the study to document the researcher's

thoughts, feelings, struggles, and thoughts on possible themes and patterns. The

examination of researcher bias is also a way to demonstrate reflexivity in a study.

Reflexivity is not a single event but occurs and reoccurs throughout the study in all

processes and procedures.

Discrepant Cases

Qualitative research can result in discrepant cases. Burkholder et al. (2020) stated

that discrepant cases are pieces of information that do not fit with the rest of the data. The

main concern with discrepant data is that the researcher does not try to make the data

conform with the other information or the researcher's preconceived ideas (Ravitch &

Carl, 2021). For this study, the reflexive process and coding procedures would have

helped identify discrepant information. If discrepant information had been identified the discrepant data would have been reexamined to determine if there were differences between them and the other participants' experiences. If there had been differences, then the possible reasons for the discrepant cases would have been discussed.

Limitations

Limitations are the weaknesses of a study and could interfere with the interpretation of and application of the results (Burkholder et al., 2020). In this study, there are a few potential limitations such as, the small sample size. According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), there are no set limits on the number of participants in a qualitative study but the researcher must recognize potential limitations of small sample sizes and the possible impacts on the results (e.g., generalizability). Likewise, a limitation may be that the interview questions were misinterpreted by participants during the interview whereby influencing the responses given (Roberts, 2020). Another limitation was that all participants were volunteers and their motives for participating could affect how they responded to the interview questions. However, the methods of securing participants, data collection and the process for analyzing information could be generalized to other research studies.

Data Analysis Results

The problem for this study was that a school district provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. A qualitative design was chosen for this study to

gather perceptions from elementary teachers. Qualitative research looks to understand how people interpret their experiences and how they shape their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data was generated from 10 elementary teachers selected using purposeful sampling. Data was recorded during 60-minute, face-to-face semistructured interviews and was audiotaped using a mobile device to ensure accuracy. The semistructured interview protocol was a self-created instrument. The two research questions for this study were (1) How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of professional development offered to improve teaching? and (2) How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their motivation to complete the professional development that is offered?

Coding Process

Structural coding was used for this study. Saldaña (2021) stated that structural coding is appropriate for data from semistructured interviews. The transcripts were coded with a list of topics derived from the research questions and conceptual framework to look for foundational patterns (see Table 2).

Table 2

Structural Codes from Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

Codes
Value of PD
Improved teaching
Motivation to complete

Codes
Readiness to learn
Professional development offered

After coding the data, I reexamined the information, one research question at a time. During this reading, I identified and coded additional segments of information related to the code list and found that some codes required clarification. The initial code, improved teaching, was changed to improved outcomes because after the repeated rounds of reading, it was clear the participants felt that improved outcomes were more representative of both student and teacher learning. Likewise, the code, professional development offered, became the code structure of professional development because of the participants' multifaceted perceptions of the components of professional development. Additionally, participants felt that the value of choice and usefulness played a part in their choices and perceptions of professional development, so these two codes were added to the code list. Moreover, it was clear the participants felt there were demotivational aspects and related costs to professional development, so the codes demotivation and opportunity cost were also added to the coding list (see Table 3).

Table 3

Research Questions and Codes

Question	Codes
RQ1: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of professional development offered to improve teaching?	Readiness to learn Value of PD Improved outcomes Value of choice Usefulness
RQ2: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their motivation to complete the professional development that is offered?	Motivation to complete Demotivation to complete Opportunity cost Structure of professional development

During further analysis I looked for patterns. As the data was reviewed, any notes or thoughts were recorded in the researcher's journal to control bias and to add to validity. Codes and categories that align with a concept important to the research questions are themes and themes put things into context, but additional information may also be found (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). As the analysis continued, two specific patterns emerged (1) Values of professional development and (2) Completed professional development (see Table 4).

Table 4

Themes Derived from the Codes

Themes	Codes
Value of professional development	Value of PD
	Improved outcomes
	Readiness to learn
	Value of choice
	Usefulness
Completed professional development	Motivation to complete
	Demotivation to complete
	Opportunity cost
	Structure of professional
	development

Theme 1: Value of Professional Development

Codes

     The value of professional development theme was generated from the following codes: value of PD, improved outcomes, readiness to learn, value of choice, and usefulness. During the interviews, participants were asked questions related to the value of professional development and its connection to learning. All participants perceived

that professional development was integral to teaching and learning. Participants spoke of what they valued in professional development in terms of relatedness to their needs as classroom teachers. Moreover, participants spoke of the desire for choice or control over their professional development to ensure the usefulness to their immediate needs.

Code: Value of PD

There was an understanding among all the study participants that becoming a better educator happened through acquiring new or enhanced skills to support teaching and student learning, and this learning happens through professional development. All participants felt that the value of professional development was found in how it made them feel or how it could change or improve their teaching. Specifically, Participant 2774 stated, "I leave invigorated excited, I leave thinking about how I'm going to weave it into established routines in the classroom…I leave excited about what I've just spent my time learning." Similarly, Participant 1359 indicated,

> [it] can help in many ways it can teach a new core…curriculum but it can train us to in new ways of teaching that we were not instructed in as before. It can teach us a whole new philosophy of what is important.

Likewise, the acquisition of knowledge and skills to apply in the classroom to improve student outcomes is the goal of professional development (Richter et al., 2019; Sancar et al., 2021). Participant 1465 expressed the value as "feeling like you can really help someone because the biggest goal and heart of a teacher is to make a change, so having the ability to make that change because you were poured into is again invaluable."

Overall, participants felt that professional development was valuable in helping them become better equipped to teach and support student learning.

Code: Improved Outcomes

Participants shared a singular goal, which was to improve outcomes for themselves and ultimately their students. Participant 4779 shared the initial response to a professional development opportunity and the outcome, "I thought, oh, I don't want to do this. I can teach reading. I've got this. [but] I learned so much and it was so earth shattering for my teaching." Additionally, Participant 2774 explained, "[the] training has been really exciting and it's long but it's exciting and I don't dislike thinking I have to do it because I'm seeing the application on a daily basis." Participant 4176 exclaimed, "oh my gosh, that [professional development] was a life changer for me … I had a student who was struggling… I pulled that [instructional tool] out and that boy picked up on it just like that… I've been using them ever since." Participant 1359 stated that, "So if you want students to get the value of that professional development, then they need to provide very clear instruction for teachers to use but also those resources are crucial." Participant 2057 said,

> I would say that it was probably the one of the most meaningful and challenging professional development endeavors I really ever took on… but I learned so much about myself, about students about you know, quality instruction. It definitely had an impact on my instruction.

Even though their perceptions of good professional development varied, participants strove to improve outcomes for themselves and their students through attending professional development opportunities.

Code: Readiness to Learn

All participants spoke of the desire to have professional development based on what they needed to learn and likewise, they wanted to be able to immediately implement what was learned. Succinctly put, Participant 3002 stated that the best professional development is something "I can implement right away, something that matches my needs, my classroom needs, and then the overall picture of growing me as a teacher or developing me into a better educator." Participant 4741 explained,

> for me PD is something where it relates to what I'm doing every day. I learn something that I can take back to my classroom and actually implement like, right away or, you know, after several days of the PD, and I like when I come away with resources.

Participant 1359 added, "it has to be it has to be directly tied to something I can use within my classroom." Readiness to learn, according to the participants, was having access to professional development that included topics that pertained to their needs or that were applicable to their students so they could implement learning immediately.

Code: Value of Choice

Another common sentiment between the participants was that they valued choice in what professional development in which they participated. Participant 5487 stated

teachers "have to be more in control of it" Participant 5487 went further to provide an example and said, "last year being the first one really, we were directed, to come up with our own ideas and provide our own professional development, so we did... [and] it was very on-point for all of us." Participant 4741 spoke of why attending a conference was not only enjoyable but valuable when they said, "there were different breakout sessions where we got to hear different things… [the] PD I chose I actually came away with a gazillion ideas of things that I could use… that would help me be a better teacher [for my population of students]." Participant 4779 said, "actually the ones that are the best are the ones that my boss asks us what we would like." Participant 1359 spoke passionately about the value of choice in professional development and stated,

> [if there are so] many hours of the instructional year that someone has to provide professional development, then teachers should be given choices so that they get to choose the ones that they think are most relevant to what they're teaching... something that they you know want to participate in… the problem that I see is if it's not, then it's utilized time that quite frankly, we don't have.

Choice or control over professional development was an important factor in the participants' overall value of professional development.

Code: Usefulness

All participants spoke of the desire for professional development to be useful to their classroom population. Participant 4779 stated that professional development "definitely [needs to be] pinpointed to my area so that it's custom made." Participant

4741 explained that usefulness is key when attending professional development by saying, the

> PD that I get here at the school I don't feel as helpful. Just because I don't feel like it's [useful] it's something we have to do kind of a thing instead of something that I need or something that I want or something that I'm interested in at the moment.

The participant went on to say, "there's a lot of them [short online PD] I mean, I'll click on those little PD points all day long. One PD point here, one PD point there but it doesn't really help. I'm not getting anything out of that [and it is not useful]" Participant 5487 spoke about usefulness by stating, "first of all, if we get good PD, then we can use it in the classroom. That's not always what happens. Like I said, you'll get professional development that has nothing to do with your subject matter at all." Participant 3002 explained the conditions for professional development to be useful by stating,

> I think it's got to be tailored to what you're doing. It should be tailored to my subject; it should be tailored to myself as an educator and then what growth do I need professionally and then what growth do I need to see in my students.

Participant 2057 stated that professional development is useful,

> if it's something that is so applicable to what I'm doing in my classroom, something that I think my students will also be able to do, to easily learn how to do or, you know, like new applications and programs, or to enhance the instruction that's already happening.

The usefulness of the professional development that participants attended or had access to was another important factor in the overall value of professional development.

Theme 2: Completed Professional Development

Participants were asked a series of questions related to their motivation to complete professional development. Of the ten participants, eight stated they had always completed any professional development activity that they started. Two of the participants stated they had experiences where they could not complete the professional development they started, and one participant stated that they missed attending a personally chosen session at a conference which to the participant felt as though they did not complete. Each participant spoke regarding their motivations, what they had to do in preparation for attending, and their preferences in the structure of the professional development. All participants spoke negatively about mandatory professional development, but they either understood why it was necessary or stated that it could be improved by adding a component of choice. The theme of completed professional development was derived from the following codes: motivation to complete, demotivation to complete, opportunity cost, and structure of professional development.

Code: Motivation to Complete

Participants' motivation to complete professional development was overwhelmingly similar in that they wanted to support their teaching and student learning. Participant 2968 shared,

well, I go to the ones I have to and then [I] determine which ones I feel like I can

use with my students… like I did the behavior [professional development] thing

because I have students who need that kind of thing right now and I needed more

knowledge in the area in order to be able to provide effective interventions when

needed.

Likewise, Participant 4176 stated "so I'm picking things that I need that I feel weakest

in." I paraphrased what the participant said and asked, "if it's something your students

needed to learn or something for you to support their learning, you are more motivated to

complete?" Participant 4176 said, "Yes, absolutely. Totally 100 percent."

However, one participant did mention that the number of points awarded for

professional development played a part in the motivation to participate and complete.

Participant 1465 stated they were motivated by,

the [number of] points as I looked for recertification points, as well as the time

commitment. The [professional development] that I received last year, that took

an entire month, and so I didn't know how committed I would be but it mattered

to me and my education, so I wanted to make the commitment. The ones that are

like a measly little point I'm not really going to go for, but the bigger ones that

would be worth more I would probably go for as well as what's expected.

Increasing teacher and student learning by attending professional development was a

motivating factor for all participants to complete. Although one participant mentioned

they were also motivated by the number of points assigned to the professional development.

Code: Demotivation to Complete

All participants, with varying degrees of displeasure, stated they do complete professional development but were also demotivated towards completing mandatory professional development. Participant 2968 summed it up when they stated, "there's some of them you have to get done, because you have to do it." Participant 4741 added "I usually finish what I start even if I didn't like [mandatory professional development]." Participant 3002 similarly stated, "I've always gotten the [professional development] done… I did [one time] have to ask for an extension by three weeks but I got it done." Additionally, Participant 5487 stated,

> I understand why we have to do it annually. However, most of my colleagues don't even watch it anymore. They just answer the questions. And that's still considered, you know, viable, professional development? …I could probably write the test myself by now.

One participant also spoke about their demotivation towards completing non-relevant professional development. Participant 3002 shared,

> I feel like some professional development is to check a box to say that I have it… I feel like it is a waste of my time. It's not content specific. It's not related to what I'm doing at the moment.

A few participants also shared that the time of year increased demotivation to complete. Participant 2057 explained during the first week of school,

> that is when you know the county seems to say oh welcome back. We're glad you're here. We've learned a lot over the summer and we're super excited to share it with you. Meanwhile, I'm sitting there and I want to give it my full attention and all, but all I can think about is you know the 75 things that I have to get done in three days.

Participant 2774 shared similar feelings regarding demotivation when they said, "My brain is not engaged in the PD…I'm thinking what are the things I want to get done in my classroom to begin the year, so I think that the time of year really matters on how much [motivation there is to complete professional development]." Participant 4167 stated an opposing thought on the time of year when they said,

> there's this level of motivation that hits you like in August that you're just geared up and ready to roll. I wish we could bottle it up and keep that going throughout the whole year because by around February, and March in you're kind of like, do I really have to do this [professional development]?

Participant 3002 also shared that the end of the year they were demotivated to complete professional development when they said, "I'm gung-ho in the beginning. I'll do a little in the middle [of the year], but by spring leading into summer I'm worn out so forget it. I'm not getting any [voluntary professional development] done." Participants stated that even

though they had feelings of demotivation to complete professional development the feelings did not stop them from completing it, although some did not complete it on time.

Code: Opportunity Cost

The most frequent opportunity cost mentioned by participants was time away from classroom duties. Some additional costs mentioned were having to write substitute plans or finding daycare for their children in order to attend professional development opportunities. Participant 3002 described their thought process in determining if the opportunity cost was worth attending the professional development by saying, "is it something I do in my free time, or is it something that I'm gonna have to take off or write [substitute] plans for… [and is it] completely relevant?" The participant went on to explain that because "there just isn't enough time in teaching anyway" [so the professional development must have value]. Participant 3002 also shared their feelings when they did not finish by the due date, "I was extremely frustrated with myself. I'm awfully hard on myself about getting things done and staying on task." I could tell the opportunity cost was high for the participant when they said, "I think it was just the demands of my classroom. Trying to put that together and carry my classroom how I like to carry it, and then be the student that I wanted to be [took its toll]." The loss of time was mentioned as an opportunity cost when involved in professional development even if monetary compensation was offered. Participant 5487 said,

> but even if we're paid to do [voluntary] professional development, if I don't see an applicable reason for it in my classroom, I tend not to do it. I [only] do the

mandatory stuff… "however if I see there's value in it, it doesn't matter whether

I'm paid for it or not. I'm gonna do it.

Participant 5487 went on to say,

I still plug through [the mandatory professional development] because I'm just

one of those people if I'm going to start a task, I'm gonna finish. It might take me

a little extra longer or I might have to pause it but it's gonna get done.

Participant 4741 spoke about the value of professional development outweighing the

opportunity cost of completing classroom responsibilities when they stated,

I know a lot [of teachers] that don't go to PD because they know they have to

write [substitute] plans and miss days from class… when I feel like my time [in

PD] was really valuable [even though] I had to come up with [substitute] plans

and leave my classroom I don't mind.

Conversely, Participant 2774 and Participant 4176 found that they could not complete a

voluntary professional development activity because the opportunity cost of classroom

responsibilities was too high. Participant 2774 shared, the professional development "was

just more than I could do independently and still maintain my own desired professional

level within the classroom… it was not one that was required. It was self-development

and I had to put it to the backburner." Participant 2774 went on to say that,

I truly enjoy professional development. I like learning. I like finding new things. I

like having new discoveries. It excites me and so when I don't get to finish it, I'm

disappointed on a variety of levels… I'm disappointed because I couldn't make it a

priority and that just T-ed me off, but then I'm also annoyed because of what

didn't I get to learn, and it's a personal frustration for me because I don't like to

start something and not finish it.

Likewise, Participant 4176 shared,

It was the hit of COVID and the constraints of what was happening in the

classroom, and I just couldn't [complete the professional development]. It was just

kind of disheartening because I couldn't do what was required… to be honest, I

wanted the points, but I also wanted to do the activity that was asked of me. It was

a waste of my time, my effort. and my money because I had to pay for that one. It

was just a waste and so it felt very heartbreaking.

Although participants did not seem to mind these costs when attending professional

development that they deemed valuable. When participants perceived the professional

development was not valuable, they felt the opportunity cost was too high.

Code: Structure of Professional Development

All participants described some type of structure of professional development that

positively or negatively affected their motivation. The presentation style, mode of

delivery, and the time of year were all discussed as important components, but they

varied in degree between participants. As for the presentation style, Participant 2968

stated, "after a certain amount of time, it just becomes overwhelming… so maybe shorter

chunks of information at a time, the opportunity to try it out back in the classroom, and

then you come back and talk about it [is the best]." Likewise, Participant 2057 said with a smile,

> the shorter the better, but you know I've really liked some of the models where it's been alright, here's the instructional piece and I'm going to tell you all the information and show you all the bells and whistles and then I'm going to give you an opportunity to try things out and apply what we've discussed.

Participant 4779 and Participant 1465 both stated that movement and interaction were important in the presentation style of professional development. Participant 4779 explained, "not too much data, because that makes it dry, a combination of good teaching practices, so you're not sitting the whole time so that you're interactive and hitting all the different types of learners." Participant 1465 said, "adapt a PD to address different modalities of learning… having that hands-on experience is so valuable to a lot of people… being able to play with it before the pressures on to really do it."

Although most participants utilized different modes of learning, face-to-face was the preferred mode of delivery for professional development. However, there were a few that mentioned online learning. Participant 3002 stated, "I am much more motivated if it fits my schedule" versus having a preferred mode of delivery.

Participant 1465 shared,

> Yes. I appreciate when professional development is self-paced or accessible from home… because if I wake up in the middle of the night... I can login and have something to do and it doesn't keep me confined to one place…. However, I really

see the value of in-person because of the chat space to be able to ask and answer

questions but I have a hard time paying attention sometimes. So any sort of

flexible or hybrid space would be totally perfect.

Even though the other eight participants spoke of participating in other modes of

professional development, they preferred face-to-face over the other modes. Participant

2968 stated that "in virtual you're doing it on your own, even if there's discussion

boards… you don't have that immediacy of the feedback that you get from the in-person,

to know if your thinking is on target or not. So, there's kind of a delay there and I think

that immediacy helps keep me focused and motivated." Participant 2057 stated,

online on demand is going to be much easier for me to complete with the

flexibility but I have kids that are a little bit older now. I have more flexibility to

my schedule in my free time, so I actually don't mind in person because like I said

before, there's so much that can be gained in those down minutes of presentations,

so I definitely prefer face to face.

Participant 4741 explained, "virtual is okay, maybe it's just my learning style. I guess I'm

a tactile learner. I like to put my hands on things and that's hard to do virtually."

Participant 2774 added, "I've done PD in every platform, and I think it depends upon the

material… each has a place. I personally, as I've said, prefer in-person just because I like

to hear it, see it, and touch it."

The last structural item of professional development that impacted participants'

motivation to complete was time of year. The participants' answers ranged from it should

be offered year-round to almost never. When asked if there were certain times of the year

professional development should not be offered, Participant 2968 stated, "no because you

never know what people's schedules and opportunities are." Most participants mentioned

that they were less motivated to attend professional development during busy times of the

year. Participant 2057 stated, "there are times where our days and schedules in the

classroom become more demanding, I would say around report cards. I'm not gonna go

anywhere near PD that I get to choose during times of high work demand, also seasonally

being that we're in education at the elementary level Christmas is crazy." Participant

4741 shared, "we have a lot of stuff going on during the summer, so I feel like throughout

the school year for me is better than any other time of the year [for professional

development]. Participant 4741 went on to share other times that they were not motivated

to participate in and complete professional development. They said, "So for me it would

be teacher work week, around the holidays, and that period of time from like middle-end

of March on to end of the year is really difficult which, I guess, doesn't leave a whole lot

of time for PD."

The structure of professional development was described by participants as

having positive or negative effects on their motivation to participate and complete. The

structures mentioned were presentation style, mode of delivery, and the time of year

although participants spoke with varying degrees of motivation depending on the

structure.

Connecting Data Results with Theory

There were several outcomes derived from the data analysis that can be connected

back to the conceptual framework and the research questions. The conceptual framework

was based on Knowles' (1980) work in andragogy and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002)

work with expectancy value. Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy focuses specifically

on how and what motivates adults to learn, and Eccles and Wigfield's expectancy value

theory focuses on components that supported motivation, effort, and consequences. The

research questions the study aimed to answer were:

RQ1: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of

professional development offered to improve teaching?

RQ2: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their

motivation to complete the professional development that is offered?

The first theory in the conceptual framework was Knowles' (1980) theory of adult

learning. Knowles posited that adults are motivated to learn about topics that are of

relative interest to their current situations and therefore need to know what and why they

are going to learn something and decide the value of the activity (Appova & Arbaugh,

2018). The results aligned with the conceptual framework because they depicted the

teachers' desire to apply what they learned in professional development immediately to

their teaching. The results also indicated that the teachers needed to have control over

what they learned (self-concept). Knowles' assumption of prior experience was supported

when teachers shared that they wanted targeted professional development versus the

setting where everyone receives the same information. The readiness to learn assumption was supported when participants spoke of wanting to know the purpose for attending a professional development session. They wanted to ensure it was relevant and they could immediately apply what they learned. Moreover, participants repeatedly stressed that professional development should be of immediate use to solve problems they face within the classroom (orientation to learning). Additionally, participants spoke passionately about their main motivation for attending professional development which was to gain skills and knowledge to improve the outcomes for themselves and their students.

The second theory in the conceptual framework was Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) theory of expectancy value which contains two major components (expectancy and value) which support motivation. The authors posited that value is associated with the task and its value to the individual. The theory stated that utility and value were associated with the task and its value and usefulness to the individual. The results revealed that teachers felt there were structures (e.g., presentation style, mode of delivery, and time of year) of professional development that positively and negatively affected their motivation to attend and complete. In most cases, participants felt the opportunity cost of attending and completing additional, mandatory, or non-relevant professional development was too high, even if monetary compensation was offered. The results could be further understood by Eccles and Wigfield's expectancy value theory when participants shared that they valued professional development that was specific to their needs and had immediate application, which is also supported by Knowles (1980).

Although participants understood that some professional development was going to be mandatory, they desired a choice or control over what they were to learn or how they were to learn through the professional development which is supported by Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) theory regarding value. Value, according to Eccles and Wigfield, is associated with the task and its value to the individual (e.g., is it important, is it worth completing, is it enjoyable, is it related to life). According to the participants, motivation to complete professional development was increased when it was flexible and tailored to what they or their students needed at the time of the offering.

Another component of expectancy value theory is utility. Participants felt strongly that if there was going to be any value in the professional development for themselves or their students that it must have relevance to their classroom or student need, which is supported by utility value. Utility value is how useful the task is in the life of the person completing the task and can be linked to present or future usefulness (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Eccles and Wigfield further posited that cost is an essential part of value. It is the loss of one choice over another. The opportunity cost could be monetary, emotional, effort, time, or another activity (Palermo & Thomson, 2019). This portion of the framework was supported when participants spoke about attending mandatory or unrelated professional development. They spoke of the lost time in the classroom for instruction and the loss of time to take care of other classroom responsibilities. However, participants also mentioned that they did not mind paying the opportunity cost if they

valued the professional development being offered because they felt that the learning outcomes would be increased.

Research Question 1

The first research question was how do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of professional development offered to improve teaching? The interviews revealed that when participants completed valuable professional development, they had feelings of excitement or renewal. Likewise, participants stated they valued professional development that could increase learning for themselves and their students. Additionally, it was revealed that professional development held value when the learning was tied to a classroom need, provided resources, and could be immediately implemented. Flexibility and access to professional development at any time also increased the value for some of the participants.

However, the interviews also revealed there were times that professional development was offered and did not hold value because the professional development session was ill aligned with what the teachers felt they needed to learn. Some professional development sessions did not meet their classroom or student needs. Participants shared that other professional development sessions did not provide resources to immediately implement what was learned. When participants stated they did not find value in a professional development activity it was because it lacked what they found valuable in a learning experience.

Research Question 2

The second research question was how do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their motivation to complete the professional development that is offered? Based on the interviews, it was revealed that participants were motivated to complete professional development to support their teaching and student learning. One participant also stated that receiving recertification points was a motivating factor for completing professional development.

Eight participants shared they have always been able to complete professional development, whereas two indicated that they were not able to complete due to the number of classroom responsibilities. However, the interviews also revealed that all participants had some level of demotivating feelings towards completion. Demotivation to complete professional development happened when participants were required to participate or if the professional development was not deemed valuable.

Several participants shared that the time of year that professional development was offered could be demotivating to completion. A couple of participants felt demotivated to participate in professional development at the beginning of the year. Whereas other participants stated that they felt demotivated at the end of the year. Nevertheless, participants stated they would still complete professional development even though they had demotivated feelings but in other instances participants may choose not to participate in voluntary professional development during certain times of the year.

The interviews additionally revealed that participants felt there were costs to participating in professional development and there were specific structures of professional development that positively and negatively affected their motivation. Among the costs were having to write substitute plans, missed time in the classroom, and finding daycare in order to attend. The participants shared they would willingly pay the opportunity costs if the professional development was valuable to them. However, they also stated they would grudgingly pay the cost if they had to attend a non-valued professional development opportunity, if it was mandatory.

The structure of professional development that affected motivation were presentation style, mode of delivery and time of year, but varied in degree from one participant to another. Most participants felt that interaction and time to discuss the topic with other participants were positively motivating. Face-to-face was the favored mode of delivery for nine of the ten participants with one preferring the flexibility of online access. The last structure discussed was time of year and it was revealed that there was no common answer. Participants' answers varied from year-round to almost never. However, each participant stated that the time of year did affect their motivation.

The conceptual framework provided a lens from which to understand the perceptions of the teachers about the value of and motivation to complete professional development. The study results could support the future direction for professional development at the study site by providing administrators recommendations on how the district of study could improve the completion rates of professional development to

improve classroom teaching. The conceptual framework grounds the study because it provides insight into how adults learn and what they need to learn, including motivation and effort (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Knowles et al., 2015).

Evidence of Quality

The quality indicators in research are dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, data saturation, reflexivity, and discrepant cases. For this study I demonstrated dependability by documenting the procedures I used to collect and analyze data in order to answer the research questions. Information was generated from 10 participants through semistructured interviews utilizing a basic qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). All participants were PK-5 teachers from the district of interest and were audio recorded using a mobile device. After the completion of each interview, the audio was transcribed twice using Otter.ai software (Liang & Fu, 2016) to ensure accuracy. Credibility is achieved when the data that is collected matches the data needed to answer the research questions (Burkholder et al., 2020). After the interviews were transcribed, they were sent to each participant for fact-checking. Any requested changes would have been recorded on the transcript which would be used for coding, but there were no corrections requested. As stated by Madill and Sullivan (2018) in Motulsky (2021), member fact-checking is a "gold standard" (p. 389) in qualitative studies to aid in credibility. Another part of evidence in a study of good quality is transferability.

Transferability in a qualitative study is demonstrated when enough description is supplied so that another researcher could make informed decisions about the application

of the findings (Burkholder et al., 2020). In this study, a researcher's journal was used to capture thoughts, feelings, and possible bias. The coding process was also documented, and participants were from multiple locations which could help diversify the sample. Ravitch and Carl (2021) stated that confirmability is when another researcher could follow the same procedures and arrive at similar conclusions. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), researchers who provide a complete accounting of the decisions made, "reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, emergence of the findings and information about the data management" (p. 122) achieve confirmability. For this study, I have documented my strategy for how I selected participants, utilized a self-created written protocol for the interviews, documented my data collection process, how I analyzed the data, and documented researcher bias with regards to the employment place, number of years employed, and lived experiences that would be similar to the participants.

Data saturation was met in this study with 10 participants using a self-developed interview protocol containing 15 questions with multiple probes (Appendix F). The interviews were semistructured and lasted no more than 60 minutes. Data saturation was met because the researcher determined that no new information was able to be collected (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Reflexivity is another standard of quality in research. For this study, I utilized interview memos, a researcher's journal, and followed the documented procedures. Reflexivity occurred throughout the study as I documented my thoughts and feelings, reflected on possible bias, and struggles. The discussion of discrepant cases is

also considered a quality of evidence indicator. Burkholder et al. (2020) stated that pieces of information that do not fit with the rest of the data are considered discrepant. In this study, I read the information multiple times and followed the coding process to determine if any of the participants' experiences did not align with the rest of the participants. I found no discrepant data within the group of 10 participants. To maintain evidence of quality in this study, I had to ensure I accurately expressed the reality of the participants' experiences. This is done through the criteria of dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability data saturation, reflexivity, and discrepant cases.

Conclusion

To explore the perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivated teachers to complete, a basic qualitative design was utilized. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling. Semistructured interviews were used to gather information regarding the perceptions of elementary teachers in a rural southeast school district and the results supplied clarity to the two research questions explored by this study.

The conceptual framework of this study informed the findings in that andragogy (Knowles, 1980) and expectancy value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) allowed for an understanding of how elementary teachers perceive professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete. The results of the interviews revealed that participants overwhelmingly desired to improve teaching and learning through valuable professional development, but what made a session valuable varied. The variability in the

value of professional development along with the structures of the professional development played a part in the participants' motivation to participate in and complete. Based on the findings from this paper, a position paper was prepared for district leadership. The project deliverable chosen could support the future direction for professional development at the study site. The recommendations could include suggestions on how the district of interest could improve the completion rates of professional development to improve classroom teaching and student outcomes.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete the professional development that is offered. A position paper was chosen as the project deliverable based on the information gathered through semistructured interviews (Appendix A). The goal of this project is to share the findings of the study with the district leadership, along with suggestions to improve teacher completion rates of professional development offered.

This section includes a rationale of why the project was chosen and how the problem will be addressed through the project. Additionally, a literature review based on the findings and the relation to the genre of the project is included. Likewise, the project description, an evaluation plan, and implications for the project are discussed.

Rationale

According to Bala et al. (2018), position papers combine new information "that may have implications for re-evaluation" (p. 1) of routine procedures and they can also reinforce best practices. Furthermore, Bigi (2020) stated that position papers focus on topics relevant to practice, by explaining or making suggestions in a way that non-experts can access. A position paper was chosen because it would be the best way to present current research, the study's findings, and the related recommendations based on the teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and

their motivation to complete. The problem examined through this study was that a school district in the rural southeast provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent.

Through semistructured interviews, it was revealed that participants of this study felt that they became better teachers through valuable professional development. Likewise, they expressed that the value of professional development could be found in the way it made them feel (e.g., excited or invigorated) or in how it changed their teaching practices (e.g., new strategies or enhanced skills or understanding). Conversely, when teachers did not have control or choice in their professional development, they felt it was less valuable and were demotivated to participate and complete it. Additionally, participants mentioned that the mode and time of year the professional development was offered played a part in their motivation to participate and complete. Furthermore, participants stated that the structure of the professional development along with their perception of the value of the professional development offered was integral to their motivation to participate and complete.

The purpose of this position paper is to provide the district of interest with information and suggestions on ways to positively affect the completion rates of professional development to improve classroom teaching based on the teachers' perceptions of the value of the professional development offered. In the position paper, I present the study's findings, an overview of current literature, and recommendations,

including resources, existing supports, potential solutions to barriers, and a proposal for implementation with a timeline.

Review of the Literature

For this doctoral project study, I explored teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete. The findings of the study resulted in a position paper. To present a scholarly review of the literature specific to the genre of the project and to present an analysis of how theory and research supported the content of the project, which included a discussion of the findings of Section 2, I searched Walden University's Library databases and supplemented the search for current peer reviewed literature using Google Scholar. The Walden databases used through EBSCO discovery service were EBSCO-host, ERIC, ProQuest Central, and Sage. The search terms I used were *professional development*, *demotivation professional development elementary*, *value of professional development*, *teacher motivation*, *continuous professional development*, and *teacher perceptions*. Only peer reviewed articles published within the last five years were chosen except for articles that provided information on theories or seminal works. The organization of the paper will reflect the review of current literature including the rational for the use of a position paper to address the problem and the themes presented in the study.

Position Paper Genre

A position paper, sometimes called a white paper, has been used in various industries for centuries and can be used for a broad number of purposes, including sales-

tools, manuals, a report to describe a complex service, or a service to a particular stakeholder group (Bala et al., 2018; Bigi, 2020). However, white papers generally do not include a literature section whereas position papers not only have a literature section they also include the background of the issues to ensure a better understanding of the position discussed (Malone & Wright, 2018). Likewise, according to Bala et al. (2018), position papers synthesize new information and research that could be important to the audience. Simply stated, position papers, as the name implies, serve to provide information and recommendations based on research around a position that may help solve a problem (Bala et al., 2018; Bigi, 2020; Malone & Wright, 2018).

Based on the characteristics of a position paper (synthesizing new information, the use of current research to make recommendations that could be important to the stakeholders and aid in future decision making), it is the best choice to convey the study's findings to increase the consistency of completion rates of professional development to improve classroom teaching (Bala et al., 2018; Bigi, 2020; Malone & Wright, 2018). According to Kron et al. (2020), position papers have been used in educational research for many years. To guide the development and organization of the project, criteria from Walden University's *EdD project study checklist – Qualitative* (Harris, n.d.a) and American Library Association's *Guidelines for Position Papers & Issue Briefs* (ALA, 2007) were used. The main sections of the position paper are (1) background including the problem statement, (2) research questions, (3) literature review, (4) methodology and data analysis, (5) summary of results, (6) recommendations, (7) project evaluation

including resources and existing supports (8) timetable recommendations including potential solutions to barriers, (9) conclusion, and (10) references.

Interconnected Analysis

The problem for this study was that a school district in the rural southeast provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. The literature reviewed showed a need to better understand teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to participate in and complete professional development. (Agboola, 2022; Mouza et al., 2022; Sancar et al., 2021; West et al., 2021). Participants in this study revealed that they desired to improve learning through valuable professional development, but what made the professional development valuable varied. The variability in the value of professional development along with the structures of the professional development played a part in the participants' motivation or demotivation to participate in and complete.

The conceptual framework was based on Knowles' (1980) work in andragogy and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work with expectancy value grounded the study and provided a better understanding of the teachers' perceptions about the value and motivations for participating in and completion of professional development. According to Smith and Robinson (2020), teachers are more motivated to learn about topics that are of interest and in which they have decided will have value to them or their students. Likewise, teachers desire to control or have a collaborative role in the planning of

professional development (Smith & Robinson, 2020; West et al., 2021). The conceptual framework is supported by the data and found in current literature (Blanton et al., 2020; Casanova et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2018; Kizilcec et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2019; Muñoz & Valenzuela, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

Both Knowles' (1980) work in andragogy and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work with expectancy value provided insight into how adults learn, and structures needed to support their learning, including motivation. The theories have been extensively used in the field of education and professional development (Casanova et al., 2023; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Kizilcec et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2019; Muñoz & Valenzuela, 2020; Parsons et al., 2019; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Smith & Robinson, 2020; West et al., 2022). This study looked to explore teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete. As adult learners their reasons for and motivation to participate in professional development must be met in order to create the instructional changes and increased student outcomes that are desired.

Educators are agents of change and as such they need to have professional development experiences that will allow them to be co-constructors of knowledge and supplied with the pedagogical knowledge, practical skills and materials, and time for reflection (Casanova et al., 2023). Participants in this study continually spoke of the need for professional development to supply them with the background, information, and

materials so they could utilize the learned information in their classrooms. Likewise, participants stated that they desired time to try out the learned material and then have time to discuss their discoveries with other teachers. Agboola (2022) postulated that teachers who had their learning needs met through autonomy of choice were more apt to create lasting change in their instructional practices. However, more times than not, teachers are mandated or told what opportunities they would participate in which is a demotivator (Agboola, 2022). According to Richter et al. (2019), teacher motivation is a key factor in the decision to participate and complete professional development. Moreover, Martin et al. (2019) stated that when andragogical principles were used in planning and delivering professional development teachers were more likely to have buy-in and go beyond surface level learning.

Value of Professional Development

One of the themes that emerged in this study was the value of professional development. According to Hwang et al. (2018) there is a need to study teachers' value of the professional development offered since teachers' willingness to attend programs vary. The data revealed that all participants valued relevant professional development that provided resources to take back to the classroom and use immediately. Additionally, teachers desired time to try out the resources to see how well the implemented activities worked with their students. Once teachers had time to use the resources and learned material, they wanted to have a way to collaborate and discuss the results (e.g., what went well what did not go well, or to hear other's experiences). Likewise, participants in the

study valued professional development that was relevant and desired the ability to have control over their learning.

      Resources from Professional Development. Participants felt that professional development was integral to teaching and learning, which could lead to improved outcomes. Likewise, participants desired materials or resources to implement what was learned in the professional development. According to de Groot-Reuvekamp et al. (2018), in a study focusing on successful professional development and student outcomes, "the highest student learning gains were reached by teachers who successfully implemented the instructional behavior aimed at, while using educative curriculum materials" (p. 290). However, the results of this study indicated that teachers rarely received the materials needed to implement the learning within their classrooms. The lack of corresponding materials was reported to be a barrier to implementation and therefore the desired student outcomes would not be achieved (Granger et al., 2019; Haug & Mork, 2021).

      The Use of Collaboration and Feedback. In addition to materials or resources to implement what was learned, several participants in the study felt there was also no feedback loop to provide facilitators with the information to possibly improve future learning opportunities or to collaborate on the implementation of professional development. Agboola (2022) recommended that school leaders should encourage teachers to form teams that have similar goals for learning to foster feedback, collaboration, and co-creation of knowledge. Likewise, school leadership should include teachers in the planning of professional learning opportunities (Agboola, 2022; Kilag &

Sasan, 2023). One recommendation to help with feedback and sustain instructional practices in the classroom was the use of coaches and modeling instructional practices during professional development (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Haug & Mork, 2021; Özdemir, 2019). Cilliers et al. (2022) posited that the use of coaches provided the needed support and feedback to sustain the learned material and instructional practices better than without the use of coaches. The use of coaches was also found to improve student achievement over traditional forms of professional development (Cilliers et al., 2022; Kraft et al., 2018). However, professional learning is a multifaceted component of teaching and is not unidirectional. The ability to engage in learning with others, and incorporate self-reflective practices, whether in a physical space or virtual, is essential (Martin et al., 2019; Trust & Prestridge, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

Relevance and Control. Ivanova et al. (2022) stated that teachers will "actively research their own practice in reference to planning, pacing, differentiated instruction and classroom management, and enter into ongoing dialogues with other practitioners on how to improve" (p. 481) knowledge and skills. The participants in this study conveyed that they would search for information related to an immediate need and were disheartened when they had to attend professional development that did not pertain to a classroom, student, or personal need. Blanton et al. (2020) recommended that professional development include adult learning principles and be "supportive, job-embedded, instructionally focused, collaborative, and ongoing" (p. 1016). These considerations

would make the professional development more relevant and useful and could result in increased interest in participation and completion (Agboola, 2022; Casanova et al., 2023).

Another aspect revealed regarding the value of professional development was the participants' desire for choice or control over their professional development in order to ensure the usefulness to their immediate needs. The acquisition of knowledge and skills to apply in the classroom to improve student outcomes is the goal of professional development (Richter et al., 2019; Sancar et al., 2021). However, the data from the study showed that many times teachers have no or very limited choice in their professional development. If teachers do not value and therefore do not use or half-heartedly implement what is imparted during professional development, student outcomes will not be reached (Haug & Mork, 2021; Liu & Phelps, 2020). Teachers in the study found the most valuable professional development was when they could control their learning choices because that ensured the relevancy and the sustained use of the material learned.

Completed Professional Development

In section two, the second theme that emerged in this study was completed professional development. Completion rates in the district of interest have been inconsistent for unknown reasons, which is very concerning to the administration. This study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to complete the training. According to VDOE (2023), one goal in the state technology plan is to improve professional development with technology. One of the indicators of accomplishment is that districts will account for not

only the number of professional development opportunities offered but also the number of completers. All participants had experienced positive feelings related to completing valuable professional development at some point, but two participants did have experiences with non-completion. The data revealed that the non-completion evoked feelings of frustration and regret in those participants. West et al. (2022) asserted that in a post-pandemic era where the needs of teachers and student shift rapidly, professional development organizers need to better understand teachers' individual goals whereby offering flexible and personalized (relevant) professional learning opportunities.

Relevance and Motivation. Another outcome in the study effecting professional development was relevance and motivation. When educators' learning needs are met, they will feel empowered and motivated to participate in and complete professional development (Agboola, 2022; Casanova et al., 2023). The data revealed that all participants were more motivated to attend and complete professional development if it was relevant to their immediate needs and provided resources to use in the classroom. However, according to the data collected, demotivation played a part in teachers' participation and desire to complete professional development. Teachers stated that mandatory or non-relevant professional development were demotivating factors. Studies have shown negative effects on teachers' future intention to participate when they are mandated or given little choice to attend professional development (Agboola, 2022; Hwang et al., 2018; Kizilcec et al., 2022).

The data gathered in this study showed that teachers felt mandatory or non-relevant professional development was a waste of their time. Participants stated that with all the classroom responsibilities the time away was an opportunity cost they did not want to pay. This was also the case in instances where a monetary incentive was present. Whereas, if the instructional leaders would ask, participants stated they would share what their professional learning needs were and gladly pay the cost of attending and completing. Sancar et al. (2021) postulated that even though teacher professional development processes provide strong learning opportunities for some contexts, they may not work across all contexts. Therefore, instructional leaders should evaluate the teachers' and students' needs along with their perceptions of workplace conditions to better garner teachers' interpretations of what would be immediately valuable (Casanova et al., 2023; Yurkofsky et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021).

Structures and Motivation. Professional development session outcomes that are underwhelming can be attributed to the structure, implementation, or presentation (Sancar et al., 2021; West et al., 2022). The results of this study revealed that there were structures of professional development that affected participants' motivation. The structures of presentation style, mode of delivery, and time of year were reported as having motivational implications for attending and completing professional development. However, the degree to which each structure affected participants varied.

Participants in the study desired interaction to some degree in the presentation style when attending professional development. Examples participants gave for the

interaction were time to discuss the topic, a hands-on activity, or some time to try out the material. Another structure that affected participants' motivation was the delivery mode. Professional development, regardless of the mode, can produce the desired learning outcomes as long as it meets the needs of the participants (Bragg et al., 2021; Yoon & Kim, 2022). Most participants felt that having the ability to discuss the learning topics in a face-to-face environment was positively motivating. There was one participant who favored an online environment due to the flexibility that virtual professional development afforded them. Teachers who voluntarily participated in online professional development found it more valuable than those that did not (Parsons et al., 2019; Powell & Bodur, 2019; Yurkofsky et al., 2019).

As for the time of year, the data revealed that participants' wide-ranging motivation was from almost any time of the year to almost never. However, each participant stated that the time of year did affect their motivation, it just varied according to their unique circumstances. The district of interest, according to participants, provides learning opportunities at various times throughout the school year including the summer in addition to self-paced professional development. According to Liu and Phelps (2020) professional development offered over the summer demonstrated more learning loss than at other times of the year. This was found due to the gap in time from acquiring the knowledge/skill to the time of use in the classroom. However, if summer professional development is combined with other professional development processes, such as being instructionally focused, job embedded, collaborative, tailored to teacher need, and

ongoing, then it is likely to lead to sustained teaching practices (Blanton et al., 2020;

Mouza et al., 2022; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Smith & Robinson, 2020).

Project Description

A position paper was composed as part of the project study (see Appendix A) and

will be presented to the district of interest's leadership. The aim of the position paper is to

supply the district with the study's findings, an overview of current literature, and

suggestions including resources, existing supports, and potential solutions to barriers. The

position paper could support future professional development at the study site by

providing suggestions on how the district could improve the completion rates of

professional development to improve classroom teaching based on the teachers'

perceptions of the value of the professional development offered.

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

The resources needed for the position paper are minimal. The position paper was

created utilizing a computer with access to a word processor. For dissemination of the

position paper, an email client connected to the internet, or a printer would be used.

Likewise, a meeting with the district leadership would be needed to present the findings

and position paper. The meeting could be held face-to-face or using a video conferencing

client. All resources needed to present and disseminate the position paper are available at

the study site. I have maintained a professional rapport with the leadership and do not

anticipate any issues with the dissemination process or acquiring a meeting time and

space with the district leadership.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions

The suggestions in the position paper come from the analysis of the results of the interviews conducted with teachers within the district of interest and current literature. I do foresee a few barriers to presenting the position paper to the leadership. One barrier would be the time of year to present the paper which would coincide with their preparations to start up the new school year. A potential solution to the time of year is to schedule the meeting slightly later and offer to meet face-to-face or by videoconference. Other possible barriers could be a result of implementing some of the suggestions in the deliverable. Leadership may decide to adjust some of the duties of the current coaches to incorporate on going feedback in some content areas. While this would not necessarily be a financial barrier since the staff are already in place, it would result in a change of processes, possible changes in job descriptions and facilitate the need for a school board presentation. Change, no matter how small, can affect stakeholders differently and some may be resistant to the suggested changes in the position paper. According to Wise et al. (2020) organizations have complex structures and changes can have a ripple effect through an organization. Nevertheless, organizational leaders have the capacity to "direct the vision and mission of their organizations, the authority to control organizational functions at every level, and [have] the capacity to inspire systemic culture change" (Wise et al., 2020, p. 345).

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

A position paper is the best way to convey the study's findings because of a position paper's characteristics of synthesizing new information, the use of current research to make suggestions that could be important to the stakeholders and can aid in future decision making (Bala et al., 2018; Bigi, 2020; Malone & Wright, 2018). The suggestions in the position paper were based on current literature and the findings of this study. The goal of this project is to share the findings of the study with leadership along with four suggestions for improving teacher completion rates of professional development offered. The suggestions are elements to incorporate into the school districts' current professional development processes and plan.

Proposal Recommendations

The suggestions for the proposal are to provide more control over and/or choice of the professional development the teachers participate in; provide relevant professional development based on teachers' stated needs; supply materials or resources to teachers to use to implement the learning; and provide collaborative opportunities and ongoing feedback to discuss classroom implementation of professional development.

Control and Choice. Since adults have a variety of life experiences and are self-directed learners, allowing them control and choice in their professional learning is essential. Therefore, it is recommended to engage teachers in the planning of their professional development to allow them more control over what they learn. Likewise, to create professional development that is delivered in multiple ways (e.g., job-embedded,

before and after contract hours, during planning, ongoing throughout the year,

synchronous, asynchronous and blended) will enable them more choice. Additional ways

to allow for choice in professional development is to diversify the way teachers interact

within the learning opportunities (e.g., lunch and learn, edcamp, BINGO or tick-tac-toe,

webinars, podcasts, book study, or instructional coaching). This should empower teachers

to have more choice in the way they learn the material.

Relevance Based on Need. The study also revealed that teachers have increased

motivation to attend and complete professional development if it was relevant to their

immediate needs. Consequently, the second recommendation is that teachers should be

given the opportunity to assess professional development sessions to evaluate if the

sessions and learning goals were met and to be able to provide feedback to the facilitators

regarding session outcomes and future needs. The assessment information would provide

the leadership with an understanding of what professional development to offer or what

strategies would best target the teachers' learning needs.

Teachers understand there are times that they will participate in mandatory

professional development. In these cases, it is recommended that the leadership team

provides as much notice as possible for teachers to complete the professional

development. It is also recommended that teachers are given additional time during

contract hours to complete professional development.

Resources to Implement. Not only do teachers have increased motivation to

attend and complete professional development if it was relevant, but also if resources to

use in the classroom are provided. Accordingly, it is recommended that when

professional development is provided there are ready-made materials or resources that

can be used to immediately implement the learned material. For example, if the

professional development is on a math strategy using a type of manipulative, then the

manipulative needs to be provided to the teachers. This would allow the teachers to have

the materials on hand for classroom implantation. If the manipulatives are already stored

somewhere in the classroom, then time needs to be provided so the teachers can locate

and organize the materials to have them ready for the lesson with the students. Another

example would be if the professional development was a reading strategy and no physical

materials were needed, then it is suggested to supply the teacher with time to practice the

strategy with others while in the learning session. Likewise, the facilitator should supply

the teacher with hard-copy or online resources so they can refer back to the learning

material when needed.

Collaboration and Feedback. Professional development in isolation will not

provide lasting change (Parsons et al., 2019; Power & Goodnough, 2019). It is therefore

recommended that a feedback system be put in place. To be effective the system needs to

contain constructive, timely, and specific feedback. It is suggested that teachers can

provide feedback (by digital survey) to the facilitators to improve or to add future

learning opportunities (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Pharis et al., 2019). Likewise, it is

suggested that leadership find ways to allow teachers to form collaborative groups that

have similar learning goals to foster feedback, collaboration, and co-creation of

knowledge (Agboola, 2022). The use of coaches to support the feedback loop would also be advised. Lastly, supply teachers with continued collaboration and feedback throughout the year.

Timetable – Suggested Implementation

Since the school year 2022-2023 has ended and there would not be enough time to implement the changes before the start of the upcoming school year, the proposed implementation is the start of the 2024-2025 school year. The recommended timetable starts with the presentation of the position paper to leadership by the end of December 2023 and ends with full implementation by the start of the 2024-2025 school year (see Table 5). This should give the instructional leaders time to read, synthesize, and integrate the recommendations into the professional development process and plan. The implementation timeline would also allow for the school division to bring together a group of stakeholders to discuss the changes and modify any of the suggestions to best meet the needs of the teachers. Sancar et al. (2021) posited that "adopting and maintaining a development process responsive to teachers' process-related characteristics is critical" (p.8) and that continual review is essential since professional development processes have interconnected parts.

Table 5

Project Implementation Timetable

Time Approximations	Task
1 month (December 23)	Present the position paper to leadership
1 month (January 23)	Plan for resources needed
1 month (February 24)	Solicit volunteers from each stakeholder group for review committee
1 month (March 24)	Plan for meetings needed for review committee to meet throughout
2 months (May 24)	To write the changes to processes/policies/training
1 month (June 24)	Changes to policies to school board for approval
1-2 months (July/August 24)	Present to teachers for implementation in the fall of 24-25 school year

Roles and Responsibilities

My role would be to present the information and recommendations in the position paper and then make myself available for any future questions that may arise. The district leadership would be responsible for the integration and implementation of the suggestions found in the position paper and any presentation of changes to the school board. Additionally, leadership may change the duties of the current coaches to incorporate ongoing feedback. Likewise, leadership would notify teachers of any changes

to the processes and procedures of the professional development activities offered.

Teachers would be responsible for carrying out any of the changes to the processes and

procedures for participating and completing professional development. The intended role

for students in the district would not change. Students would still be responsible for

giving their best effort by engaging in instruction and seeking support from teachers

when needed. However, students may benefit from the professional development

recommendations through the change in classroom instructional practices.

Project Evaluation Plan

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers'

perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what

motivated them to complete the professional development offered. There are several

types of evaluations that could be used, such as goal-based, outcome-based, summative,

and formative. Goal-based evaluations examine larger previously stated program goals or

if objectives have been achieved (van Ruler, 2021). Outcome-based evaluations are

usually based on preset goals, and measure if the goals (e.g., skill, knowledge, attitude)

are having the desired effect on participants (The New York State Library, 2019; van

Ruler, 2021). Two other types of evaluations are summative and formative. These two

types of assessments usually contrasted and measure or examine different things, but both

produce inferences about learning (Leenknecht et al., 2021; Lyon et al., 2019). However,

summative evaluations gather information at the end of the program or instruction

(Andersson & Palm, 2018; Dolin et al., 2018; Leenknecht et al., 2021). Consequently, a formative evaluation was chosen as the evaluation tool for the project.

Formative Evaluation and Justification

A formative evaluation was chosen for this project because a formative evaluation gathers ongoing feedback in real-time (Andersson & Palm, 2018; Dolin et al., 2018; Leenknecht et al., 2021). Additionally, formative evaluations help strengthen or improve program outcomes with collected evidence that can be used to adjust teaching and learning activities (Lyon et al., 2019; Schildkamp et al., 2020). A formative evaluation is usually used at the onset of a program but can be used in conjunction with other evaluation types throughout the program (Lyon et al., 2019).

Although all the evaluation methods in some way could be utilized for the project study, a formative evaluation was determined to be the best choice due to its ongoing feedback and the ability to use the feedback to change or guide the professional development throughout the school year. Formative evaluations are about how the evidence is used to influence planning and facilitating professional development to best meet the teachers' and students' needs (Lyon et al., 2019).

Project Evaluation Goals

The aim of an evaluation is to determine if the goals set need adjustments, are on target to be met, or have been met (CDC, 2019). The goals of the formative evaluation are to monitor progress and give ongoing feedback to improve learning. With the goals of monitoring progress and giving ongoing feedback to improve learning, I would

recommend the use of digital surveys, check-in meetings with the coaches, and observations as evaluation tools. Likewise, the use of any database that may be in use to track attendance of professional development activities would be recommended. Digital surveys are a reliable way to collect information and reduce manual errors (Burkholder et al., 2020). Facilitators would provide time at the end of each professional development activity so that teachers could provide feedback on the session. The purpose of providing a digital survey at the end of each professional development session would be to gauge if the objectives of the session are met, to garner participants' perceptions of the session, and to gauge if the teacher's learning objectives were met. The survey would be a combination of a Likert scale and open-ended response questions. Survey data would be made available to school leadership and the content coaches so targeted feedback, support, and additional or improved professional development sessions could be created.

An additional evaluation tool would be coach meetings. It is recommended that leadership meet with coaches as a check-in to see how the project implementation is going. Check-in meetings could be scheduled in bi-monthly intervals after the initial implementation. Teachers in the position of coaches (non-classroom but licensed educators) would have a different perspective on implementation than classroom teachers or administrators. The coach check-in would facilitate the sharing of information on an ongoing basis. Likewise, check-ins would allow administrators to stay up to date on how professional development is being implemented or if there are needs still not being met.

A third formative evaluation tool would be the use of observations. Informal observations by coaches and leadership are an evaluative tool that can be used to provide feedback to the teacher and gauge if the correct implementation of the learned material is happening or to provide suggestions for improvement. Observations can be completed bi-monthly after the start of the implementation. These meetings could be held the opposing months of the coach check-in meetings. Observations allow the observer to see first-hand what is happening in classrooms instead of relying on what others say. It is also another way for teachers to give and receive feedback. Another evaluative tool is any database used to track participation and completion throughout the year. Reports are easily generated and can provide the leadership team with another data point to examine if professional development and its implementation are successful or where there may be a need for improvement.

The combination of the various formative evaluations will allow leadership to gain better insight, through multiple perspectives, into how teachers are learning from and experiencing the professional development offered. With this knowledge, leadership will be better able to create professional development activities that teachers value and desire to complete, consequently impacting classroom teaching.

Project Stakeholders

For the proposed project there are several stakeholder groups that may benefit from the recommendations and the information gathered from the evaluation goals. The stakeholder groups are district leadership, coaches, teachers, and students. The following

discusses the potential benefits to each group of the recommendations and evaluation goals.

District Leadership

District leadership is comprised of a superintendent and the district and school-based administrators. Along with the recommended elements to incorporate into the professional development plan, the evaluation goals may allow leadership to have a better understanding of the teachers' needs and how to improve learning for teachers and students. Likewise, the information collected through the evaluation goals could support leadership in identifying specific ways to improve the delivery and value of professional development which teachers will participate in and complete. Since the district leaders are fiscally responsible for budgetary items, including professional development (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), the proposed recommendations could be useful in properly allocating human and capital resources when planning for teacher professional development. Additionally, leadership could also potentially benefit from the recommendations in the position paper because providing teachers with professional development that is valuable could increase teacher job satisfaction and retention, and it may improve student outcomes.

Coaches

The coaches in the district are composed of licensed teachers who specialize in content coaching at the elementary level. There are two staff members for each of the three out of four main content areas (math, reading and STEM-science). The coaches

could benefit from the position paper recommendations because they would have direct access to the information gathered through the evaluations which would allow them to provide professional development targeted to teachers' specific needs. Moreover, the recommendation for feedback would allow coaches to foster better relationships with the teachers which could better facilitate giving constructive feedback.

Teachers

There are approximately 147 elementary teachers who potentially could benefit from the position paper suggestions. The project's recommendations were the results derived from this study which came from interviews with some teachers. This stakeholder group could benefit by having the ability to attend valuable professional development based on the recommendations of this paper. Moreover, teachers could benefit from the recommendation to incorporate a feedback loop. The feedback could allow them greater control and choice in their professional learning. Likewise, the teachers' collective voices could be heard through the use of feedback which in the end could provide them with enhanced skills and knowledge to improve classroom practices and student outcomes.

Students

There are approximately 1,894 students in this stakeholder group. If the recommendations are implemented, the students could benefit from the recommendations by being afforded the chance to participate in the changes to instructional practices. As the teachers incorporate improved skills and knowledge, the students are then potentially

able to increase their understanding of the content and its connection to the real world whereby potentially increasing their learning outcomes.

Project Implications

Social Change Implications

In this sub-section I will discuss the implications for social change at both the local and national level. Walden University's (n.d.) website stated that social change did not "have to be so academic, particularly since social change, in practice, involves real people working to improve the lives of others. In fact, "people working to improve the lives of others" is a fine definition of social change" (para 2). In this project study, I explored teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivations to complete. This study could create a pathway for social change through the school administrators, coaches, teachers, and students by instituting the recommendations in the position paper regarding professional development which could result in changes or enhancements in practice leading to increased student outcomes.

Local Stakeholders

The implementation of the recommendations to professional development content and structure may have impactful social change implications for multiple local stakeholders, including district leadership, coaches, teachers, and students. Positive social change may result when the district's leaders have a better understanding of teachers' motivations as related to professional development, which will support and maintain the

highest quality of instruction and services for students. Additionally, positive social change may result when coaches have access to data collected from the teachers regarding the types of topics the teachers would value in professional development since the coaches would then be able to identify specific ways to improve the delivery and value of professional development. Likewise, the coaches' use of the feedback throughout the year could positively affect teachers' skills and knowledge past the immediate professional development session. With the coaches' support in the professional development process, they play a direct role of enhancing the teacher's skills and knowledge which can improve the quality of the student learning.

The implementation of the recommended revisions to professional development content and structure may also have social change implications for teachers. As teachers acquire or enhance their skills during professional development, they make changes to their teaching and potentially improve student outcomes. Future social change may result because, as adult learners, teachers' experiences help to shape future actions, which may improve both completion of professional development and student outcomes. Likewise, teachers may have a better understanding of what motivates them to complete professional development through reflective practices. Possible future social change for students would come through the teachers' increased skills and knowledge and the changes to instruction. As students are exposed to improved teaching practices, students may be able to connect what is being taught to their everyday life which might increase their educational outcomes.

National Stakeholders

The recommended revisions to professional development content and structure may have impactful social change implications outside of the local area. The study may support similar districts that are experiencing similar challenges. With a better understanding of teachers' perceptions and motivations, districts may be able to improve the consistency of professional development completion rates and improve classroom teaching and student outcomes which adds to a positive instructional environment and better prepares student to enter the global community. Another implication for future social change would be if other districts with similar problems used the methods of this study and conducted additional research in their own context to improve professional development. Moreover, the study furthers research around elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and the motivation to complete.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete the professional development that is offered. The participants were elementary teachers from a rural southeast school district. During the 10 semistructured interviews, teachers revealed that the value of professional development was found in the immediate need and use of the learned material and their control over the learning. Additionally, participants felt different levels of motivation and demotivation to participate in and complete professional development offered. Moreover, there were structures of professional development that also played a part in their motivation and demotivation to participate in and complete.

From the results of this study, a position paper was chosen as the project deliverable. A position paper could provide the district of interest with suggestions on ways they might positively affect the completion rates of professional development to improve classroom teaching based on the teachers' perceptions of the value of the professional development offered. Specifically, the position paper recommends that professional development be revised to add participant reflective feedback to learning opportunities, creating ongoing opportunities to collaborate about the learned material and its implementation, and incorporate more teacher choice and control over learning opportunities. Likewise, it is suggested that digital surveys, coach check-in meetings, leadership observations, and database records that track professional development

attendance and completion be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional

development plan.

This section presents the project's strengths and limitations, and recommendations

for alternative approaches. I will also present a reflection on what I learned about the

processes specific to the research and development of the project which will include a

reflective analysis about my learning/growth of self as a scholar, practitioner, and project

developer. Additionally, I will reflect on and discuss the importance of the work overall,

and what I learned. Lastly, I will describe the potential impact for positive social change

and implications for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The problem addressed through this study was that a rural southeast school

district provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom

instructional practices, but the completion rates are inconsistent. The project deliverable

recommended specific strategies for the district of interest that were derived from the

data collected from the participants. Understanding that all research has inherent

strengths and limitations, I realize the position paper presented is like that in that regard.

Strengths

The position paper has several strengths. One of the major strengths of the

position paper is that the recommendations were derived based on the analysis of

interviews with participants of the district of interest. Likewise, the position paper offers

recommendations that should produce the desired professional development outcomes for

leadership, coaches, teachers, and students. The position paper could also potentially impact consistent completion rates in the district. Professional development can produce the desired learning outcomes if it meets the needs of the participants (Bragg et al., 2021; Yoon & Kim, 2022). Additionally, the position paper could evolve with feedback from assessments. Furthermore, the position paper offers concrete recommendations, a timeline for implementation, including roles and responsibilities, and evaluation methods, which could be amended to best meet the stakeholders' needs as they change. Even though there are a number of strengths, the limitations must also be considered.

Limitations

Limitations are the weaknesses that could interfere with the interpretation of and application of the results (Burkholder et al., 2020). In the project, there are several potential limitations. The limitations could be the sample frame, the generalization of the position paper, the amount of time to implement, competing priorities, and the changes needed to implement the recommendations.

The position paper recommendations were based on the analysis of interviews with 10 out of approximately 147 teachers from the district of interest. All participants in the study taught at the elementary level (grades PK to five). Due to the low number of participants and the grade levels, the position paper may not be generalizable to other schools in the district or other grade bands. The timeline to implement may also be a limitation if recommendations do not align with the district's calendar and current instructional plans. Likewise, there may be conflicting priorities with initiatives that are

currently in progress. To better incorporate teacher choice and feedback, the project deliverable recommends changes to current professional development processes. The changes may not be met with full buy-in from all staff. Therefore, leadership should be cognizant of possible pushback and prepare some proactive measures. Considering the strengths and limitations of a project can aid in ensuring the project recommendations are implemented with the least amount of difficulty.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Alternate Approach

The problem addressed by this qualitative study was that a school district in the rural southeast provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. An alternative approach would have been to conduct a mixed methods study with an increased number of participants including PK-12 teachers in the district of interest. Using a mixed methods study would have allowed for the best components of both qualitative and quantitative studies to be used. The results could have provided insight into whether certain grade-bands, or years of experience, or content areas, had differing perspectives and experiences with professional development and their motivations for completion. The project deliverable for the alternate approach could be an evaluation report. According to EvalCommunity (2023), evaluation reports present conclusions of findings, and recommendations and could help "build capacity for monitoring and evaluating within organizations" (p. 2) by encouraging a culture of continuous learning.

Alternate Solution

An alternative definition and solution to the local problem could be to examine professional development through the human resources department. Different stakeholders in the district will have distinct perceptions and influences based on the part they play within the greater whole of the system (Ni et al., 2018). Human resources, for instance, might examine the problem by looking at hiring, on boarding, and sustaining high quality teachers through professional development. Werdhiastutie et al. (2020) posited that achievement interest and motivation had an impact on behavior, high performance, and sustainability. Likewise, the human resources department would have historical data they could examine to look for trends in participation and completion. For this type of study, a position paper may not be the best choice for a deliverable. An evaluation report with an outcome-based evaluation might be a better choice. An evaluation report could evaluate the current state of the problem and demonstrate areas of improvement that had not been previously recognized. Additionally, outcome-based evaluations are usually based on preset goals, and measure if the goals (e.g., skill, knowledge, attitude) are having the desired effect on participants (The New York State Library, 2019; van Ruler, 2021). Examining the problem from a human resources perspective could be an alternative solution to the problem.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Reflecting on my growth as a scholar, I would say my continual learning has always been important to me. I earned my undergraduate and graduate degrees at Marymount University. Since then, I have been enrolled in one program or another. I became a certified International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) educator. I attended James Madison University where I earned my K-12 administrative endorsement and a post graduate certificate in instructional design. Each of these experiences increased my knowledge, curiosity, and drew me closer to a doctorate program while helping me build some lasting collegiate relationships.

When I enrolled in the doctoral program at Walden, I understood this part of my educational journey would be the most challenging adventure to date. I was correct and incorrect at the same time. It has been challenging but it has also been very intellectually rewarding. Likewise, I have honed my research, communication, and scholar-practitioner skills. Through the doctoral research process, I have learned how to look at problems, ask questions, and formulate the research needed to present the information in a scholarly way to help inform social change.

Project Development and Evaluation

In developing the project study, I learned how to evaluate the best way to present the finding and recommendations to the stakeholders. After researching the different types of project deliverables, I chose a position paper as the best way to present the

background, findings of the study, supporting research, recommendations, and evaluation. For the position paper, I also created a timeline for implementation and wrote the role responsibilities of the different stakeholders. The process was enlightening and informative. Through each stage of the project, I had to purposely connect the outcomes of my research with supporting recent literature so the project would be grounded in theory. Overall, I found the creation of the evaluation goals the most challenging because there are many ways to evaluate. I wanted to be able to give practical ways to determine if the recommendations were working without placing additional burdens on the teachers. Another part of the project development that helped me become a better scholar-practitioner was the use of feedback from my chair through the iterative process. Overall, I feel I have a much deeper understanding of what research should contain to be considered a quality study and that is due to my time here at Walden.

Leadership and Change

Leadership is a process of social influence that moves others into action to achieve a common set of goals (Emeritus, 2022; Mugira, 2022). I firmly feel that my idea of leadership has evolved since I began my doctoral journey at Walden. Through the research, analyzing, writing, and collaboration with Walden educators and staff, I have learned by example that good leadership does not always come with a title and can be found at every level of an organization. I have become a better leader and recognize that if I see a problem, I now have the skills to create positive social change through being a confident scholar-practitioner. Completing my research and working through the creation

of the project deliverable, I recognize a leadership change in myself. I now actively listen more, and my collaboration skills have increased. Most importantly I now make sure I provide research when recommending a change within my organization.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The purpose of my study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete the professional development offered. I created a position paper with recommendations to incorporate into the current professional development process at the study site. The work was important because it could help the study site understand the problem of providing professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices. Likewise, the work is important for future social change. Social change may result because teachers' experiences help influence future actions, which may improve completion of professional development. Likewise, through reflective practices teachers may have a better understanding of what motivates them to complete professional development. As for students, social change may happen when they are exposed to enhanced teaching practices. The literature reviewed for the position paper showed a need to better understand teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivation to participate in and complete professional development. (Agboola, 2022; Mouza et al., 2022; Sancar et al., 2021; West et al., 2021). Therefore, my work in this area is also important to the greater body of research.

Through my analysis I created a position paper that included four

recommendations along with tools to evaluate the goals. As I reflect on the work

completed, I realize how research can be properly used to help solve a problem and

induce positive social change. My research study and the work on the project deliverable

has given me a new level of self-efficacy in my ability to enact positive social change. I

also now have a new respect for teachers as they continue to struggle under an

increasingly large number of responsibilities including professional development, while

also trying to manage their personal lives.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications

Positive social change may result from the project study, if the study site

implements the suggested recommendations to improve the value of the professional

development offered. Additionally, from the feedback collected by assessing the

evaluation goals, the study site could provide targeted learning opportunities that may

increase professional development completion. Moreover, with a better understanding of

teachers' motivations as related to professional development, leadership can support and

maintain the highest quality of instruction and services for students.

Application

I utilized andragogy (Knowles, 1980) and expectancy value theory (Eccles &

Wigfield, 2002) as a conceptual framework which allowed for an understanding of how

elementary teachers perceive professional development to improve teaching and their

motivation to complete. The recommendations in the position paper align with the theories and can be used to create additional professional development opportunities that teachers value.

Direction for Future Research

There is an increased amount of literature on teacher professional development, and when teachers participate in professional development it leads to improved teacher skills, enhanced teaching practices and student achievement (Boström & Palm, 2020; Garrett et al., 2021; Sprott, 2019). My study found congruence with Ebner and Gegenfurtner's (2019) study that found that professional development that is satisfying or valuable to teachers is more likely to be completed. The recommendations and evaluative measures in the position paper if implemented would support the study site in providing valuable learning opportunities for their teachers.

Based on the limited sample size and frame, future research could include increasing the number of participants and interviewing PK-12 teachers. Another area for potential research would be to use a mixed methods study instead of a qualitative study. Using a mixed methods study would allow for the collection of different types of statistical data along with the interview data. The results could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development and their motivations to complete by examining other factors within the district (e.g., grade-bands, years of experience, or content areas.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers'

perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what

motivates them to complete the professional development offered. I conducted a basic

qualitative study with semistructured interviews. The participants were elementary

teachers from a rural southeast school district. The study found that teachers valued

professional development that served an immediate need and supplied materials they

could use in their classrooms immediately. It was also found that teachers desired choice

and control over the learning. Moreover, there were structures of professional

development that also played a part in their motivation and demotivation to participate in

and complete. From the results of this study, I created a position paper as the project

deliverable. In the position paper I included recommendations, an implementation

timeline, roles and responsibilities, and formative evaluation methods.

I recommended in the position paper that participants have an opportunity for

reflective feedback after professional development. I also suggested the study site create

ongoing opportunities for collaborations about the learned material and its

implementation and incorporate more teacher choice and control over learning

opportunities to be incorporated into the current professional development process. To

evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development plan I recommended formative

evaluations in the form of digital surveys, coach check-in meetings, leadership

observations, and database records. If the study site incorporates the recommendations,

they will potentially improve the consistency of professional development completion rates, improve classroom teaching, and student outcomes, which better prepares students to enter the global community.

Through the research process I have gained a better understanding of teachers' perspectives of their professional development and how these activities impact their classroom practices. During the interviews participants spoke passionately about their experiences and shared their thoughts and feelings. I learned to be a better active listener in order to accurately capture their lived experiences. Likewise, I have learned the process of creating quality research and a project deliverable. Throughout the entire process, I utilized tools to reduce my personal bias. I was enlightened because there were areas where I did not think bias was present but by using the research journal did detect bias. Through the dissertation process, I feel I have become a better person, a better scholar-practitioner, and an agent of social change.

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Appendix A: The Project

Position Paper: Teacher Perceptions of the Value and Motivation to Complete

Professional Development

by

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Abstract

There needs to be more research on teachers as learners and what motivates them to participate in and complete professional development because professional development and its link to increased student outcomes. This district provided professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete the professional development that is offered. The conceptual framework contained both Knowles' work in andragogy and Eccles' work with expectancy value. The results indicated that professional development held value when the learning was tied to a classroom need, provided resources, and could be immediately implemented. Conversely, demotivation factors were found when participants did not value the professional development offered, or they were required to participate. The findings and recommendations were compiled into this position paper that offers recommendations to school leaders for improved professional development. Implementing recommendations in this position paper may impact completion rates of professional development, thereby resulting in improved teaching and student outcomes.

Background

Professional development and its link to improved student outcomes have been the topic of much research (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Fischer et al., 2018; McCray, 2018). Still, there needs to be more research on teachers as learners and what motivates them to participate in and complete professional development. This district provides professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates need to be more consistent. For this paper, I will outline the problem statement, research questions, conceptual framework, methodology and data analysis, a summary of the results, recommendations, and closing with references.

This district provides professional development to elementary teachers to improve classroom instructional practices, but the completion rates were inconsistent. In the 2021-2022 school year district's available data revealed that of the 134 teachers, 107 (79.85%) did not complete the two mandatory professional development sessions. There were 67 (50.00%) teachers who registered for at least one voluntary professional development session and may still need to complete the session. However, there were some teachers who did complete some amount of voluntary professional development (119 teachers, 88.81%) that same school year (Personal Communication Admin 04, March 2022). The gap in practice is that this district is providing professional development with inconsistent completion rates for unknown reasons. This qualitative study explored elementary

teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and what motivates them to complete.

Research Questions

To better understand teachers' perceptions and motivations, the overarching research questions for this study aimed to determine:

RQ1: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe the value of professional development offered to improve teaching?

RQ2: How do elementary teachers in a rural school district describe their motivation to complete the professional development that is offered?

Review of Literature

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework includes "one or more formal theories (in part or whole) as well as other concepts and empirical findings from the literature. It is used to show relationships among these ideas and how they relate to the research study" (Lemieux, n.d., p. 1). The conceptual framework used to support the project was based on Knowles' (1980) work in andragogy and Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work with expectancy value. Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy which focuses specifically on how and what motivates adults to learn and Eccles and Wigfield's expectancy value theory which focuses on components that support motivation, effort, and consequences. The conceptual framework is supported by the data and found in current literature (Blanton et al., 2020;

Casanova et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2018; Kizilcec et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2019; Muñoz & Valenzuela, 2020).

Professional Development Value

Osman and Warner (2020) stated that professional development was "Any program, activity, or training aimed at improving instructional practice regardless of the structure" (p. 1) or mode. The goal of professional development is the acquisition of knowledge and skills to apply in the classroom to improve student outcomes is (Richter et al., 2019; Sancar et al., 2021). Teachers as agents of change need to have professional development activities that will allow them to be co-constructors of knowledge and supplied with pedagogical knowledge, practical skills, and materials (Casanova et al., 2023). Likewise, the ability to engage in learning with others, and incorporate self-reflective practices, whether in a physical space or virtual, is essential (Martin et al., 2019; Trust & Prestridge, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). According to de Groot-Reuvekamp et al. (2018), in a study focusing on successful professional development and student outcomes, stated "the highest student learning gains were reached by teachers who successfully implemented the instructional behavior aimed at, while using educative curriculum materials" (p. 290). Moreover, Martin et al. (2019) stated that when andragogical principles were used in planning and delivering professional development teachers were more likely to have buy-in and go beyond surface level learning. Therefore, there is a need to study teachers' value of the professional development offered since teachers' willingness to attend programs varies. (Hwang et al., 2018).

Motivation and Completion

According to Richter et al. (2019), teacher motivation is a key factor in the decision to participate and complete professional development. When educators' learning needs are met, they will feel empowered and motivated to participate in and complete professional development (Agboola, 2022; Casanova et al., 2023). Conversely other studies have shown negative effects on teachers' future intention to participate when they are mandated or given little choice to attend professional development (Agboola, 2022; Hwang et al., 2018; Kizilcec et al., 2022). Blanton et al. (2020) recommended that professional development include adult learning principles and be "supportive, job-embedded, instructionally focused, collaborative, and ongoing" (p. 1016). These considerations would make the professional development more relevant and useful and could result in increased motivation to participate in and complete (Agboola, 2022; Casanova et al., 2023).

## Methodology and Data Analysis

A basic qualitative design was chosen as the method for this study. Qualitative research looks to understand participants' experiences and how the experiences shape their world view (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative studies help the researcher understand the world as another person experiences it. The invitation to participate was emailed to all PK-5 teachers, and the first 10 respondents were chosen to be interviewed.

The data generated by the participants was recorded during 60-minute, face-to-face semistructured interviews and was audiotaped using a mobile device to ensure

accuracy. Transcript software was used to convert the audio into a transcript for member checking and coding. Figure 1 shows the structural coding that was utilized, and two themes that were derived from the data.

Figure 1

Theme Generation Process

<div align="center">
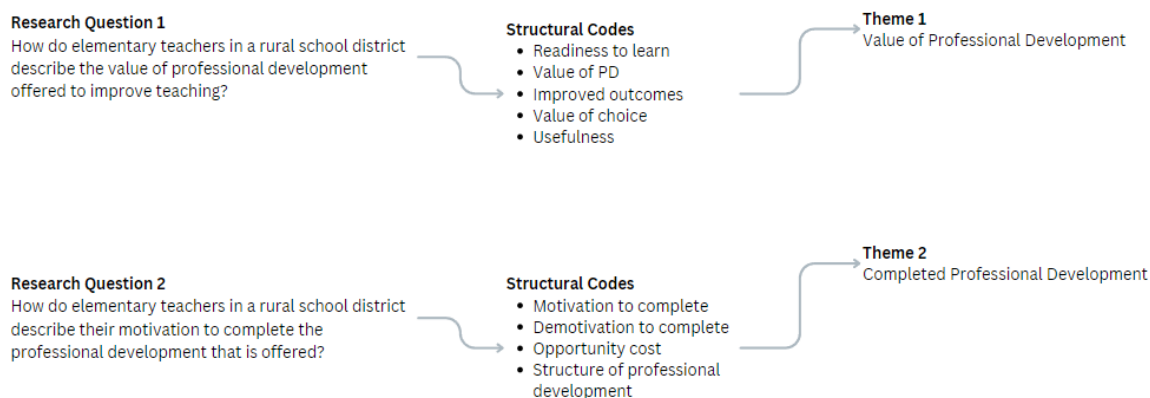
Summary of Results

</div>

Value of Professional Development

One theme that emerged was the value of professional development. Since teachers' willingness to attend professional development programs varies there is a need to study teachers' value of the professional development offered (Hwang et al., 2018). It was revealed that all teachers in the study valued relevant professional development that provided resources to take back to the classroom and use immediately. Participant 4741 explained,

for me PD is something where it relates to what I'm doing every day. I learn something that I can take back to my classroom and actually implement like, right

away or, you know, after several days of the PD, and I like when I come away

with resources.

Additionally, teachers wanted to collaborate and discuss the results of the

implementation. Teachers in the study also desired the ability to have control or choice in

their learning. Participant 1359 stated passionately,

[if there are so] many hours of the instructional year that someone has to provide

professional development, then teachers should be given choices so that they get

to choose the ones that they think are most relevant to what they're teaching...

something that they you know want to participate in… the problem that I see is if

it's not, then it's utilized time that quite frankly, we don't have.

Resources from Professional Development

The teachers felt that professional development was integral and could lead to

improved student outcomes. Knowing professional development can lead to improved

outcomes, the teachers wanted to take away from the professional development session

some materials or resources to implement what was learned. According to de Groot-

Reuvekamp et al. (2018), in a study focusing on successful professional development and

student outcomes, stated "the highest student learning gains were reached by teachers

who successfully implemented the instructional behavior aimed at, while using educative

curriculum materials" (p. 290). Participant 1359 stated that, "So if you want students to

get the value of that professional development, then they need to provide very clear

instruction for teachers to use but also those resources are crucial." A barrier to

implementation is the lack of corresponding materials and therefore the desired student

outcomes would not be achieved (Granger et al., 2019; Haug & Mork, 2021).

The Use of Collaboration and Feedback

The use of collaboration and feedback was revealed as another important

component of professional development. Participant 2968 stated, "[give us] chunks of

information at a time, the opportunity to try it out back in the classroom, and then you

come back and talk about it [is the best]." Likewise, Participant 4741 stated,

> not everybody is going to be able to just figure that out on their own. There needs
>
> to be discussions afterwards. I think of not just discussions between the teachers,
>
> but I feel like discussions back to whoever led the PD because maybe it didn't
>
> work out so well. And we want to provide that feedback back to that person. So
>
> that whoever it was that led the PD can maybe make it better [or] not [make it]
>
> better but [they can take a] different look at it.

Agboola (2022) recommended that school leaders should encourage teachers to form

teams that have similar goals for learning to foster feedback, collaboration, and co-

creation of knowledge.

Relevance and Control

The teachers who participated in the study revealed that they desire relevance and

control or choice in their professional development. The teachers stated that they would

seek out information voluntarily but were discouraged when they had to attend

professional development that did not pertain to a classroom, student, or personal need.

Participant 2057 stated that professional development is relevant,

> if it's something that is so applicable to what I'm doing in my classroom,
> something that I think my students will also be able to do, to easily learn how to
> do or, you know, like new applications and programs, or to enhance the
> instruction that's already happening.

Additionally Participant 5487 shared,

> but even if we're paid to do [voluntary] professional development, if I don't see an
> applicable reason for it in my classroom, I tend not to do it. I [only] do the
> mandatory stuff… "however if I see there's value in it, it doesn't matter whether
> I'm paid for it or not. I'm gonna do it.

The desire for choice or control over their professional development to ensure the usefulness to their immediate needs was another aspect participants found valuable. The data showed that many times teachers have no or very limited choice in their professional development. If teachers do not value and therefore do not use or half-heartedly implement what is imparted during professional development, then student outcomes will not be reached (Haug & Mork, 2021; Liu & Phelps, 2020). Participant 5487 said teachers "have to be more in control of it." Participant 5487 went on to provide an example and stated, "last year being the first one really, we were directed, to come up with our own ideas and provide our own professional development, so we did... [and] it was very on-point for all of us." West et al. (2022) asserted that in a post-pandemic era where the

needs of teachers and student shift rapidly, professional development organizers need to better understand teachers' individual goals whereby offering flexible and personalized (relevant) professional learning opportunities.

Completed Professional Development

The second theme that arose was completed professional development. All teachers shared positive feelings regarding completing valuable professional development, but two participants have experienced non-completion. The data revealed that feelings of frustration and regret accompanied non-completion. As for mandatory professional development, each teacher spoke negatively about having to attend. Studies have shown negative effects on teachers' future intention to participate when they are mandated or given little choice to attend professional development (Agboola, 2022; Hwang et al., 2018; Kizilcec et al., 2022).

Relevance and Motivation

The relevance of the professional development activity held motivating and demotivating factors. Participants had increased motivation to attend and complete professional development if it was relevant to their needs and provided materials or resources to use in the classroom. According to Agboola (2022) and Casanova et al. (2023) teachers will feel empowered and motivated to participate in and complete professional development when their learning needs are met. Demotivation played a large part in teachers' participation and desire to complete professional development that was mandatory. Participant 3002 shared,

> I feel like some professional development is to check a box to say that I have it…
> I feel like it is a waste of my time. It's not content specific. It's not related to what
> I'm doing at the moment.

Casanova et al. (2023), Yurkofsky et al. (2019), and Zhang et al. (2021) postulated that to better garner teachers' interpretations of what would be immediately valuable, instructional leaders should evaluate the teachers' and students' needs along with their perceptions of workplace conditions.

The data also revealed that professional development took time away from other classroom responsibilities and they did not want to pay the opportunity cost, even if a monetary incentive was offered, unless the professional development was valuable (i.e., targeted, or immediately useful). However, participants stated if they could share what their professional learning needs were, they would gladly pay the opportunity cost of attending and completing.

Structures and Motivation

It was found that structures of professional development also affected participants' motivation. Sancar et al. (2021) and West et al. (2022) posited that underwhelming professional development outcomes can be attributed to the structure, implementation, or presentation. Each structure (presentation style, mode of delivery, and time of year) to different degrees affected participants motivational implications for attending and completing professional development. For example, for presentation style, participants liked interaction, time to discuss the topic, hands on activities, and time to try

out the materials. Participant 1465 shared that facilitators of professional development should, "adapt a PD to address different modalities of learning… having that hands-on experience is so valuable to a lot of people… being able to play with it before the pressures on to really do it." According to Haug and Mork (2021), utilizing differing learning styles during a professional deployment session increases the likelihood of a teacher using the strategies in their classroom.

Another structure of professional development that affected participants' motivation was mode of delivery. All participants have previously had online learning opportunities but all but one stated they still preferred a face-to-face environment for professional development. Participant 2774 shared, "I've done PD in every platform, and I think it depends upon the material… each has a place. I personally, as I've said, prefer in-person just because I like to hear it, see it, and touch it." The structure time of year, as described by participants, varied from almost all year around to almost never. When asked if there were certain times of the year professional development should not be offered, Participant 2968 stated, "no because you never know what people's schedules and opportunities are." Conversely, Participant 4741 shared the times of the year they were not motivated to participate in and complete professional development,

> "So for me it would be teacher work week, around the holidays, and that period of
> time from like middle-end of March on to end of the year is really difficult which,
> I guess, doesn't leave a whole lot of time for PD."

Time of year was the only structure where the variability in the data was due to each participants' unique circumstances.

<div style="text-align:center">**Proposal Recommendations**</div>

The recommendations were derived from the results from the study and current literature and may be useful in creating learning opportunities that will increase participation and completion in professional development. The recommendations are elements that make integration into the district's current professional development plan and processes as smooth as possible. Likewise, the recommendations can be edited to best meet the current teachers' and students' needs or any goals set by the division. The four recommendations outlined below are, to provide more control over or choice of the professional development the teachers participate in; provide relevant professional development based on teachers' stated needs; supply materials or resources to teachers to use to implement the learning; and provide collaborative opportunities and ongoing feedback to discuss classroom implementation of professional development.

Control and Choice

According to participants, having more control and choice will increase their motivation to participate and complete professional development. Teachers' knowledge and increased student outcomes are found to be in a positive relationship with professional development (Fischer et al., 2018; Garrett et al., 2021; Yoon & Kim, 2022). Therefore, developers and facilitators of professional development should provide a choice of topics and offer different modes of delivery. Moreover, Adults are self-directed

learners and have various differing life experiences, so allowing them control and choice in their professional learning is crucial. It is suggested to engage teachers in the planning of their professional development to allow them more control over what they learn using currently established meeting times and data collection methods. Likewise, it is suggested that professional development is delivered in multiple ways (e.g., job-embedded, before and after contract hours, during planning, ongoing throughout the year, synchronous, asynchronous and blended). Differentiating the way teachers interact within the learning materials allows for teachers to have more choices in how they learn (e.g., lunch and learn, edcamp, BINGO or tick-tac-toe, webinars, podcasts, book study, or instructional coaching). It has been found that teachers who had their learning needs met through autonomy of choice were more apt to create lasting change in their instructional practices (Agboola, 2022).

Relevance Based on Need

The second recommendation is to provide relevant professional development based on teachers' stated needs. This district is not alone in facing challenges providing relevant professional development (Fischer et al., 2018). One way to ascertain teachers' stated needs is to have them self-assess what their needs are and then create learning goals for themselves. Digital surveys should be provided post professional development activity and the assessment information would then be shared with the leadership team. Sharing of the assessment data would provide facilitator and planners with the

professional development to offer or the strategies that would best support the teachers'
learning.

No matter how demotivating it was, the teachers in the study understood there
would be a certain amount of mandatory professional development. According to Appova
and Arbaugh (2018), and Fischer et al. (2018) teachers understand the need for
mandatory professional development, but they are less likely to perceive the experience
in a positive way which may result in compliance issues. Therefore, in these instances, it
is recommended that the leadership notify teachers in advance and give additional time
during contract hours to complete the professional development.

Resources to Implement

If resources and materials for use in the classroom are provided during
professional development, then teachers had increased motivation to attend and complete.
Therefore, the third recommendation is that when professional development is provided
there are ready made materials or resources that can be used to immediately implement
the learned material to achieve the highest student outcomes (Casanova et al., 2023; de
Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018). If materials are already located in the classroom, then it
is suggested to provide time so the teachers can locate and organize the materials to have
them ready for the lesson with the students. Another way to support the recommendation
if there are no physical material for the professional development session, then supply the
teacher with hard-copy or online resources so they can refer back to the learning material
or allow them time to practice the strategy during the session.

Collaboration and Feedback

The fourth recommendation is to provide collaborative opportunities and ongoing feedback to discuss classroom implementation of professional development. One suggestion to foster feedback and sustain instructional practices was the use of coaches and modeling instructional practice during professional development (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Haug & Mork, 2021; Özdemir, 2019). The use of coaches, over traditional forms of professional development, found to improve student achievement (Cilliers et al., 2022; Kraft et al., 2018). Likewise, the use of digital surveys should be utilized to collect teacher feedback and reflections after professional development. The information could then be shared with the leadership team to refine or create new professional development activities. Lastly, supplying teachers with various collaboration and feedback opportunities throughout the year.

<div align="center">

Formative Evaluation Recommendations

</div>

The suggestions below are for monitoring the progress and giving ongoing feedback to improve learning (formative evaluation). The aim of an evaluation is to determine if the goals set need adjustments, are on target to be met, or have been met (CDC, 2019). I would recommend the use of digital surveys, check-in meetings with the coaches, and observations as evaluation tools. Likewise, it is suggested to use any database that is in use to track attendance of professional development activities.

Digital surveys are a reliable way to collect information and reduce manual errors (Burkholder et al., 2020). Digital surveys would be provided to participants at the end of

each professional development activity so that teachers could provide feedback on the session. The survey contains both Likert scale and open-ended response questions and would be to gauge if the objectives of the session are met, to garner participants' perceptions of the session, and to gauge if the teacher's learning objectives were met. The collected responses would be available for school leadership and content coaches to enable targeted feedback, support, and to improve or create additional professional development sessions.

Additionally, to ensure correct implementation, the leadership can meet with coaches as a check-in. Check-in meetings could be scheduled after the initial implementation in bi-monthly intervals. Coaches would have a different perspective on implementation than classroom teachers or administrators. The coach check-in would facilitate the sharing of information on an ongoing basis. Likewise, these meetings would allow administrators to stay up to date on how professional development is being implemented in their building or if there are needs still not being met.

Another evaluative tool is the use of informal observations by coaches and leadership. Informal observations can provide feedback to the teacher about implementation or to provide suggestions for improvement (Pharis et al., 2019). The informal observations would be bi-monthly after the start of the implementation and would be held on the opposing month of the coach check-in meetings. This is one more way for feedback to be given to teachers and the observer will see first-hand what is happening in classrooms instead of relying on what others say.

Databases are another evaluative tool that can be used to track participation and completion throughout the year. The database reports are another way for leadership to examine if professional development and its implementation were successful or where there may be a need for improvement (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Professional development is multifaceted and the use of a combination of formative evaluations is the best way for the leadership team to gain better insight into how teachers are learning from and experiencing the professional development offered. With this multipronged approach to evaluation, leadership will be better able to create professional development activities that teachers value and want to complete and simultaneously improve teaching and student outcomes.

Resources and Existing Supports

The resources needed for the position paper are minimal compared to other system changes since the recommendations integrate into the current professional development plan and process. All resources needed to present and disseminate the position paper are available at the study site. The distribution of the position paper to leadership, would be handled with the use of an email client connected to the internet, or a printer. Likewise, to present the position paper to district leadership, a meeting would be scheduled. The meeting could be held face-to-face or using a video conferencing client. I have maintained a professional rapport with the leadership and do not anticipate any issues with the dissemination process or acquiring a meeting time and space with the district leadership.

Timetable Recommendation

Table 2 shows that the recommended timetable starts with the presentation of the position paper to leadership by the end of December 2023 and ends with full implementation by the start of the 2024-2025 school year. This should give instructional leaders time to read, synthesize, and integrate the recommendations into the professional development plan and processes. Kilag and Sasan (2023) found that instructional leadership plays an essential role in supporting professional development. The implementation timeline would also allow the school division to bring together a group of stakeholders to discuss the changes and modify any of the suggestions to best meet the needs of the teachers.

Table 2

Proposed Project Implementation Timetable

Time Approximations	Task
1 month (December 23)	Present the position paper to leadership
1 month (January 23)	Plan for resources needed
1 month (February 24)	Solicit volunteers from each stakeholder group for review committee
1 month (March 24)	Plan for meetings needed for review committee to meet throughout
2 months (May 24)	To write the changes to processes/policies/training

Time Approximations	Task
1 month (June 24)	Changes to policies to school board for approval
1-2 months (July/August 24)	Present to teachers for implementation in the fall of 24-25 school year

Potential Solutions to Barriers

The suggestions in the position paper came from the analysis of the results of the interviews conducted with teachers within the district of interest and supported by current literature. Therefore, I do not see any potential barriers to the leadership receiving the position paper. However, I do foresee a barrier to presenting the position paper to the leadership at one of the busiest times of the school year. To ease the burden of scheduling the presentation of the position paper at the start of the school year, it can be done in person or by means of videoconferencing software by the end of December 2023.

Other possible barriers could be a result of the implementing some of the recommendations in the deliverable. Leadership may decide to adjust some of the duties of the current coaches to incorporate on going feedback in some content areas. While this would not necessarily be a financial barrier since the staff are already in place, it would result in a change of processes, possible changes in job descriptions and facilitate the need for a school board presentation. Change, no matter how small, can affect stakeholders differently and some may be resistant to the suggested changes in the position paper. According to Wise et al. (2020), organizations have complex structures

and changes can have a ripple effect through an organization. Nevertheless, organizational leaders have the capacity to "direct the vision and mission of their organizations, the authority to control organizational functions at every level, and [have] the capacity to inspire systemic culture change" (Wise et al., 2020, p. 345).

Conclusion

The results of this study provided insight into teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development to improve teaching and their motivations for completion. When teachers acquire or enhance skills during professional development, it changes their teaching and improves student outcomes (Roth et al., 2019). The recommendations in this paper are supported by the results of the study and recent literature. The four recommendations would make the professional development offered more valuable to teachers and could result in increased interest in participation and completion of professional development. The recommendations, if implemented, should benefit the current and future leadership, coaches, teachers, and students.

Boström and Palm (2020), Dunn et al. (2018), and Passmore and Hart (2019) posited a person's identity and learning are weaved together and therefore, professional development should permit choice and voice to promote participation. Recommendation one, was to provide teachers with more control over or choice of the professional development. Additionally, the intention to participate in relevant professional development, which is recommendation two, leads to higher completion rates (Rutherford-Quach et al., 2021). It is noted that successful professional development and

student outcomes are increased when the teachers successfully implement the learned

content while using the materials provided (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018).

Participant 1359 agreed that "if you want students to get the value of that professional

development, then they [facilitators] need to provide…[the] resources [they] are crucial."

Hence the third recommendation to supply materials or resources to teachers to use to

implement the learning was suggested. Furthermore, Granger et al. (2019) and Haug and

Mork (2021) found that the lack of resources was reported to be a barrier to

implementation and therefore the desired student outcomes would not be achieved.

Another essential component of professional development was recommendation

four, collaborative opportunities and ongoing feedback to discuss classroom

implementation. The literature stated that it is vital to provide the ability to engage in

learning with others, whether in a physical space or virtual (Martin et al., 2019; Trust &

Prestridge, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). A suggestion to support ongoing feedback was the

use of coaches. Coaches can provide the needed support and feedback to sustain

classroom instructional practices better than without the use of coaches. (Cilliers et al.,

2022). One study recommended that leadership encourage teachers to get with other

teachers who have similar learning goals to foster feedback, collaboration (Agboola,

2022).

The acquisition of knowledge and skills to apply in the classroom to improve

student outcomes is the goal of professional development (Richter et al., 2019; Sancar et

al., 2021). Armed with a better understanding of teachers' perceptions and motivations

and the recommendations in this paper, the district may be able to improve the

consistency of professional development completion rates, improve classroom teaching,

and student outcomes.

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