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Teacher Preferences for Professional Development Delivery Models and Delivery Model Influence on Teacher Behavior in the Classroom

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Eve Sauer

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Walden University
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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Current trends and research in education indicated that teacher learning is a crucial link to student achievement. There is a void in the research regarding teacher preferences for delivery models in professional development Determining teacher preferences is an important component in professional development planning and the driving inquiry for this research. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to determine teacher preferences in delivery models for professional development and whether delivery models influenced teacher behaviors in the classroom. The primary theory for this study was based on andragogy, and the research was conducted under the conceptual framework of constructivist principles. Data collection included interviews with 10 classroom teachers using open ended questions. Data analysis included the extraction of themes and subthemes emerging from the interviews. Findings indicated teachers' preference for hands on professional learning opportunities and technology use in delivery models. Teachers also expressed an interest in being given a choice in the delivery model of their professional learning opportunities. Implications for positive social change focus on professional development planners and facilitators, who are encouraged to seek preferences from teachers to best meet the needs and interests of educators in order to advance changes in teacher behavior and subsequent improvement to student achievement.

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Dedication

The completion of this study is truly a labor of love. I dedicate this work to my parents, my boys and their wives, my husband, other family members and friends for their constant support throughout my journey. My Dad was a driving force in my doctoral work. After having suffered his last stroke he would motion to me with his fingers, as if to ask, “Are you working on your doctorate?” He even bought me a laptop to aid in my work. I know he is smiling down from Heaven as I complete this study.

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This work would not be complete without the expertise of Dr. Edward Garten, my committee chair and champion. Dr. Garten, along with Dr. Roberta Liebler, my methodologist, guided me through the stages of completion with this study. My committee has been the driving force to helping me complete this phenomenal task.

I thank my first peer editor from my first class I took with Dr. Garten through Walden University, Jen Bond. Jen has been there for me every step of the way. I could not have done this without her love and support.

I acknowledge the work of Dr. Tom Guskey; he inspired me with his work in professional development. Having heard Dr. Guskey speak on more than one occasion, I was moved to continue the work in this field of expertise.

Most importantly, I thank God for the strength and fortitude to conceive and complete this project.

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Section 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Throughout the history of both formal and informal public education, focus has been placed on training teachers to understand the fundamentals of student learning. Blankenstein (2004) stated that although forming standard knowledge may be difficult, formulating basic inferences or beliefs is more complex. Early theorists researched how the mind works, how students learn, and how to teach students. Understanding historical viewpoints, Spring (2005) posited that how one views their feelings, comprehension, and thoughts about the past may influence future events. In more recent years, educators and theorists have explored the area of teacher education in a new light focusing on educator learning versus student learning. As a means of responsibility and guidance, Sergiovanni (2005) suggested that school leaders provide the circumstances, aide, and additional support to facilitate teacher learning. The goal for professional development should be to build a solid team, champion shared governance, and build trust among staff members (Horak, Kicks, Pellicciotti, & Duncan, 2006). Richardson (2008) wrote that realizing quality learning in students is correlated to the quality that adults receive in their learning. How should teachers be taught in order to advance student performance and achievement? My exploratory case study was based on contradicting information regarding elementary teachers' preferences with the type(s) of professional development opportunities (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) for educators.

Problem Statement

A source of consternation for many educators is having the opportunity to choose professional development workshops or classes that match their learning styles, professional needs, and interests. Staff development is often outdated and is in need of reevaluation of purpose for learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). According to Guskey (2000), as school districts continue a trend to purchase more hardware, they have a tendency to spend less on professional development. Many staff development programs are not successful with increasing student achievement (Mayer et al., 2005). By continuing to reuse former programs with teacher training, frustration and decreased results are realized (Guskey, 2000). Teachers lament that they are often overwhelmed with responsibilities such as planning and preparing lessons that align with prescribed state and local standards; teaching lessons; recordkeeping; and communicating with colleagues, administration, and parents. Teachers are faced with added responsibilities, and so the task of adequate training becomes more of a challenge (Glazer, Hannafin, & Song, 2005).Not being given the choice to attend professional development that matches their learning styles can add to teacher frustration (Danielson, 2008). The decision makers setting policy and planning professional development programs are usually no longer in the classroom, and often teacher input is not sought. Teachers are expected to comply; resulting in little buy in regarding their professional learning (Mohr et al., 2004). This study determined preferences for delivery models within professional development among educators, including preferences of professional development opportunities

afforded to educators, to gain insight and support of training initiatives, and to advance the goal of student improvement.

Nature of the Study

My qualitative case study used open-ended questions in 10 participant interviews to determine preferences for delivery models in professional development. Following the process for informed consent and interview protocol, the random participants in this study were interviewed towards the middle of the 2010-2011 school year. The field of participants remained constant throughout the study. I had continuous involvement while results of specific research were collected. I kept field notes and audio tapes of each interview. Within protocol guidelines, questions became more focused as the researcher became familiar with those being studied. Introspection of values, biases, and interests relative to the study were included. True to a qualitative project study, collecting, writing, and reporting data continued to evolve as my study progressed. The audio tapes and field notes were crucial with the quality of reporting. Through use of member checking, the participants reviewed the draft for accuracy of reporting. I also used my principal as a peer reviewer to assess the trustworthiness of my reported results. This exploratory case study interval lasted approximately two weeks near the middle of the 2010-2011 school year (Creswell, 2003).

I obtained permission for the study from Walden University (IRB #08-09-10-0351897), the school system, and the principals from six schools used. Throughout the research project, I protected the rights of those involved. Upholding the position of gatekeeper, I was involved in a non disruptive manner of data collection, remaining as

unobtrusive as possible in the classroom and school setting. No students were present at the time I conducted my interviews. I reported results openly to all those involved in the study. In any situation where sensitive issues are divulged, anonymity was kept (Creswell, 2003). A more detailed description of the research procedures is in section 3 methodology.

Specifically, this qualitative study was intrinsic in nature as it involved preferences in professional development indigenous to the 10 participants. Creswell (1998) suggested necessary components within a case study were: (a) the problem, (b) the context, (c) the issues, and (d) the lessons learned. Essentially, the researcher infuses her own personal touch by adding tables of information regarding gathered information; answers to questions relevant to the study; and the epilogue. Within the epilogue personal experiences in the narrative bring closure to the study.

Guskey (2002) discussed the importance of case studies for cognitive outcomes as supporting both professional development and a supportive measure to gather evidence of the participants' cognitive learning. Participants revealed key ideas within the study, and therefore identified quality learning points (Elmore, 2007). At this juncture of professional development studying the design is an effective process to measure goals. Responses to teachers should be made accordingly (Driscoll, Holland, & Kerrigan, 1996; Einsiedel, 1995).

Respecting the research site, I left the study sites undisturbed. All inquiries were minimal, allowing for the natural flow of learning within the school. Also, I was aware of any hesitancy by the participants, and moved on to others that chose to participate. All

research was conducted in a professional, unbiased, scientific manner to enable data collection to be seamless; leaving a good impression at the research site (Creswell, 2003).

Research Questions

Primary research question: What are elementary teachers' preferences regarding delivery models in professional learning?

Subquestions:

1. What type(s) of deliver model(s) in professional learning (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) do elementary teachers prefer?
2. What reason(s) do elementary teachers' give for their preferences in delivery models (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) of professional development?
3. Do elementary teachers feel that certain delivery models encourage/bring about changes in their teaching behavior?

Purpose of the Study

I conceived the idea for my exploratory case study based on contradicting information regarding teachers' preferences with the type(s) of (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; action research; peer coaching & review; etc.) professional development opportunities for educators. Having been involved in facilitating a variety of professional development delivery models (lecture, small group, and book studies) for several years, and given the lack of research available, I determined a need to study teacher preferences

in this area of adult learning. The study examined whether local and district initiatives for staff development are adequate for teacher needs, or whether adult learning needs might be better met with alternative methods of professional learning delivery methods to foster student learning.

Basic knowledge in teacher learning stated:

- Inductive reasoning and transfer of learning are essential in understanding how teachers learn best. The epistemology surrounding teacher attitudes and behaviors is central to basic understanding of how teachers learn (Creswell, 2003).
- Motivation and participation of teachers is a process by which teachers typically become agents of change (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Finally, the purpose of my study was to provide information necessary for professional developers to support learning for both educators and students in their respective schools and districts; ultimately encouraging additional research in this area to benefit both adult learning and increasing student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

I focused my study on Knowles' theory of andragogy; termed the art and science of how to teach adults, (Knowles, 1984). Directed to the individual adult learner, Knowles' theory differentiated adult learners from child learners. Knowles' theory will be explored in depth in section 2. My study was inspired by the conceptual framework of Guskey (2000), known in the field of professional development. Along with Guskey,

Lambert et al. (2002) collaborated with researchers in this field and inspired my current work in a constructivist form of study.

Through critical analysis, research of historical perspectives, and concluding remarks, my research study focused on answering basic questions. Do elementary educators have preferences in delivery models (i.e., lecture; small group or book study) to support their learning? What type(s) of delivery models produce learning for elementary teachers? Past and present theorists were compared in terms of relevancy to the field of education, particularly the education of teachers. Reflecting on the focus of teacher training and the current cries for relevancy to the needs of students, staff development has its place of importance in current educational fields of study. Additionally, it has been determined through more recent studies that there is a need for additional research to support and add to the body of knowledge respecting professional learning and its link to improving student achievement.

Taking a teacher from their classroom to attend a half or all day inservice can be a daunting task. Deemed by many teachers as wasted time and energy, many schools and school systems give teachers little flexibility to choose their teacher training (Mayer et al., 2005). Mandates to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have caused administrators and school systems to investigate ways to improve student achievement in a heightened form (U. S. Department of Education, 2008). With an emphasis on differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of all learners, and the use of data-driven instruction to attain those goals, staff development

continues to evolve and change. Identifying similarities and differences among learners is essential to "basic human thought," (Marzano, 2007, p. 64).

Intrinsic to teacher learning, controversy exists among professional developers regarding the most effective ways to train teachers; the ultimate goal being changes in teaching behavior and increased student achievement (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). A lack of sufficient research regarding teachers' wants, interests, strengths, and prior knowledge is at the center of my research project. The demands for data-driven results and accountability through NCLB forces professional development programs to a heightened awareness of validity within teaching the standards; leaving teacher interest and teacher needs at a deficit (Popham, 2006). Deemed overly theoretical and based in substance of academic orientation, today's professional learning lacks rigorous and relevant studies focusing on the adult learner (Fleischman, 2006). Senge (2000) demanded that educational organizations look at training individuals in how to learn and grow. Growth within their profession is based on an ever-increasingly competitive world (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006). My case study dealt with the qualitative aspects of teacher preferences in their learning. Through use of rich, descriptive materials, my research will add to the body of knowledge respecting professional learning for teachers.
Practical application of the focus on teacher training was discussed, inferences drawn as to how preferences in professional learning influence instruction models, and implications for change in improvement of professional development were drawn.

Operational Definitions of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): one of the cornerstones of the NCLB federal law enacted in 2001. AYP is a year-to-year measure of student achievement on statewide standards assessments (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

Backyard research: studying the researcher's own organization, friends, or immediate work surroundings (Creswell, 2003);

Bounded system: a case study is bounded by time and place. The interrelated parts of the case form a whole, which is considered a system, thus, a bounded system (Creswell, 1998);

Constructivism (constructivist): defined as "the theory of learners constructing meaning based upon their previous knowledge, beliefs, and experiences, and their application to schools (Lambert et al., 2002).

Gatekeeper: anyone who holds authority to rights of entry within a facility or of archival materials (Creswell, 2003);

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS):"providing clear expectations of students for assessment, instruction, and student work." GPS is the level of work that demonstrates achievement of the standards, enabling a teacher to gauge the level of learning. Performance standards incorporate the content standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

Interview protocol: a specific form to record observational data during a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003);

Member-checking: participants of a qualitative study determine whether the final report is accurately reported (Creswell, 2003);

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): enacted under the Bush administration in 2001, this federal law was enacted "To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind," (U. S. Department of Education, 2011).

Peer debriefing: a person other than the researcher reviews the study, questioning the results and enhancing accurate results (Creswell, 2003);

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): the development of a professional educational environment is to foster support collaboration, support, personal growth, and combination of efforts (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope and delimitations of this study were based on several factors. First, my study focused on certified teachers in six of almost 70 elementary schools within the district. This may not be considered "representative" of the entire district, or elementary school educators, in general. Second, my study focused only on elementary school, as opposed to the inclusion of middle and high school professionals. Third, the nature of this type of study lent itself to possible bias and inaccurate reporting of findings (Creswell, 2003). There exists a serious legitimation regarding validity and reliability within qualitative research. I viewed trustworthiness in terms of accurate reporting and data analysis. The important issue of reliability within a qualitative study becomes one of dependability and consistency of the research and findings. Replication of qualitative

research will not provide similar results in a study. The true measure then becomes one of consistent data collection from a trained researcher (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Finally, my study focused on a 2-week period within the 2010-2011 school year. Therefore, the results were limited to a narrow window of surveys and interviews; although based on educators' collective preferences and experiences (Creswell, 2003).

Assumptions and Limitations

I assumed that the responses from certified teachers would be accurate and unbiased. My study was limited by constraints placed within the local school district. Such constraints included the exclusion of test data to measure the possible effects on student achievement. I conducted the study in a professional manner and worked diligently to avoid bias in reporting. The nature of research lends itself to possible bias in reporting results by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative study, by its nature, presents the possibility of biased by the researcher, and conformism by the participants. By establishing a collegial relationship with the participants prior to the interview session, I attempted to put the participant at ease and explain the full introspect of the study and its implications for social change within professional development to diminish the need for conformist responses during the interviewing process. I conducted the research in an ethical manner, remaining true to my intention to conduct and report findings as unbiased as possible (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Significance of the Study

The potential significance of this study lies in determining whether there were preferences in learning and whether these preferences are advantageous to educators and/or their students. Time and commitment to understand the participants' experiences were necessary to my study. The significance with my study is threefold. First, the study could benefit local staff developers as they plan for future training. Understanding the impact of professional development opportunities and their effect on teacher learning is tantamount to success. Next, the results of my study are applicable to other district, state, and national professional developers. The study and nature of changes in teacher practices within this study add considerably to the body of existing knowledge. Few studies are found that rely on the opinions and preferences of teachers to guide further professional planning. By exploring teachers' preferences, this study can foster professional planning and future study in this area of research.

Lastly, my study focused solely on the preferences of teachers in their professional development. This study provided an opportunity for positive social change by identifying elementary teachers' preferences in learning delivery models of professional development by teachers. Research from existing studies often use exit surveys to determine future planning for teachers. My study offered introspection into preferences from teachers' past experiences with professional development and learning and related changes in teaching behaviors; ultimately aiming to influence student achievement. In comparison, other qualitative studies include end of course/exit surveys, or similar questionnaires. However, the potential of my study to influence future

professional development has many possibilities. True to qualitative study, the findings of my research present an implication for positive social change by revealing the nature of changes in teacher behavior based on teacher preference in learning models. Teacher behaviors can then be studied to determine a connection with improving student achievement.

Summary

I determined a need to study preferences of adult learners in delivery models of professional development, as there appeared to be a lack of current research on the topic. My study covered several aspects in determining learner preference. Learning opportunities through book studies; PLCs; lecture; small group; professional learning models, along with action research; peer coaching, and review are currently offered to teachers within professional development. Therefore, a look at current research indicated a need for further study in the area of preferences for professional learning. The research will add to current foundations in the area of professional development by showing preferences of teachers in their learning and its potential to increase student achievement.

Problematic to some, educators often express dissatisfaction with professional development opportunities afforded them through local initiatives. My study examined only elementary teacher interviews to determine if there were preferences towards their professional learning. Measures were taken to ensure unbiased, fair reporting of the data (Creswell, 2003).

Section 1 included the background for the study, problem statement, nature of the study, purpose of the study, theory and conceptual framework, scope and delimitations,

assumptions and limitations, and the significance of the study. Following this section, the study includes a review of adult learning literature, and an overview and detailed introspect of professional development's origin and growth over the past 4 decades in section 2, along with a review of literature in the area of adult learning, and a complete description of methodology. Section 4 describes coding responses, including probes to encourage and extend responses from participants, analyses of responses, and findings of the study. Conclusions based on the interview results and recommendations for current practices and future professional development planning appear in section 5.

Section 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Knowles' (1984) theory of andragogy, the constructivist theory (Lambert et al., 2002), and the conceptual framework of Guskey (2000) were of particular focus for my study. In this section, I have explored the aspects of elementary teacher preferences regarding the delivery model(s) in professional learning. Building a strong foundation for my study, this literature review encompassed a wide spectrum of references relating how professional development in education meets the needs of teachers' learning.

The potential significance of this study lies in the determination of preferences in the delivery models of professional learning and how those preferences affect teaching performance. Enhanced teacher performance has a direct correlation to improvements in student achievement (Guskey, 2003). My study also included current research by Timperley (2005), which oppose the outcomes stated by Guskey.

Outlining pertinent literature available, I organized the literature review into three areas: (a) a history of professional development; (b) a framework for the study based on current theory, conceptual frameworks, and research; and (c) a comparison and contrast of recent research studies in the field.

Organization of Literature Review

I concentrated the literature review on quality versus quantity and used a compilation of scholarly textbooks, recent dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles, and current research in the area of professional development planning for teachers. I used library databases through Walden University and Georgia State University. Included in

my search for relevant literature were the library databases ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center), EBSCO host Academic Search Premier, Educational Research Complete, A-to-Z EBSCO Full-Text List, Education: A SAGE Full-Text Collection, and Walden University's ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Once I determined the theoretical foundation for my research with use of Knowles' (1984) theory of andragogy, the constructivist theory (Lambert et al., 2002), and the conceptual framework of Guskey (2003), I began a more extensive search. Continuing an electronic search, I used the following key words: *teacher training, professional development, professional training, teacher development, and staff development*. I continued my search from 2007 to 2011. I then conducted an advanced electronic search using combinations of terms, such as key words: *professional development* and *preferences*, *delivery models and teacher preference*, *educators* and *professional development*, *professional development* and *student achievement*, and finally, *staff development* and *teachers*.

I used the following peer-reviewed journals and periodicals: *Educational Leadership*, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *Leadership Staff Development Council*, *Phi Kappa Deltan*, *Educational Technology Research & Development*, *Leadership*, *Teachers & Teaching*, *Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Staff Development*, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *Library Media Connection*, *Canadian journal of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education*, *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Journal of In-service Education*, *British*

Educational Research Journal, *The Journal of the National Staff Development Council*, *Connect*, *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, *Theory and Practice*, and *Teachers College Record*. Finally, I located and researched additional topics through web sites, educational books, and recent dissertations and theses relating to current professional development practices; adding relevant information to support my study.

An Historical Perspective on Professional Development

I focused this area on some well known theorists and their contributions to the area of adult learning. By looking at the history of professional development, I determined trends and research in the evolving understanding of adult learners and their needs. Decades of educational study have formulated theories by respected researchers.

Early Education Theorists

Early theorists in the field of education, such as Piaget (Trotter, 2006), Kohlberg (Gibbs, 2005), and Erikson (Hansen & Zambo, 2005) developed educational theory based on psychology and scientific means to determine the developmental stages of childhood and adulthood. The growth of scientific study of childhood development was ingrained in the education of teachers during the latter part of the 19th century, and continued to encompass professional development throughout the 20th century (Trotter, 2006). Focusing on the child, Piaget (Cunningham, 2006) studied childhood development in terms of four cognitive stages of learning: (a) sensorimotor, (b) prepoperational, (c) concrete, and (d) formal operations. Through observation, interviews, and hands-on tasks, a child's reasoning abilities were scientifically tracked (Hansen & Zambo, 2005). Often

deemed difficult to understand, early teacher education was wrought with arguments of Piaget's intent. Upon closer examination of this pedagogy, the pervasive beliefs at that time regarded Piaget a productive writer, although his writing was not easily understood at times. Much of his literature was used to develop teacher trainees, and thereby put theory into practice in the classroom (Cunningham, 2006). Considered the father of stage theorists, Piaget posited that adults pass through distinct stages of learning in adulthood, based directly on ways they construct childhood experiences (Trotter, 2006).

Another stage theorist, Kohlberg (Gibbs, 2005) developed a cognitive developmental approach to learning based on moral reasoning. Ensuing debates over moral judgment maturity, or competence, remain in educational teaching today. The basis of his theory related orientations toward authority, others, and self (Trotter, 2006). Erikson's theory of psychosocial development suggested that children have developmental stages, as does Piaget's stages of development. Erikson's theory (Hansen & Zambo, 2005) was based on milestones of developmental crisis that must be reached and resolved in order for a child or adult to advance to the next stage of learning capabilities.

Age Theorists

In contrast to the stage theorists were age theorists who held that problems and personal issues could be directly related to the particular age of an adult, as well as their ability to learn new concepts. The beliefs of age theorists, Sheehy, Levinson, and Loevinger (Trotter, 2006) were examined: (a) Sheehy believed in transition periods for adult learning between their late 30s and early 40s, (b) Levinson's theory related to adults

between their mid 40s and early 50s as being able to build new structures for the rest of their lives, thus entering a unique learning phase, and (c) examining ego development, Loevinger explained adult learning and development in terms of movement from conformity to an emotional interdependence. Loevinger believed the final stage of adult maturity dealt with reconciliation and resolution to inner conflicts in order to recognize one's identity and ability to learn in new ways.

Theory Development

Theorists continued to develop the study of education. Vygotsky (Gibbs, 2005) and others viewed childhood development from differing perspectives. Vygotsky's theory was based on sociocultural theory of cognitive growth. His theory involved both formal and informal interactions with children. Teachers were formally taught that through the use of systematic ideas, concepts, and behaviors, children become successful in schools. Psychological theories may be understood by teachers in relation to specific curriculum subjects. For instance, mathematics and science are often related to Piaget's work (Trotter, 2006). This is opposed to research-based and sociocultural theory (Hansen & Zambo, 2005). Whereas in the 1940s and 1950s educators were trained solely on traits of children, the 1960s and 1970s brought about a major change in professional development. A push to raise academic achievement enabled study and data collection, and brought adult learning to a head (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The 1980s incorporated team teaching and open classrooms. Also, teachers were now held accountable for what students were taught the meet standards (Hord, 2008). Ultimately, this paradigm shift made a major impact on professional development today (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Cognitive Development Theory

Another area of great interest for adult learning was cognitive development theory. Hunt and Perry (Trotter, 2006) had separate theories based on research evidence. Hunt's theory included four levels of development: (a) the low conceptual level; focusing on personal need, (b) categorical judgments; relying on one's external standards, (c) awareness of alternatives; being sensitive to others' needs, and (d) reliance on internal rather than external standards; learning by viewing multiple view points. Perry's theory included four levels of progression, moving from Level 1 to Level 4. In Level 1 a person dealt with right or wrong. Next, Level 2 focused on a person experiencing both diversity and uncertainty. Additionally, Level 3 related adult knowledge and learning to contextual relativism. Finally, Level 4 involved affirmation of one's self and the process by which adults move through the different levels of development. Cognitive development was followed by the functional theorists.

Functional Theory

Functional theory, considered the social science of teaching, focused on several theorists from the early part of the 19th century through the 20th century. I reviewed the theories of Lindeman, Dewey, Simpson, Knox, and Smith (Trotter, 2006). Lindeman espoused the theory that teachers and textbooks were secondary to adult education. He believed that experience should be an adult's learning base. Dewey advocated for measuring education by the desires of those willing to learn. Simpson related two distinctions within adult learning: (a) autonomy of direction for learning, and (b) the ability for self-directedness. Knox generalized that adult learning should be continual and

informal to recognize maximum benefits. Lastly, Smith observed that adult learning was: (a) lifelong, (b) personal, (c) involved with change, (d) a part of human development, (e) experiential, and (f) partly intuitive. Each theorist has added to the body of adult learning within their own right.

Knowles (1984) viewed adult development and professional development, once referred to as a neglected species, as sorely lacking in the realm of education. Knowles' theory of andragogy involved the art and science of adult teachings. Knowles' studies delineated between educating adults about student learning and about their own learning. By understanding how adults learn and share their learning, Knowles' research added to the body of knowledge relative to professional development. Five key assumptions about adult learning were that adults be: (a) motivated to learn through their experiences and needs, (b) lifelong learners, (c) involved with experiences, (d) self-directed in their learning, and (e) recognized for their differences as they increase in age (Trotter, 2006). Commonalities among Knowles' and Smith's theories exist regarding adult learning.

20th and 21st Century Theorists

The latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century brought names such as Senge (2000), Servioganni (2005), Schmoker (2004), Guskey (2000), Sparks (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997), Hirsh and Hord (2010), Timperley (2009), Danielson(2008), and many others to the forefront. Whereas the focus had been on educating teachers about childhood development, there now evolved theory and conceptual knowledge emphasizing the developing educator. Research points to professional development as a decisive element to increasing student achievement. The debate often arises as to whether

teacher training should focus on theory, practice, or a combination of both (Casale, 2004). Hall, Smith, and Nowinski (2005) referred to the history of teacher education and evaluation as inconsistent, growing, and narrow in scope. Webster-Wright (2009) summarized the development of theory in education as recognizing adult learning needs instead of previous theory of andragogy.

Casale (2004) argued that there is a fundamental difference between the history of knowledge and the history of science respecting teacher education. The history of knowledge referred to theoretical studies versus the history of scientific matter. The argument was based on the fact that teacher training has centered on the study of humanities; however, research was and continues to be founded on scientific study. Theoretical study based on moral and practical tasks loses to scientific reliability in this argument.

A Current Perspective on Theory, Conceptual Frameworks, and Research

Current research attests to the significance of exceptionally trained staff to deliver a high caliber of education. Educators' knowledge base, commitment, and ability to relate to students are fundamental to success in educating adults (Neuman, 2007). Researchers found that investing time and resources heavily in highly targeted professional development was imperative to strong classroom instruction (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Killion (2011) posed the challenge that educators must be learners to compete in a global network. Undoubtedly, teachers needed to understand the individual subject matter they were teaching deeply, allowing flexibility in their teaching in order to adapt their instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Through means of

educators' practices, organizational changes, and student outcomes, the effectiveness of a staff development program should be evaluated in a summative form. By using reflection, questionnaires, observations, and interviews effective staff development programs can improve teachers' learning; the ultimate goal becoming effective teaching practices and the motivation of students to boost achievement, as determined by local assessments and guidelines (Price, 2008).

Hall and Hord (2006) emphasized the importance of facilitating an organizational culture within professional learning communities (PLCs) to strengthen teacher learning. The guiding principles for the encouragement of growth within the teaching culture must be set by the organization and implemented by individual teachers. Hord (2004) stated that cultural changes within PLCs must continually be "engaged in reflection, inquiry, problem solving, and learning and teaching together" (p. 56). Earl and Timperley (2008) found that essential elements within PLCs must include relevant data, relationships of both respect and change, coupled with an inquiry process wherein the process of evidence-based decisions are included in professional learning. Hirsh and Hord (2010) explained that examining multiple sources of data must exist to establish support for both acquired teacher and student learning. Seen as the necessary underlying principles for successful professional learning, Roy and Hord (2004) mandated the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards of context, process, and content. These essential standards are repeatedly brought to the forefront regarding professional development requisites.

Several modern theorists and constructivists led me to determine the basis for this study. Key components of several frameworks drew the purpose and value together, as described by Guskey and Sparks (1996). Using components of content, process, and context, the quality of professional development must be infused. After filtering through administration and related stakeholders within a school system, the outcome for students can be used for student learning. Along with supportive administration and stakeholders, Richardson (2003) listed access to materials, acknowledgement of beliefs and practices, and use of outside facilitators to support teacher learning. In a study by Robinson and Timperley (2007), mentioned later in detail, the essential tools were considered the link between standards of great practice and improved practices. In order for effective teacher learning to occur, extensive focus must also be placed on spending energy and time to bring about teacher education (Olafson, Quinn, and Hall, 2005).

A Meta analysis study by The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) correlated the scientific effectiveness of professional development to increases in student achievement (CCSSO, 2009). Through a process of elimination, 74 studies were reviewed and ultimately 16 were deemed relevant to the study. The results in the study revealed the following characteristics important to professional development and related progress in student achievement: (a) it is possible to create adequate measurable outcomes of professional development with scientific research designs; the process was suggested for all funded programs, (b) both treatment and control groups are important elements to be woven into professional learning programs, (c) measureable outcomes within the training are essential to determine if the phenomenon between teacher training

and teacher learning increases student achievement, (d) student improvement should be measured as a means to gauge effectiveness of professional development plans, (e) state and local educators should work to assure that assessment of educators adequately measures teacher effectiveness, and (f) cross analyses of teacher learning and student achievement are effective tools for local and state professionals to consider. The researchers made no direct correlation between professional development and an increase in student achievement. The conclusion made by researchers was the importance of measuring the phenomenon to student achievement.

Developing best practices in teaching requires strong leadership and effective professional development at high levels to enable teacher engagement (Stetson, 2007). Four basic truisms in professional development planning are: (a) teachers should be treated as active learners, (b) teachers must be empowered as professionals, (c) teacher education must be situated in classroom practice, and (d) teacher educators should treat teachers as they expect teachers to treat their students (Lieberman & Miller, 2001).

Successful professional development involves establishing clear and shared goals, taking an inquiry stance, and channeling positive outcomes. Student achievement is realized when teachers are made stakeholders in their own professional development (Lieberman & Miller, 2001). To advance professional development, planning should focus on improving student improvement (Guskey, 2003). Barth communicated that educators must be active participants in their own learning through empowerment, recognition, satisfaction, and success. Further, stating that professional learning would be beneficial if educators revealed their rich craft knowledge to one another (Barth, 2006).

Comparing workshops to professional learning communities, Schmoker (2004) made a strong argument that we can no longer bring teachers together and assume that meaningful learning will take place. Professional development is often perceived as superficial (Murphy, 2005). However, according to Guskey, purposeful training with shared planning and facilitation is what makes professional development effective (Guskey, 2002). Educators pay more attention to results of their learning through enhanced job performance, organizational effectiveness, and success for their students. Educator reform and personal growth evolve with commitment and deep understanding of one's own thinking together with a sense of shared purpose (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006).

According to Danielson (2008), educators must recognize the idea that professional development is ongoing. Marshall and Hooley (2006) argued that educators become disenchanted when there is no apparent relevance for the individual learner. Weinbaum et al. (2004) described two methods for use in adult learning. One method involved informative learning; the acquisition of factual knowledge. The second method involves traditional forms of professional development; the acquisition of new information in the form of subject area or strategies. Regardless of whether the learning is informative or factual, educators must be given multiple experiences with long-term, frequent training. Thus, the importance of well-planned and sustained professional development is evident.

Although educators are provided with structured professional development opportunities through the local school system, the true measure of their effectiveness can

be drawn from reflection and collaboration. Teachers have the innate ability to use resources to solve problems and reflect on their learning, if given adequate time (Donaldson, 2006). Participant feedback is another important component of professional development (Hill & Flynn, 2006). Most teachers are more than willing to share their own strategies and techniques. Successful training often yields implementation of learned strategies and techniques (Stetson, 2007). According to Stetson, six key principles to improvement in teacher learning within a school system are as follows:

- It's about instruction and only about instruction;
- Instructional change is a long, multi-stage process;
- Shared expertise is the driver of instructional change;
- Focus is on improvement within a school system, not just school-wide improvement;
- Good ideas come from talented people working together;
- Set clear expectations; then decentralize. (Stetson, 2007)

Hargreaves (2006) called for a moral mandate that teachers pay attention not only to developing their professional learning, but also development within their profession. A further distinction was made that professional development involved more than just knowledge and skills. Educators grow through experienced learning and character traits from within. Active learning by participants demands understanding by planners regarding how teachers prefer to receive training (Caffarella, 2002).

The ultimate goal within professional development, once called teacher training, should always be to improve student achievement through educator learning. Viewed as a

lifelong search for identity, professional learning melds the processes of knowledge development; experiential learning; relationships among participants; and continued invention and exploration (Zellermayer & Margolin, 2005). Whereas training indicates a form of assembly or factory model, the word development suggests a continuum of increased knowledge and inquiry (Easton, 2008). Garrison (2008) espoused the need to prepare all learners for life in the real world. Easton (2008) further stated that educators must continually learn and grow as educators in order to pass on knowledge to their students.

In tandem with effective training, Koops and Winsor (2005) promoted goal setting; reflection; and contributions to the community to foster their learning. They directly correlated quality of student learning with the quality of the educator. Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald, and Bell (2005) further supported the notion of teacher quality by stating, "a growing body of research confirms teacher quality as one of the most important school factors influencing students' achievement" (Mayer et al., p. 160). Calling for reform by many lawmakers and concerned citizens, Cochran-Smith (2006) said that the foundations for teacher learning and training must be in the forefront to advance professional development. This review of literature further explored these foundations of successful professional learning through conceptual frameworks of current educators.

Conceptual Frameworks

Several content characteristics such as knowledge, skills, and understandings build a foundation for adult learning efforts; the why of adult learning. The so called nuts and bolts of adult learning concern who, what, when, where, how, and why of professional development in its entirety. The way in which professional learning is developed is the how as it involves the type and form with which professional learning is developed. Concerning who, when, where, and why involve the context characteristics of learning. Professional development should always be intentional, ongoing, and systematic in nature (Guskey, 2000). Longevity and purposeful planning prove to be qualitative factors in effective staff development opportunities (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). Guskey (2005) further stated that improvement in teacher training must be connected with classroom instruction and learning. Simply-stated, allowing interactions within the common workspace, common planning time, and common tasks allow both new and veteran teachers professional learning that is embedded in professional development (Shank, 2005). Successful professional learning is generated with related learning opportunities (Piggot-Irvine, 2006). Teachers learn by undertaking activities that are specific to their experiences in teaching; and through reflection and collaboration (Shank, 2005).

Looking beyond the traditional forms of professional development, William (2008) delineated verbiage between teachers knowing that, and knowing how to guide in development of a dominate model for teacher training. Ashburn and Floden (2006) listed intentionality, content centrality, active inquiry, and collaborative work as essential to

meaningful learning for adults. Policy makers viewed schools in terms of needing improvement to grow and succeed (Gallagher, 2008). Watkins (2006) viewed teacher research as a vehicle for professional learning that is unlike any other form of adult learning and reiterated that teachers are capable of making their own connections with learning and teaching. Easton (2004) contended that professional learning should give and benefit from the real world. Further, Easton stated that exceptional teacher training relates directly to classroom learning. Finally, Easton (2008) gave the following edicts for success in professional learning as: (a) content-rich, (b) collaborative, (c) a culture of quality, (d) slowing the pace of schooling to reflect on learning, and (e) providing activities that make PLCs more meaningful.

One could then ask why professional development initiatives are sometimes ill-received by educators. The obvious answer would be that central components of effective planning and delivery were not in effect. However, a missing component might be that data-driven results have not been considered. According to Gonzales and Vodicka (2008), a realistic approach to development of professional learning must include the following components to be successful:

- a systematic approach to learning – as opposed to arbitrarily selecting subject matter to cover in professional learning;
- content chunking – the inevitable pitfall to many initiatives is to cram too much information into too short a time period;
- peer teaching – deemed a social act, engaging peers in development often produces more effective teacher buy-in;

- technology-driven activities – engagement increases with participation in technology-driven learning;
- humor – laughter increases lifelong learning;
- follow up – the proverbial sit and get workshops fail the learner with lack of proper follow up to learning;
- conversations and consistency – allowing for collegial conversation at even intervals allows for learning to occur successfully with adults; and
- next steps – being aware that there are additional steps to the aforementioned process allows for alignment of strategies and focus on application of learning. (pp. 8-13).

Further, obstacles mask themselves in rhetoric and produce autonomy and resentment (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Barriers in adult learning are pervasive and evident in most educational surroundings. Relying on effective planning, purpose, execution and follow-up enable realistic goals and objectives for professional learning to occur. The challenging aspects of professional development are finding the best educators to train and find teachers willing to be responsible for their own learning (Higgs-Horwell & Schwelik, 2007). By providing the venue for both collegial conversations about learning and student achievement, concrete learning takes place (Vandeweghe & Varney, 2006).

Teachers are charged with implementing new knowledge (Fullan, 1991). More importantly to some, teaching quality relies in many ways on the details of the practice. Professional development that focuses on training teachers to overcome obstacles in teaching increases instructional effectiveness and relevancy (Kennedy, 2006). Wiggins

and McTighe (2006) asserted there should be a correlation between instructional assessment and sound professional development principles implemented by teachers to match the needs of learners. Termed a default, Macfarlane and Hughes (2005) expressed concerns that educational development focuses on teaching and learning; lacking the broader aspects of academic practice.

An essential component in professional development is communication. Infusing components such as meaningful conversation become indispensable for strengthening cultural proficiency for staff and stakeholders within a school's community (Lindsey, Roberts & CampbellJones, 2005).Although deemed important, opportunities for collegial conversation are often void. The essence of research-based professional development involves the practices of: (a) dialogue and sharing practice, (b) dialogue about beliefs, (c) frameworks for professional learning conversations, (d) asking questions, (e) active listening, (f) valuing silence, (g) listening to what has actually been said, (h) using affirming body language, and (i) using words the learner uses (Cordingley, 2005). Dirkx (2008) contended that the emotions, feeling, affect, and emotion in learning have long ranked in importance for adult learners. Dirkx suggested that a more meaningful, hands on approach be involved to improve communication in professional development.

Considering communication to be the how of professional development opportunities, Dunn et al. (2009) looked specifically at the learning-style instruction and its effect on teachers. The study looked at teachers' practices; the impact of learning styles on what was taught; the impact on the teachers' values; a question of improved instruction; student outcomes due to learning styles of teachers; improved perceptions of

learning outcomes; and whether teachers felt that learning styles had an overall impact of learning. The results supported the premise that if teachers used differentiation with a learning-styles approach, their learning and that of their students was considerably enhanced. Structured dialog in a PLC is a positive means to growth in professional practice (Hollins, 2006). Additionally, Thwaite and Rivalland (2009) conducted a study to look at miscommunication by the teacher. They argued that the area of classroom discourse within professional development is often overlooked. The ability to convey meaning accurately to students and cohorts is deemed a necessity for effective instruction.

Schubert (2007) posited that if professional development is to be authentic and meaning, it should hold the following traits:

- view the training as a process – not as a one-time event;
- staff members should be given time to practice and rehearse what they have been taught;
- both review and refresh time should always be given after staff receive initial training;
- review events that occur within an organization to ensure that training concepts and principles are accurately applied;
- assure that mentoring models are available for further support;
- make sure that administration and leaders within the school/organization understand the policies and continue to support professional development initiatives; and

- ensure that the philosophy of any professional development program supports the goals and objectives within that organization.

Wood (2008) felt educators agree that if the experience of learning is designed effectively, and continues on an on-going basis, the goal of integrating practices would evolve.

Current Research by Walden Students

A wealth of professional development research was available through Walden University. Several qualitative case studies were reviewed; many espousing similar interests to my proposed study regarding professional development relevancy to teachers. The first study "Bridging the Performance Gap: Applying Payne's Model to Professional Development" (Michael Zinn, 2007) involved Ruby Payne's model for professional development opportunities; focusing further on Bandura's social learning theory. The basis for Zinn's study was to determine if teacher efficacy would generate successful experiences through professional development opportunities. This case study took place in a large suburban middle school. Teachers at this school had experienced a dramatic increase in both minority and below poverty level students. The purpose for the professional development was to enhance the foundation of teaching efficacy with qualitative inquiry. The outcome of the study proved positive, indicating that Payne's model and Bandura's social learning theory could be directly related to success in professional learning. The researcher noted participants' ability to relate to students in a more enhanced manner; building strong relationships. Participants also noted an improved understanding of the relationship between poverty and learning. Another major

observation was an enhanced understanding of parental concerns for children of poverty. The result of this study linked professional development to the interests of teacher learning and subsequent changes in teacher behavior.

Time was considered a basic hindrance in this study, as the training was relatively short in teacher's terms. The principal of the school involved in Zinn's (2007) study indicated that Payne's model lacked significant examples for productive learning; resulting in weak comprehension by teachers. The absence of concrete examples was deemed a weakness of the program; affecting the amount of applicable knowledge to the classroom. Overall, the researcher indicated that results showed that Payne's model could be effective with staff members if given extended time to process material and content of the model. Teacher feedback was important to the concluding results of this study.

Zinn's (2007) study closely paralleled the methodology outlined in case studies previously studied, and of interest to me. A one-group pretest-posttest design was used. Further, Zinn used teacher interviews, observation, and documented evaluation in his findings. The principal and counselor at Zinn's school were involved with data collection and input for findings of the study. Overall, Zinn's study lends credence to the field of professional development by providing insight into Payne's model and the use of Bandura's social learning theory (Zinn, 2007).

A second study of relevance to my research, entitled "Using the Lesson Study Model of Professional Development to Enhance Teacher Collaboration" presented both a comparative and contrasting viewpoint. DuFresne (2007) described the purpose of her qualitative study as following the Japanese professional development model to determine

whether increased collaborative time would enhance teacher success. DuFresne determined that there was a gap between the School Improvement Plan (SIP) to allow for collaborative time and the actual time given to teachers to collaborate. Similar to the collaborative inquiry process, the lesson study model follows similar steps.

DuFresne (2007) initially referred to following Creswell's (2003) foundation for a grounded theory study by setting up interviews, used observation in the field, and debriefed and reflected on the lessons taught by teachers. Later referred to as a triangulated case study, DuFresne was involved in extensive interviews and the development and oversight of focus groups. Eight middle school teachers were used in this study. Social studies, math, and science teachers were used.

DuFresne (2007) concluded that the lesson study model could be a viable means to strengthen teacher engagement and learning in professional development. The overall outcome was positive in that teachers reported that they were drawn closer through collaborative efforts in their focus groups. Overwhelmingly, the participants echoed sentiments that they were learning by observing each other and doing activities based on the lesson study model. Overall, DuFresne felt that use of the lesson study model for professional development would enhance collaboration, increase instructional effectiveness, and strengthen instructional best practices among staff members.

Current Research Outside Walden University

A third study, "Examining Teacher Growth in Professional Learning Groups for In-Service Teachers of Mathematics" mirrors the foundation for the previous two studies. Kajander and Mason (2007) studied the learning process of middle school teachers of

mathematics, outside Ontario, involved in professional learning groups (PLGs). Synonymous with professional learning communities, PLGs are groups of educators collaborating to increase student achievement through study. A mixed methods design using surveys and interviews was developed. The survey was a pencil and paper instrument designed to measure attitudes and beliefs of teachers with Likert-type questions. Extensive audiotapes and field notes were taken to thoroughly encapsulate discussions during meetings. The researchers' intent was to provide insight into an area with little known research; professional learning communities.

Positive results were reflected by members of the PLGs in this study. Kajander and Mason (2007) noted differing types of learning reported by various members with the groups. Student achievement and classroom processes were among the items discussed positively within the PLGs. The researchers expressed the advantage of sharing both qualitative and quantitative results with faculty. Teachers were able to view values of others in the profession, and collaborate in a meaningful way. It was noted that the overall process by which the PLGs were conducted was markedly different. No evidence of foundation for these differences was found. However, the researchers expressed that the results of the study positively impacted how teachers interacted with each other; using data provided from the study to gain approval and confidence by the faculty. In essence, this research fostered PLGs and other collaborative efforts within professional development for teachers.

A fourth case study I reviewed was conducted in Barbados by Cher Ping Lim (2007). Titled "Building Teachers' Capacity for Using Technologies in Schools: A case

study of in-service professional development in Barbados,' Cher Ping Lim directed this study towards the advancement of professional learning for teachers in Barbados. Working with the Ministry of Education, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Youth Affairs and Sports of Barbados, Ping Lim conducted research to guide principles of professional development in technology for teachers.

Realizing an innate tendency for the teachers of Barbados to resist change, this research was conducted to expressly determine if teachers were able to obtain greater flexibility and self-determination by constructing meaning in this study. Following the constructivist theory, Ping Lim (2007) sought to change teacher attitudes and enhance adult learning. Key components of the in-service professional development model were: (a) on-site professional development, (b) active learning combined with scaffolding, (c) inter-department professional development teams, (d) teachers as role models and facilitators, and (e) center of excellence as professional development sites for teachers.

This qualitative study involved observation, field notes, and videotaping instruction and meetings of teachers. The outcome was positive in that consultancies were established to support teachers. All stakeholders were actively involved and enthusiastic about the training received during this study. Additional recommendations by the researcher included additional training for teachers; incentives and motivation to empower teachers; appointing technical assistants within schools to support technology initiatives; redefining the role of the coordinator for technology; gaining more autonomy for school leaders and technology funding; and continuity within the professional development model for teachers.

A fifth study correlated strongly to the previous studies I found on professional development. A contrast was that the study was conducted with teachers in Britain and Wales. Poulson and Avramidis (2003) conducted their study to compare and contrast several case studies on the subject of professional development. Based on the premise that professional learning and development are "fundamental to the achievement of these aims," (p. 543) the researchers concluded, much the same as Guskey (2003) and others previously mentioned, that long-term, sustained training is imperative for adult learning to occur. Collegiality was listed as a significant means of developing professional development and reflection.

A sixth study conducted by Hatch, White, and Capitelli (2005) drew from preexisting research on professional development. They concluded that there are four key factors to look at when developing teacher training. These four factors were: (a) teachers' prior knowledge, (b) the nature of their interactions, (c) the representations of thinking and practice that they develop and use, and (d) the contexts in which they operate and draw on their prior experiences. Of utmost importance, the researchers concluded that the application of these skills is essential to adult learning.

The seventh case study I reviewed compared two approaches to adult learning: one approach measured compliance to local and district prescribed instructional practices; the second approach called for teachers to organize PLCs or teacher inquiry communities to promote ownership and mutual learning (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Based on the inputs, means, and outcomes of the two approaches, Levine and Marcus concluded that teachers must be taught how to dialogue and form trusting relationships. Similar to the

previous studies, Levine and Marcus conclude that more needs to be done in the areas of building teacher collegiality and further investigating teacher interests and needs within professional development.

Timperley (2005) reported research based in New Zealand on the essential components of PLCs and their ability to increase student achievement. The data collection phase of the study included the following: (a) understanding the problem, (b) making links between administration and teacher, (c) designing more authentic testing, and (d) forming a generalization. First, the assistant principal and teachers worked to identify the problem with accuracy of data that would enable adjusted instruction to be made. Then the teachers and assistant principal worked to make a connection between what was observed and what the teachers should have done to help students comprehend. Teachers were reluctant to realize that on differing levels their apprehension to change their instructional methods affected student progress. The next phase involved having teachers report how they were going to change their instruction to meet student needs. By addressing the knowledge, skills, and expectations for instruction, shared leadership became the responsibility of all stakeholders.

In a research paper by Timperley, Parr and Bertanees (2009), a direct correlation was found between teaching learning and student learning. The importance of the project was based on the quality of engaging conversations in PLCs relative to teachers' prior knowledge and preconceptions of student achievement. The realization of student differences in learning was of great importance to the project. Extensive study of

students' learning needs and teacher needs resulted in deepening knowledge and teacher skills. The end results were changes in teacher behaviors and interactions with students.

Summary

I reviewed a significant number of reputable sources to ascertain how pertinent the study for delivery models in professional development and how they may make an impact on social change within education. Reviewing case studies completed in the field of professional development, a correlation I found some correlations in the studies between teacher interests and changes in behavior. As seen in the Meta analysis study (CCSSO, 2009), a connection between successful professional development planning and increased student performance were not identified. By using measurable outcomes within the training and student achievement, the correlations yielded some positive results. However, the research finding did not support a direct link between professional development and student improvement. A need for further research was a prevailing conclusion drawn in most of those studies reviewed. Through comparison and contrast of several case studies, it could be concluded that the essence of effective adult learning begins and ends with the individual. Professional developers can set the stage. However, the teacher must embrace the learning and make it their own in order for true learning to occur. An historical viewpoint of professional development shed light on the paradigm shift between educating teachers about childhood development to current trends that educate adults about adult thinking and processes. Unlike childhood developmental theorists, current conceptual frameworks for adult learning focus on how adults learn and apply knowledge in a different manner than children. Research continues in the field of

professional development and adult learning. Through comparison and contrast of several case studies, it could be concluded that the essence of effective adult learning begins and ends with the individual. Professional developers can set the stage. However, the teacher must embrace the learning and make it their own in order for true learning to occur.

A direct correlation of previous research to current research within the field was evident, as differing methodologies were described. Concluding statements led me to an awareness of the importance for my research and its potential to impact social change in relation to professional development by adding to the body of knowledge regarding teacher preferences in this area and its relationship to increased student performance.

Section 1 included an introduction to the study; background and outline for the study, and in section 2 I provided an overview and detailed introspect of professional development's origin and growth over the past 4 decades in the area of adult learning, along with a student of current research findings and conclusions. Section 3 provides a complete description of methodology to be used.

Section 3: Methodology

Introduction

Professional development occur in varied forms of its purpose within educational settings; teachers a focal point in education. My research study was designed to ascertain attitudes and preferences of teachers' learning regarding the delivery method(s) of their professional learning; and determination of changes in teaching behaviors. Qualitative study with surveys and observations are prevalent; asking teachers their preferences for their learning is not as prevalent. The current research indicates one of the keys to successful training includes the quality of the content, process, and context (Guskey, 2000). My exploratory case study examined the process by which behaviors are changed within professional development training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Planning effective training that allows teachers to acquire knowledge and skills is often a challenging task for professional development facilitators. However, determining the element of changed behavior is integral to successful professional development.

As professional development has grown in popularity over the past 3 decades, how teachers learn best has become a definitive question (Trotter, 2006). My qualitative case study explored the attitudes and preferences teachers expressed regarding their own learning within particular delivery models, such as small group, lecture, experiential, and/or mixed models, action research, peer coaching, and review in professional development. The most fundamental aspect of effective teacher training concerns the needs of the participants. By determining preferences for delivery models, professional development planners gain invaluable information; thus, the potential for changes in

teacher beliefs and practices (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). More specifically, my research provided an opportunity to study what type(s) of development delivery methods might enhance optimum learning experiences and behavioral changes for future teacher training.

The technique of using generic questions with participants allows for open responses (Moran, 2007). My study was based on teachers with previous professional learning experiences. Interviewing participants resulting in dialogue between the researcher and participants "can lead to social change that transforms the lives of participants in positive ways," by examining the teachers' perspectives regarding the realm of their previous learning experiences (Hatch, 2002, p. 17). I allowed some flexibility with the order of questions depending on responses from the participants (Merriam and Associates, 2002). Teachers in this study were questioned about their learning and any related changes in their behavior (Caffarella, 2002). My study explored whether current school-focused and district initiatives for staff development address teachers' needs, expressed by teachers' own preferences, or whether adult learning needs might be better met with alternative forms of professional learning models. Such alternative methods would include online courses and professional learning communities (PLCs).

Design

My qualitative case study provided research based on teachers' preferences regarding professional development delivery models. By establishing a rapport with the teachers and allowing for open-ended responses, I gave teachers opportunities to share their interests. The focus for my study was on precepts and internal beliefs of educators' professional development experiences, not on the case in point (Creswell, 2003). The research method was based on asking general questions with a generic technique, lending itself towards open, honest responses from participants (Moran, 2007). Through qualitative analysis, participant preferences can be studied using authentic conversations (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Further, by engaging participants in open-ended questioning, professional development designers can better understand the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the learners' experiences (Caffarella, 2002). Responses were coded and analyzed; rich, descriptive discussions were included in the findings and results.

Spending considerable time in the field, the researcher collects and studies data in order to reconstruct participants' sense of their worlds (Hatch, 2002) in the case of this study, pertaining to learning opportunities. My case study included a qualitative model based on professional development opportunities offered to teachers in their local school and/or district. I solely used intensive interviews of 10 selected participants regarding professional development delivery models. I acted in a professional manner; avoiding involvement or influence with the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Based upon review of literature, I developed an exploratory case study intended to measure attitudes of teachers. These teachers were interviewed regarding preferences in delivery models in

professional development. My case study involved a random sampling of participants (Creswell, 2003). My process of data collection included field notes taken during individual interviews. Interviews were audio taped for accuracy. Specifically, my qualitative study was intrinsic in nature as it involved personal preferences for professional development indigenous to the faculty being used (Creswell, 1998).

The Research Site

The six public elementary schools used for the research were located in a large suburban county in Georgia. The school district educated over 106,000 students during the 2010-2011 school year. The ethnic breakdown was as follows: White 44.5%; Black 31.2%; Hispanic 16.5%; Asian 4.8%; Multi-Racial 2.7% and American Indian <0.1%. Approximately 45 % of students qualified for free/reduced lunches; transiency was 24.2% in 2009-2010. There were approximately 3,000 students enrolled within the six schools involved in my study. Students included special needs prekindergarten through fifth grade. Demographics in the six areas of the district varied greatly including 8000+ ESOL students from over 130 countries; including over 83 major languages spoken. The certified faculty at the six research sites ranged from 3-20 years experience. As gatekeeper of this research design, I had accessibility to the participants, through permission of the county and site based principals.

Research Population

The research population consisted of 10 teachers, one or two randomly chosen from each of the six school's alphabetical rosters (Krause, 1991). The first 10 random numbers in a random number table were used to coincide with the roster of teachers. The

first name on each school's roster was numbered, beginning with the number 1. If a participant declined the next name on the roster was chosen. For purposes of the study, only teachers having taught 3 or more years in the current school system were sought. Choosing teachers with 3 or more years' experience was preferable to allow for a perspective of previous professional development experiences. Random selection also allowed for a variety of grade level, general education versus special education, and gender of the participants.

I requested and secured IRB approval (# 08-09-10-0351897) before data were gathered. Permission was granted from the school district and participating schools' principals, and consent forms were signed by participants (Creswell, 2003). Permission was first gained from the school district in two stages. After initial permission from the school district, permission was gained from the principal of each school chosen for the research. Permission from the principals was sent back to the school district for final approval. Finally, a signed consent form was obtained from each of the 10 participants in the study before research began. All documents were sent to Walden University before final IRB approval was obtained.

Data Collection

Data collected during my study included qualitative samples. I gave consideration to each date collection site with no disruption to any classroom setting. Students were not present as I interviewed after each school's dismissal time. Respective of the data collection site, minimal disruption was involved during data collection. I allowed at least 1day's interval in-between interviews to allow the researcher to evaluate data and avoid

confusion between participants (Creswell, 2003). Serving as gatekeeper, I respected the integrity of the facility and participants involved. Any harmful information collected was eliminated to protect the participant(s) involved. Data collected will be kept in a secure location within my personal home library. Both paper and electronic copies of the data will be kept for 5 years. Names of participants were removed from data. After 5 years the information will be discarded properly; paper copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be erased.

Interviews

Ten selected participants were independently interviewed for a period of approximately 1hour. The researcher requested and secured IRB approval before data collection was gathered. During the time of each interview, I established a rapport with the participants. The interviews were audio recorded. Open ended questions were used to interview the participants. The Interview Protocol (Appendix A) contained three icebreaker questions, and nine questions related to the research topic. I attempted to make the participants feel at ease through the use of an icebreaker (Hatch, 2002). Respecting the research site, I strived to leave the study site undisturbed. All inquiries were minimal, allowing for the natural flow of learning within the school. Also, I was aware of any hesitancy by the participants, moving on to others that choose to participate. All research was conducted in a professional, unbiased, scientific manner to enable data collection to be seamless, leaving a good impression at the research site (Creswell, 2003).

Data Analysis

I qualitatively coded and analyzed details following in depth interviews of selected participants. Details included a series of responses and probes, such as:

1. Attention probe (AR): Let the interviewee know that the researcher was listening carefully;
2. Background (B): Questions designed to give the researcher information about the interviewee;
3. Concluding background (CB): Questions designed to move from the introductory phase to general research questions;
4. Basic (Ba): General questions;
5. Clarification probe (CP): Used when the interviewer was unclear about a response by the interviewee;
6. Continuation (C): Response by the interviewer to indicate that the interviewee should continue (i.e. "Uh huh; yes; more, please");
7. Detailed (D): Encouraged the interviewee to give more specifics;
8. Finalization (F): Questions to guide the close of the interview;
9. Negative (N): Interviewee responses that are negatively-stated;
10. Steering probes (SP): A means to gain further clarification within responses; guiding an interviewee back to the subject; and
11. Validation (V): Affirmation by the interviewer (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The coding procedure for the data analysis was used consistently throughout the interview and data collection phase of the research, allowing me guidance and

organization of responses and probes. I attempted to transcribe and review records shortly after the interviews, allowing time to clear up any ambiguity from each interview (Hatch, 2002). Throughout this process, I began to form conclusions based on the data, cognizant that qualitative research is never complete (Hatch, 2002). I brought bias regarding prior experience with the formulation and expectations of professional development (Creswell, 2003). Patterns of responses and probes used were then analyzed. Positive versus negative responses, probes used to elicit more information or move the participant's responses back on track were infused. Key descriptors included coding responses for background information; clarification and continuation cues, negative, steering, and validation probes, and cues. Any conclusions of results regarding preferences were shared during the member checking process. Recommendations for future models in professional development have been provided in section 5, along with implications of social change based on the results.

Quality

Respective of the research sites, I attempted to leave the study sites undisturbed. All contact within the research sites was minimal, allowing for the natural flow of learning within the school. My role was that of interviewer, recorder, and reporter (Creswell, 2003). To avoid conflict of interest, no participants were used from my school. I attempted to build rapport with participants, establishing collegiality and trust. Also, I was aware of any hesitancy by the participants; allowing adequate time for the interviewee to respond to questions. Data considered detrimental were eliminated to ensure privacy of the participant. All research was conducted in a professional, unbiased,

scientific manner to enable data collection to be seamless (Merriam & Associates, 2002); leaving a good impression at the research site. Member checking; peer debriefing; and use of rich, thick narrative was used to provide a valid balance of data collection. Peer debriefing was done by my school's principal to establish trustworthiness. The principal of my school held a doctorate and was an experienced source for reviewing the data I collected. I sent copies of my field notes to each participant through the school district's electronic mail. The only identification was the numerical number I assigned to each participant. I then spoke with each participant when they received the information and I did not proceed with data analysis or reporting until all 10 participants were contacted and approval was given to me to proceed. Ethical practices were followed throughout the study. I ensured ethical methods be used to provide a quality research study worthy of Walden's standards and expectations. As such, I complied with all ethical standards in research, as outlined by the university. I began using an outline of participant responses to begin writing the narrative. Quotes and a summation of each identified theme and subtheme were then infused into the writing. Several rewrites were done in section 4 to assure the quality of information I was sharing in the narrative was reported with accurately (Creswell, 2003).

Summary

A complete description of methodology, including research design, coding, and research questions were presented in section 3. Coding responses, including probes to encourage and extend responses from participants, analyses of responses and findings of the study are reported in section 4. Conclusions based on the interview results, and recommendations for current practices and future professional development planning follow in section 5.

Section 4: Presentation of Data and Analysis

Introduction

My exploratory case study was conducted in a large suburban school system in Georgia to determine preferences of elementary teachers in delivery models of professional development. A random sample of 10 elementary school teachers was chosen and interviewed regarding experiences in their professional learning. After the initial meeting at which background information was gathered, I asked the participants 10 open ended questions. Member checking was used for participant review, and peer debriefing completed for quality by my principal, to review answers relating to the research question and subquestions:

Primary research question: What are elementary teachers' preferences regarding delivery models of school-focused and related professional learning?

Subquestions:

1. What type(s) of deliver model(s) in professional learning (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) do elementary teachers prefer?
2. What reason(s) do elementary teachers' give for their preferences in delivery models (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) of professional development?

3. Do elementary teachers feel that certain delivery models encourage/bring about changes in their teaching behavior?

The Participants

Ten participants were randomly chosen from within the school system. There are six geographic areas within this large suburban school system. At least one participant from each of the six areas was chosen; two participants were chosen in four areas and one participant in each of the remaining two areas. Each of the six elementary schools was chosen randomly from a list of schools in each of the six areas in the district. Teachers were randomly chosen from a list provided by the participating school's principal. By using an alphabetical list and numbering the certified staff from each of the schools chosen, corresponding numbers were chosen from a random number chart (Krause, 1991). If the potential participant declined, the next random number was chosen from the number chart and another potential participant chosen using the corresponding number from the staff list until the researcher obtained 10 participants for the study.

Process of Data Collection

Potential participants were sent an Invitation to Participate in Research and Consent Form. After receiving consent forms signed by participants and the principal of their respective school, correspondence, phone conversations, initial background interview questions, and research related questions in interviews were scheduled. I recorded each interview along with taking field notes and using an interview protocol (Appendix A.) for each participant (Creswell, 2003). Each teacher was interviewed individually. I reminded participants that they would remain anonymous and that the

results would be shared for member checking before submitting the final draft of the paper. The interviews were downloaded onto my personal home computer, which is password protected and stored on a separate flash drive. Each participant was coded with a number 1-10 to maintain confidentiality. Interviews took place during a 2-week period at the end of March, 2011.

Data Analysis

My research project was an exploratory, qualitative study questioning teachers about their preferences for delivery models in their professional learning. After completing the interviews, I listened to the interviews, adding additional notes to the field notes obtained during the initial interviews. Coding was used for each response. I studied and compared field notes, and coding to determine if there were familiar themes or subthemes that were evident (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). I followed protocol using systematic coding and extraction of information rather than constructing meaning based on confirmation of initial ideas (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The patterns and trends that emerged are presented in Table 1. The topic for each question used during the interviews is listed, followed by themes that were evident through the data analysis. After the themes are listed there are subthemes within each theme that are also provided.

Table 1.
Themes and Sub-Themes

Topic of Question	Theme	Sub-Theme	Sub-Theme
1.Delivery model that supports learning.	Hands-on	1.1 Make & Take	1.1 Technology
2.Delivery model that does not support learning.	Lecture	2.1 Presenter not in field.	2.2 Unprepared presenter
3.Most effective professional development experience.	Hands-on/ Interactive	3.1 Summer staff development opportunity.	3.2 Math & Reading/Language Arts
4.Least effective professional development experience.	Lecture	4.1 Motivational speaker.	4.2 Too much information in short period of time.
5.Current staff development fosters learning.	Interactive	5.1 Collaborative/PLCs	5.2 Literacy coaches
6.Opinion of current staff development delivery model.	Collaborative/PLCs	6.1 Technology	6.2 Math and Reading/Language Arts
7.Change preferences for current school-focused staff development.	CHOICE in learning	7.1 Restructure current model.	7.2 Use experts in the field.
8.Behavior changes in classroom due to professional learning.	County training	8.1 Literacy coaches.	8.2 Interactive training.
9.Barriers to incorporating/infusing learning.	TIME	9.1 Pacing of standards.	9.2 age-appropriate barriers within standards.
10.Anything additional to add/reiterate.	CHOICE in learning		

Research Findings

Ten participants were interviewed and asked about their preferences for delivery models in professional learning. The research findings were validations of many professional development practices currently used in the school system. Ten themes and subthemes are identified with narrative and quotations from participant interviews.

Theme 1 Hands-On Learning Supports Learning

The first theme that emerged in the analysis dealt with the delivery model(s) that best support learning for the individual participant. Themes are pervasive answers to a question mentioned by several participants. Trends are similar responses given within themes that are repeated in subsequent research questions. The findings for the subthemes below are in response to the first substantive question asking participants what delivery model(s) they felt supported their learning. The responses relate to the research question, "What are teachers' preferences regarding delivery models of school-focused and related professional learning?" and particularly to the first interview question, "What delivery model(s) do you feel support your learning the most? How do you base that decision regarding support for your learning?"

Participant comments are as follows:

- Participant 1: "I cannot sit and listen to someone talk for 3 hours. I have to be actively engaged with hands-on activities."
- Participant 3: "Technology – hands-on anything. I have to have hands-on."
- Participant 4: "You get a syllabus to pick and choose what you want. I want to interact in a hands-on way to understand."

- Participant 5: “Stuff that’s very experiential where you participate in what you’re going to teach hands-on. Workshops where you’re singing and dancing like how you’ll teach your own kids back at school.”
- Participant 6: “My own personal learning is online learning. I like to do it myself.”
- Participant 7: “Being able to see it, touch it, and be able to think about it.”
- Participant 8:”I like to get the information and have a hand out where I can take notes. I have to have hands-on or I don’t learn it.”
- Participant 9: “I like literacy training for redelivery. I have a hands-on approach to learning.”
- Participant 10: “I’m very visual, so I have to have something to see and something to do.”

Nine of the 10 participants expressed a preference for one form or another of hands-on learning. Hands on learning activities involve the participant touching or creating the subject being studied. For example, in professional development, participants indicated they wanted to learn technology by doing, making samples to take back to the classroom. Participants gave examples of experiences where the participant was actively engaged either kinesthetically or tactically with training.

1.1 Make and Take Five of the 10 participants responded to their preferred delivery model of learning explaining that being involved with training where they create a product that can be taken back to the classroom (make and take) is preferable.

Comments were as follows:

- Participant 1: “The most beneficial training is make & take. Something where you are actually introduced to so many things, but you can make it and take it back with you to the classroom to implement.”
- Participant 2: “Give me a little bit of information and let me create something to take back to the classroom so I remember it better.”
- Participant 5: “Specialists in my field want something concrete they can apply back at school. If I have a model I can generate lessons from that.”
- Participant 6: “I like Make and Take because I can do it all on my own. Then when I get back to the classroom it makes sense to me.”
- Participant 9: “Like the kids, more hands-on is best for me. When I can make something I understand it better.”
- Participant 10: “I am very visual, so I have to at least have an outline that I fill in, or make something to take back with me. My little ones like examples, too.”

Further, these participants gave particular examples of small group interaction with literacy and math training, both at the local school and within the school district, where they had been presented with concrete examples of activities to use with their elementary students. The teachers were then able to create activities to take back to their classrooms to enhance instruction and learning for their students.

1.2 Technology The second subtheme that emerged for hands on delivery models was in the area of technology. Participants expressed a preference for being able

to receive instruction in technology, and then have hands on experiences in the training. Some comments from participants were:

- Participant 3: "My principal knows any time technology training comes through to send my name in. My students use technology every morning with warm-up activities and throughout the day. The more technology training I can get, the better."
- Participant 6: "I prefer technology for my learning. I'm not a very good auditory learner, so I have to be doing the learning on the computer."
- Participant 7: "I can appreciate people talking about technology, but I have to do it. I am visual, so I can follow. Just let me try it, too."
- Participant 9: "The interactive whiteboard training is my favorite. I learn just as much as the kids when I can interact."

Whether the training was via an instructor or self-paced online instruction, participants expressed a preference for being able to practice and implement tasks after initial instruction.

Through the use of SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) within the school district's county, each elementary classroom within the district has an interactive board, Promethean ActivBoards or Smart Boards, to use for instruction. Participants explained that observation of technology instruction for use with the aforementioned Promethean ActivBoards or Smart Boards or being given a handout with general information is not effective unless teachers are given an opportunity to practice in

conjunction with these two forms of instruction. This practice includes both creation of instructional flip charts and general navigation aspects of the interactive boards themselves.

Theme 2 Lecture Does Not Support Learning

The second theme that appeared during interviews related to delivery models that participants felt did not support their learning. Participants were asked, "What delivery model(s) do you feel do not support your professional learning? How do you base that decision regarding support for your learning?" Seven out of the 10 participants, when asked about what delivery model does not support their learning, reported that lecture is the least supportive delivery model, as follows:

- Participant 1: "After an hour or so listening to someone talk, I have to get up and leave. I don't want to be rude, but I have to be doing something."
- Participant 2: "I don't mind lecture if it's in a small group, but once you get more that 7 or 8 in a group I can't concentrate."
- Participant 3: "You can lecture a little while, but then you need to stimulate the teacher or after a while the teacher shuts you off just like the kids do."
- Participant 4: "Just sitting there listening, you just get so bored. You're tired of listening, listening, listening, when you want to see what can be brought back into the classroom."
- Participant 5: "I don't get very much out of lectures."
- Participant 6: "Pure lecture is not for me."

- Participant 10: “The ‘Sit and Get’ is the worst. You get bits and pieces, but you don’t get the whole picture.”

Sit and get, as it is often referred to in educator terms, was not a preference expressed by the majority of the participants. Examples of both staff development training at the local school and large group lecture at the district level were discussed. Participants that responded to lecture as being least effective also expressed that lectures were generally not of their choice; rather lecture was given at mandatory staff meetings or system in-services. Whether the training was held during local staff meetings/in-services, or district training, the lecture was not a training chosen by the participants.

2.1 Unrelated Field of Expertise by Presenters Within the theme of lecture, the first sub-theme that emerged was in the area of lecturers whose background was unrelated to the topic of the lecture. Comments were as follows:

- Participant 5: “When I had to just sit through a meeting and it had absolutely nothing to do with what I teach it was hard. The presenter didn’t know anything about what I teach.”
- Participant 7: “Some presenters give information that is completely irrelevant to what I teach. I have so much to do that it’s a waste of my time.”
- Participant 8: “The presenter didn’t even teach in the field. She acted like she was in a hurry to push her product and catch the next plane. It was such a waste of my time.”

Participants expressed feelings that this type of lecture negates the possibility for interaction or buy in on the participants’ part of the training relative to learning about a

new textbook adoption. Subsequent training at the local schools with colleagues was deemed more effective. Participant 8 explained that a "canned" presentation is essentially a waste of time for the participant as it lends no credible information to be gained by the training. The participant also responded that it is often obvious that presenters from textbook companies have either little or no experience in the classroom, or they have been in the classroom for a long time.

2.2 Unprepared Presenters The second sub-theme for lecturers is being unprepared for training. The participants that gave this reason for not learning from lecture stated emphatically that any lecturer that is unprepared insults the learner and wastes time for everyone involved, as follows:

- Participant 2: "They just gave us the information and didn't explain anything. I think they were just unprepared and it showed. The training was not effective at all."
- Participant 10: "You just can't hide it when the presenter is unprepared. It's such a waste of my time and it makes me feel I'm worthless to them."

Further, one participant stated having walked out of a training due to lack of preparedness of the presenter; the participants time was considered as valuable as the presenter.

Theme 3 Hands-On and Interactive are Most Effective In a question regarding the most effective staff development or professional development training experienced by the participants, the theme that was overwhelmingly evident was hands-on and interactive training. Participants were asked to, "Tell me what you feel was the most effective professional learning opportunity you have experiences and why you deemed it as such." Comments from participants were as follows:

- Participant 1: "We had training with a summer institute and everything was hands-on. It was wonderful. It was something where you were actually introduced to so many new things you wouldn't remember them all of you didn't make things and take them back."
- Participant 2: "There were two literacy coaches from the county that I had for guided reading training. We were able to model, role play, and do the guided reading ourselves; not just learn about the guided reading. It was awesome."
- Participant 3: "We had to take our weakest kids and design after school work for them. It included plans for differentiation. Being able to make those activities makes every training I go to more meaningful now."
- Participant 4: "I like science training where they demonstrate what to use in the classroom. You could see what the kids see. It was all hands-on and I liked that."
- Participant 5: "Having experiential training that's hands-on is what I like best. Using instruments and learning the way the kids do is important."

- Participant 6: “I can’t remember the name of it, but the county provided the training. It was all hands-on learning about reading and activities. We shared a lot of experiences about things we used in the classroom.”
- Participant 7: “I like being able to see it and do it. Technology instruction I got was great because you actually sat and did the same thing the instructor did. That’s most applicable to me.”
- Participant 8: “I liked the training for math where you went from group to group rotating to different presentations. Every time you rotated you got to do hands-on math. It was pretty good training.”
- Participant 9: “The interactive whiteboard training has been the best. It’s hands-on and that’s what I need. I can’t just sit and watch someone teach technology, I have to do it.”
- Participant 10: “We did a week of highly effective teaching strategies. Each day you watched someone teach, and then you got to be involved. The model of seeing it in action, then participating was great.”

Ten out of 10 participants felt that the most effective training experience that came to mind involved hands on and/or interactive elements.

3.1 Summer Staff or Professional Development Seven of the 10 participants gave examples of preferred training occurring during their off time in the summer. Regardless of the training, the common thread involved hands on learning, participatory, and/or interactive learning during a summer session.

- Participant 1: “The Summer Institute on math standards was my favorite. We made games. You are working on your own time and that makes a difference for me, anyway.”
- Participant 2: “When I did guided reading training during the summer I was able to take time to make lessons for my students. I learned a lot from it.”
- Participant 3: “I took a course at a local college on differentiation. I loved being able to learn without the pressure of being in school. I still have the book and use it a lot with my students.”
- Participant 4: “When I took the summer training they had a model classroom set up. I was able to participate and think of ways to use the activities in my own classroom.”
- Participant 6: “The best training was during the summer. The county sponsored it. I like training on my own time. I get more out of it that way.”
- Participant 7: “I took a course at a local college. Being able to meet with other specialists in my field and make things to use in the classroom was the best thing about it.”
- Participant 10: “We had a whole week where we came in during the summer. We planned and made activities for our classrooms. We had visuals and were able to model, too. The modeling was great.”

When asked to give further details, participants felt that giving of their free time without constraints of daily teaching lent to a more relaxed environment to receive information.

3.2 Math, Reading/Language Arts, and Science Training When participants were asked to think about one professional learning opportunity that stands out as being the most effective for them, hands on math; reading and writing; and science training were prominent. Specifics ranged from training with school district literacy and math coaches, to interactive experience with technology. Participants described the trainings as follows:

- Participant 1: "We studied math and were able to make games based on the math standards. I like to use new things in my centers for when I teach in small group."
- Participant 2: "I attended a guided reading workshop with another teacher. It was awesome. One of the teachers even came to my school for one week to help me plan and watch me teach."
- Participant 3: "The literacy coaches here are wonderful. They taught me ways to save time during guided reading. They came in and helped me set up my centers so I could focus more on the reading instruction. The kids love them, too."
- Participant 4: "The old science model training was great. You got to see everything set up and they modeled the activities. You participated. That's how I like to learn."
- Participant 5: "When I learned with other teachers in my field it was most beneficial. We were able to do hands-on learning together. I can relate when it's specific to my field."

- Participant 6: “The training was important because we got to experience it; not just sit and listen to someone.”
- Participant 7: “Being at a training session with other teachers in my field is exciting. We were able to share ideas and work on things we normally would not have time to do on our own.”
- Participant 8: “Moving around to different stations and working with math hands-on was most beneficial. I got great ideas for things to do back at school. It was well done by county math coaches.”
- Participant 9: “Being able to create flip charts to help students with math and reading is was a powerful learning experience.”
- Participant 10: “Being able to see a model and then take that back to your classroom helps me get the big picture. I can see how to help my students with reading when I have ideas to put into place.”

All 10 participants indicated that the reason for being the most effective training was the ability to interact in a meaningful way with qualified specialists in the area(s) of curriculum being taught. Further, having participation in a field of interest for the participant, such as the subjects of math, reading/language arts, and/or science was relevant.

Theme 4 Lecture is Least Supportive for Learning

Participants were asked about the least effective learning opportunity to support their learning. They were asked, “Tell me about the least effective professional learning opportunity you have experienced and why you deemed it as such. Regarding this

professional learning opportunity, what do you believe could have been done differently to make that experience more meaningful and educational for you?" In addition to comments previously mentioned under Theme 2 Lecture, participants made comments such as:

- Participant 6: "We had to stay once a week until 5:30 and watch videos about the program. Then we had to write about it. There was no discussion. We had no choice; we had to do it."
- Participant 8: "Watching someone else talk about technology and not show you or let you practice is the worst training I've been in."
- Participant 9: "I'm sure the school system pays a lot of money for some of these lecturers, but we don't get anything out of sitting all day and listening to someone else speak."
- Participant 10: "When you just have to sit there and listen and you don't even have anything written to follow I don't want it. I don't get anything out of it."

Several participants noted some form of lecture during professional development training as being the least effective for their preferred learning style. One participant reported that there were no areas that they felt were least-supportive; the participant said she takes anything negative and turns it into a positive in some form or fashion.

4.1 Motivational and/or Other Speakers Regarding lectures being the least supportive means for learning, 6 of the 10 participants felt that motivational speakers during district-mandated in-services, and company representatives that trained teachers

for textbook adoption programs were the least effective, making the following statements:

- Participant 1: “During preplanning we had to sit and listen to that man that sounds like a preacher. We had to repeat stuff. That was not useful at all.”
- Participant 2: “The math rap training didn’t do much for me. If I have to listen I also want time to discuss it. Don’t just hand me the information; teach me.”
- Participant 4: “You can listen to lecture for just so long and then you lose focus; like when we have to listen to those speakers during preplanning.”
- Participant 5: “I had to sit through a lecture on a topic that had nothing to do with my specialized field. If I don’t teach writing, how is it beneficial to me to sit and listen about it?
- Participant 8: “We had to go to training for a new program. The trainer was in such a rush to cram in all the information. I don’t even think she was a teacher.”
- Participant 9: “I don’t like the motivational ones. You know? The ones where you sit and they try to entertain you. I’m sure the county spends a ton of money for these entertainers. It’s not for me.”

Some participants felt strongly that during economic times such as these that district funds could and should be better spent. Two participants expressed comments that their time could be much better spent in their classrooms preparing for the first day of school as opposed to attending mandatory inservices.

Similarly, others felt that when required to attend new textbook adoption training often the trainers do not relate well to classroom teachers. They said that representatives from companies are often either noneducators or former educators that do not relate to current needs of a classroom teacher. Participants felt information given is too lengthy and time too short to gain anything meaningful during the training. The result for participants is often feeling a sense of urgency to leave the training due to feeling overwhelmed with the information or even bored and learning does not take place.

4.2 Too Much Information in Too Little Time Five of the participants said that with lectures too much formation is often given in too little time, as previously mentioned in Theme 2, and as follows:

- Participant 2: "They just gave us the stuff (math content) and didn't have enough time to actually train us on how to use it."
- Participant 4: "If they don't give you anything to take notes on, or go too quickly, you can't process the information."
- Participant 7: "With computers you have to watch, practice, and think about what you've just learned. They just gave us the information and didn't teach anything."

The result for participants is counterproductive for those in attendance; especially if the training is not of the participant's choosing. Irrelevant information from lecturers who are unprepared or non-engaging presenters make lecture less valuable to those who expressed that they attempt to learn when lecture is not the optional way to gain information.

Examples by participants also included statements about staff meetings where all teachers were included in lecture with a massive amount of information given in a short period of time. Three participants commented as follows:

- Participant 1: “Just sitting and looking up at a projector and then listening to so much information is tiring. I know the county tells administration what we need to know, but we need it in smaller chunks.”
- Participant 4: “Sometimes administration has a lot of stuff to tell us. In the past it was all done at once. Now it’s better because they break it up into smaller groups and we can discuss it.”
- Participant 10: “I understand that the administrators have to give us a lot of information in a short period of time. It’s better if we can listen, then talk about it so we understand better.”

After a long day of teaching, the participants reported that it was difficult to concentrate on the information being shared at staff meetings.

Theme 5 Interactive Staff Development

When asked how participant’s current school-focused staff development fostered learning, interactive delivery models were a common theme. Specifically, participants were asked, ‘how do you feel your current school-focused staff development fosters professional learning for you?’Whether the training was technology or curriculum-based, all ten participants reported that interactive activities supported their learning.

5.1 Collaborative Groups and PLCs Six out of the 10 participants explained how working in collaborative groups was a preferred way to engage in staff development opportunities, as follows:

- Participant 1: "We do learning communities once a month. We post things online to discuss with others. It is really good."
- Participant 2: "I like to do our grade level collaboration with common assessments. We've been setting up our data room. It's been very helpful."
- Participant 3: "We're able to work with our teachers collaboratively. We have everything we need for resources right here. They come in and work with us."
- Participant 4: "Our grade level collaboration frees you up to share ideas, then make things to use in your classroom."
- Participant 5: "I feel like our curriculum team has looked for good resources. We've been able to look at how different people are displaying the different aspects of the curriculum."
- Participant 10: "It's neat when we have our collaboration days."

Further, working with grade level teams that focus on areas of GPS and curriculum were common among responses given. Additionally, PLCs studied areas such as math and literacy. Participants reported positive results for being active in a school based PLC as they related to the subject matter.

Some participants were also involved with iRespond training for use with interactive boards. This technology training was considered highly effective because it provided hands-on interactive training.

5.2 School District Literacy Coaches Supporting the areas of reading and language arts, some participants reported that learning was best with literacy coach involvement. Literacy coaches are available through the school district for teachers that request help. The coaches provide training outside and inside the classroom. Along with district training, the participants explained instances where literacy coaches came into their classrooms to demonstrate, assist with planning, and facilitate learning for the teacher, as follows:

- Participant 2: "My first year of teaching I struggled with guided reading. Then (names given of two literacy coaches in the school district) they provided a series of workshops for new teachers. It was wonderful to have one of them come to my school and help me plan."
- Participant 3: "We have a super literacy coach here. Literacy, writing, anything, she's just incredible. There's another literacy coach and she's awesome with writing. They come into the classroom and the kids just love it."

Participants expressed their interest in interactive learning.

Theme 6 Collaborative training and PLCs (Professional Learning Communities)

When asked their opinion of their current school focused staff development delivery models, both collaborative training and PLCs were a common thread. Participants were asked, "What is your opinion regarding the delivery model(s) given in professional learning opportunities at your school?" Similar to responses given in the

previous question regarding how staff development fosters learning, several responses included collaborative work and PLCs, as quoted in 5.1.

6.1 Technology Questioning participants further regarding collaborative training and PLCs at the local school level, responses involving technology training were mentioned repeatedly, as follows:

- Participant 1: "We do a lot on Blackboard. We post discussions. We're doing a lot with math."
- Participant 3: "We do a lot with online training and use of our computer lab. I do anything I can with technology."
- Participant 4: "Our administration has been great with technology integration with collaboration. Now we get online and look at our data and come up with strategies. The collaboration focuses the teacher more rather than before. It's more targeted."
- Participant 7: "My principal has allowed me to collaborate online with teachers from other schools that teach the same area. I'm always given the opportunity for training at my school, but I appreciate the collaboration I get from others."
- Participant 9: "I love the whiteboard training. We meet every other week. I take careful notes at those meetings. They have been very useful."

Five participants' schools organized local training to include the use of online responses within PLCs and collaborative groups working on standards-based learning. Technology was a common link to working with others in a preferred learning model.

6.2 Math and Language Arts By further asking participants about collaborative and PLC interaction, their involvement with math and language arts was mentioned. The delivery model preference for receiving training in math and language arts made the learning more assessable and meaningful to those that were involved.

Theme 7 Choice in Learning/Time Involvement

Participants were asked, "What, if anything, would you like to see done differently to foster enhanced learning for yourself and the teachers at your school?" Nine out of 10 participants responded that having choice in their learning and having more time were important, as follows:

- Participant 1: "Time. There's just not enough planning time. We plan for eight subjects, centers, room set up, etc. It's just a rush to get it done. I wish I had more time."
- Participant 2: "We always need more time, but it gets done. For everything they want us to learn they should give us more time to try it."
- Participant 4: "I wish we had more opportunity – time – to do make and take. To make more activities – it's just so time-consuming. We need more time to collaborate."
- Participant 5: "I wish we had the chance to choose to go to meet with teachers to discuss our subject areas; math, science, music, art, etc."
- Participant 6: "Choice. Just give us a choice. We're like the kids – we learn differently."

- Participant 7: “I don’t know how the topics are chosen, but if we had the choice to go to meetings with other teachers that teach the same specialized fields I would like the opportunity. Maybe even be more involved in the schoolwide planning would help.”
- Participant 8: “More choice would be great. I’ve never been to professional development where there is any choice. You’re going to do this or that, but maybe we’ve been doing that for 36 years. Just give us a choice.”
- Participant 9: “Time for professional learning. Extent the school day and give us more release time.”
- Participant 10: “More time to get in all the curriculum. I want to keep it organized, but you just can’t keep up. I want time to organize it so I can go back and remember what I did with it the year before.”

By choice, participants expressed they preferred being able to choose the topic for their professional development; rather than mandatory training. One participant responded that nothing should be done differently; teachers and literacy coaches at the school are great.

7.1 Restructure Current Model Restructuring school-focused learning was mentioned among responses. By allowing teachers a choice in topics for learning, teachers would become more involved in their professional development, as previously mentioned. Additionally, choice would allow for more teachers to become involved in a positive way.

Time is the other issue participants felt was needed to enhance learning. By restructuring to allow teachers to study more intently in areas of their own expertise, professional learning would be more effective and efficient.

7.2 Use of Experts Other than using local teachers, three participants mentioned bringing in experts to train, as follows:

- Participant 1: "Online instruction allows a perspective from someone outside of the school system. I got different angles of teaching from the instructor."
- Participant 5: "I like it when I go to statewide workshops. They bring in specialists that teach us new ways to make learning fun. When I go to workshops like this I am always coming back and trying new things."
- Participant 6: "I liked it when they brought someone in to teach us our learning styles. Helped my teaching because I was able to look at the other children differently."
- Participant 10: "I liked learning from others at a local university. My teaching was improved from what I learned."

Teachers indicated that they want concrete examples of ways to improve teaching techniques and through the use of experts in these areas; stating all teachers would benefit.

Theme 8 School District Training

The question was posed to participants, "Tell me about any learning opportunities where you felt your behavior changed in the classroom. Do you feel the delivery model of that training influenced that change in behavior?" In response, eight of the participants

gave examples of district-level training that brought about direct changes in classroom teaching behavior.

8.1 Literacy Coaches School district literacy coaches are involved with training across the district, and individually at the school. Four of the participants felt that experiences with literacy coach training were most effective in changing instructional behaviors in the classroom in a direct, positive manner. Specific examples of guided reading instruction, both at the district level and school level were given, as follows:

- Participant 2: "I went to a guided reading workshop with another new teacher. The two literacy coaches (gave names) were great. They actually showed you how to teach guided reading. One of them came in for a whole week and helped me plan."
- Participant 3: "we have a super literacy coach here. She comes in and helps me plan."

Three literacy coaches' names were given, in particular, and cited as being instrumental in their instruction relative to behaviors in classroom instruction changing for teachers.

8.2 Interactive Learning Six of the participants mentioned interaction in professional development as having a direct impact on changes in classroom behavior. Areas of study included Positive Discipline; differentiation; small group study of learning styles; hands-on experiences with other teachers in the same specialized field; and highly effective teaching strategies. Some of those statements not previously listed are as follows:

- Participant 1: “I took a class online with Walden University for my Masters about succeeding with difficult children. I’ve used it for one of my students this year. My teaching was improved by the class.”
- Participant 2: “We got a chance to look at Positive Discipline in grade level collaboration. We got to read the book, try to conduct a class meeting, discuss the book. I learned how to avoid punitive punishment. For the most part, it works for 90% of my class.”
- Participant 3: “The county training and support have helped me to most; especially the hands-on and literacy coach support.”
- Participant 4: “Collaboration with differentiation showed us what it was and how to bring it into the classroom. That really helped.”
- Participant 5: “From the workshops I go to, I’m always coming back and trying something different.”
- Participant 8: “In one workshop I learned some new math tricks. We learned a lot of activities and songs. I came back and used it right away.”
- Participant 10: “The training on Highly Effective Teaching game me a lot of time to think. It was very useful.”

Participants’ comments validate instances where their behavior was impacted by their professional development experience.

Theme 9 Time

Participants were asked, "Are there any barriers that prevent you from incorporating/infusing newly-acquired skills/knowledge into your teaching?" Of those that listed a barrier, time was mentioned more frequently. Five participants felt they had support at the local school to integrate skills; one of the five participants mentioned that people create their own barriers, as follows:

- Participant 4: "I think teachers create their own barriers. I always hold high expectations for students in my classroom. If you do that, you don't have barriers."

Regarding a training situation, another of the five participants stated:

- Participant 7: "Taking a negative learning situation and turning it into positive a situation through positive thinking prevents barriers for me and others. I learned a lot about the positive and negative experiences."

Of those that mentioned time as a barrier, they also followed the statement with ways they were able to compensate for lack of time and the realization that there is never enough time to do everything they would like to do for their students, as follows:

- Participant 8: "Time is a major constraint. There's never enough time, but you get the work done anyway."

9.1 Standards Pacing Along the lines of time being a barrier to infusing knowledge in the classroom, three participants expressed frustration with following the school district's pacing guide for implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards, having stated:

- Participant 9: “When I moved back to Georgia several years ago I was concerned about the state standards. I was really stunned about the fact that only one third of the national standards were being covered in the state standards.”
- Participant 10: “The pacing of the curriculum is difficult. You just can’t get to all of it the way you want to do it.”

9.2 Age Appropriate Barriers An additional comment further stated regarding standards is as follows:

- Participant 1 – “The Georgia Performance Standards are not always age appropriate. If they could give us different ways to teach these standards for kids that aren’t ready it would be so much easier.”

The same three participants that commented under Theme 9 also followed their statements with similar comments that they realize there is never enough time to actually teach all they would like to teach their students.

Theme 10 Choice

The final question to participants involved asking, “Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding your experiences or attitudes towards professional learning?” Four of the participants said they felt the interview was complete and had nothing further to add. Two participants reiterated that choice in professional development would allow for meeting needs of delivery models within training. An additional closing comment was noted, as follows:

- Participant 8: "I would just emphasize that my specialized field has a lot going on; especially paperwork. With professional learning it's not always tied to what you're doing. Time is a major constraint."

Participants also mentioned that professional development choice must be realistic and sometimes choice is not an option.

Primary research question: What are elementary teachers' preferences regarding delivery models of school-focused and related professional learning?

The research showed that 9 out of 10 teachers interviewed preferred professional development that involved hands-on interaction as a means of adult learning. Teachers also gave specific examples of changes in teaching behavior based on previous learning opportunities.

Subquestion:

1. What type(s) of deliver model(s) in professional learning (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) do elementary teachers prefer?

Results of my research revealed preferences for face-to-face, interactive, and collaborative learning experiences. Teachers cited several county inservice trainings where they had been given opportunities to interact with others; often producing make and take artifacts to take back to their classrooms. In doing so, teachers felt they were able to gain a better understanding of the training.

Subquestion:

2. What reason(s) do elementary teachers' give for their preferences in delivery models (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) of professional development?

Responses from teachers regarding why the expressed preferences for collaborative, hands on, and interactive training included a sense of ownership for their own learning, feeling that the training was worth time spent if they were to return to school with a handmade artifact, and the value of connecting their learning with changes in teaching behavior produced improvement in student understanding. Teachers shared their passion for learning when circumstances yielded interaction and productive activities. Finally, a theme emerged for teachers wanting a choice in their learning. Several teachers were involved in training by literacy and math coaches within the school system. They cited names and specific situations that resulted in positive professional learning.

Subquestion:

3. Do elementary teachers feel that certain delivery models encourage/bring about changes in their teaching behavior?

Teachers expressed preferences for both hands on and collaborative learning to enhance and influence their teaching.

In conclusion, there were several common themes and subthemes that were evident through the interview procedure. Hands on and interactive training was a theme that repeated itself throughout the process of interviewing ten participants. Lecture and mandatory training in unrelated fields of expertise were also similar themes seen as counterproductive to professional learning. Time and choice of subjects for training were seen as barriers to productive learning for some participants. Collaboration, whether in a small group, grade level, or PLCs were mentioned frequently in a positive manner.

Section 1 of this study outlined the basis for researching teacher preferences in delivery models of professional development. Section 2 provided a detailed overview of the literature pertaining to professional development and teacher preferences. An outline of several models of professional development, along with a summary of the history of professional development was included. Section 3 included the methodology used for obtaining data relating to preferences in delivery models of teachers throughout a large suburban school system in the state of Georgia. This section presented data that was generated, recorded, and studied to determine patterns and trends relative to the research question. A detailed analysis of the results is contained within this chapter, along with a summary. Section 5 supplies the summary, conclusion, and recommendations for further study.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of my exploratory, qualitative case study was to determine preferences in delivery models of professional development among teachers. My intention was to minimize frustration for educators and facilitators; maximize time and energy spent in training; and to foster cost-efficient uses of time and talent to match goals of increasing student achievement. A void in research for preferences in delivery models was evident in current research. This case study was generated due to contradicting research regarding teachers' preferences with the type(s) of delivery models of professional development opportunities. Preferences were evident among participants for experiencing learning hands-on versus sitting and listening to others present information. Also, participants expressed an interest in choosing the topic(s) for their professional learning.

My study sought to identify themes and patterns among 10 participants throughout a large, suburban school district in Georgia. Within Knowles' (1984) theory of andragogy, which added to the body of knowledge relative to professional development, understanding how adults learn and share their learning was reviewed. Professional development research should include purposeful and intentional means to determine how educators prefer to receive training; consciously designed to bring about positive change and improvement (Guskey, 2000). Richardson (2008) wrote, "Ensuring high-quality learning results for students begins with providing high-quality learning for the adults who work with those students" (p. 51). Blankenstein (2004) stated that in order

the create consensus about the basics in professional learning there must first a general understanding. The significance for my study focused on determining common understandings and explaining relevant assumptions or beliefs pertaining to preferences within delivery models.

Summary and Discussion of Results

Interpretation of Findings

I conducted 10 interviews with open ended questions, to determine results based on the research question and subquestions:

Primary research question: What are elementary teachers' preferences regarding delivery models of school-focused and related professional learning?

Subquestions:

1. What type(s) of delivery model(s) in professional learning (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) do elementary teachers prefer?
2. What reason(s) do elementary teachers' give for their preferences in delivery models (i.e., lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands-on technology delivery models; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) of professional development?
3. Do elementary teachers feel that certain delivery models encourage/bring about changes in their teaching behavior?

Using a random number chart, (Krause, 1991) potential participants were sought, and consent forms were obtained after permission was granted from the principals of the

respective schools. The participants' teaching areas ranged from kindergarten through fourth grade, a special education support teacher, an art teacher and a music teacher. The average number of years teaching in the current school system was 14.8 years. Six schools from throughout the large school district were randomly chosen for my study.

I conducted all 10 interviews within a 2-week period at the end of March, 2011. The results of these interviews revealed much about preferences for delivery models within professional development by the participants. I was often moved to tears by the honesty and sincerity displayed by the participants within each interview. The reality of having a random selection of participants, versus hand-picking participants, and a mild apprehension I had about interview results were soon diminished once the interviews were underway and results obtained.

Ten themes emerged from the research results. Overwhelmingly, teachers expressed preferences for hands-on delivery models of professional development. Whether the learning experiences involved make and take items, or hands on technology instruction, the participants communicated they felt learning was more meaningful if they were an active part of the learning. Conversely, lecture was mentioned as the least favorite delivery model by 7 out of the 10 participants. Although three participants indicated that some form of lecture was acceptable, these three participants also suggested that for lecture to be a successful means of delivering information, a mixture of lecture with handouts or a Power Point were a more likely way to engage the learner.

When asked what the most effective professional development experience was, participants provided concrete examples of professional learning seminars, workshops, or

classes offered within the school district. Further, many of these learning opportunities were offered throughout the summer months when participants were given the choice of learning in their time off from working. When asked more in depth questions regarding these summer opportunities, participants listed reading and math instruction supported by the school district's literacy and math coaches; often mentioned by name. Having been involved with facilitating professional development numerous times within the school district, I related to responses but was careful to avoid bias for this type of delivery model to influence my questioning.

In response to questions relating to lecture being the least effective manner of delivery models for learning, participants gave specific examples of motivational speakers and other speakers that were unprepared. They were adamant that this type of speaker was unacceptable for their learning. Some participants also gave examples of mandatory training for new textbook adoptions and speakers that appeared only to understand their product and not the needs of the classroom teacher. This type of training was viewed as undesirable by those participants.

Regarding participants' opinions of their current school-focused staff development, the theme of collaborative models was prevalent. Whether collaboration was fostered through grade level teams or PLCs, a majority of the participants preferred active engagement with others to support their learning. Collaboration through use of technology was significant. Participants that expressed this form of delivery model shared that they enjoyed posting comments to other teachers and receiving support in their learning. Additionally, collaborative models to enhance math and reading instruction

were also a preference. Learning from team members or others within the local school was preferential, according to half of the respondents. Therefore, collaboration within schools was a preference for participants.

The last four themes involved choice in professional development and time to take information and make it work for the individual in their classrooms. Participants were asked what changes, if any, they would make to their current school-focused staff development delivery model to make learning more effective. A theme of choice in learning was predominant, as identified by 9 out of the 10 participant responses. By differentiating the learning to meet varied needs of learners, the participants expressed a preference for choosing their own way to learn; mandatory meetings being undesirable. Also, time limitations were viewed as an obstacle to learning. Whether during the training itself, or as a follow up, lack of time to delve into topics was another hindrance. Suggestions were given that by restructuring training sessions or directing learning more efficiently, barriers to learning might be minimized. Overall, participants were positive in their statements that although choice and time are factors to their learning, they take what they have and make it work for them.

Eight out of 10 participants gave examples of training within the school district as having the most impact on behavior changes within their classroom. Four participants mentioned that literacy coaches within the district impacted behavior changes by modeling instruction within their classrooms; supporting their learning. All participants expressed school district training as influencing positive change to their instructional behavior is one form or another.

Conclusion

For purposes of this exploratory case study, participants answered questions relative to their preferences in delivery models of professional learning. The themes that evolved throughout the research were indicative of participant passion for learning and motivation to help students achieve success in the classroom. Questions ranged from delivery models that support learning, to those that least support learning. Most effective and least effective school-focused staff development training, and opinions relative to current school training were included. Choice was mentioned as the one factor that would support improved learning for participants. Lack of time to implement newly-acquired skills and knowledge was a barrier for many participants. When asked if there were additional comments, most reiterated that if they were given a choice in delivery models of professional development, hands-on learning and technology integration would be preferred.

Knowles' (1984) theory of andragogy guided the framework for my research project. Knowles' studies delineated between educating adults about student learning and educating adults about their own learning. Beyond understanding student learning, Knowles' theory was integral in education of adults. Guskey (2002) cited the relevance of case studies for cognitive outcomes as supporting both professional development and a supportive measure to gather evidence of the participants' cognitive learning. Both Knowles' (1984) and Guskey's (2002) research supported adult learning and promoted further understanding as a means to improve student achievement.

Recommendations

The results of my study indicated that professional learning development include a variety of delivery models to meet the needs of its adult learners. Further, support for choice in the delivery models within school-focused staff development and school district training is recommended. Responses from participants indicated that a combination of hands-on learning coupled with technology instruction is advantageous to the learner. Additionally, participants responded that if lecture is to be used, hand outs and/or Power Point presentations be given to assist the visual learner.

I recommend that adult learners be polled regarding preferences for delivery models. The participants in this study were open and passionate regarding their own learning. Their responses reflected a genuine interest in successful learning for themselves in order to support student success. By polling learners, professional developers would have an informed means to meet the needs of their adult learners.

I encourage future studies relative to choice in professional development delivery models. Understanding the complexities and management of school-focused staff development opportunities, further research in encouraged as it would provide professional development participants a choice in delivery models. As indicated in my research, choice would be advantageous to others; particularly the learner. Behavior changes with instruction would have a positive impact on improved student achievement. As themes and subthemes emerged, I felt an impassioned sense for continued research with adult learning and preferences for choice in delivery models.

Results will be shared with the school district's accountability department, participants, principals of participating schools, and other interested parties within the school district. I will approach the professional development department, along with area assistant superintendents within the school district, to present findings with those that develop adult learning, as permission is granted. Finally, I intend to share results in professional journals and will present at educational seminars to further educate and inform others about the results from the participants regarding their preferences in delivery models.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this research study have provided opportunities for introspection into participant wants and needs relative to delivery models within professional development. Researchers are encouraged to look at their individual school and/or school system to determine if related studies would potentially benefit adult learning and behavior change in the classroom to support student achievement. By giving teachers the choice in their learning, the results of this research indicate that enhanced learning for teachers and hopefully for students alike takes place, the ultimate purpose of professional development.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol

Field Notes	Question:_____ Teacher:_____ Date: _____	Coding
	1. Tell me how you *chose* education for your profession?	
	2. How long have you been an educator? Where did you receive your training?	
	3. I want you to think about all the different delivery models you may have experienced in prof. dev. training in the past (lecture; small group; book study; PLCs; online electronic/hands on technology delivery models; experiential; mixed; action research; peer coaching & review, etc.) the list is infinite, especially with mixed methods. What delivery model(s) do you feel support your learning the most? How do you base that decision regarding support for your learning?	
	4. What delivery model(s) do you feel do not support your prof. learning? How do you base that decision regarding support for your learning?	
	5. Tell me what you feel was the most effective prof. learning opportunity you have experienced and why you deemed it as such.	
	6. Tell me about the least effective prof. learning opportunity you have experienced and why you deemed it as such? Regarding this prof. learning opportunity, what do you believe could have been done differently to make that experience more meaningful and educational for you?	
	7. How do you feel your current school-focused staff development fosters prof. learning for you?	
	8. What is your opinion regarding the delivery model(s) given in prof. learning opportunities at your school?	
	9. What, if anything, would you like to see done differently to foster enhanced learning for yourself and the teachers at your school?	
	10. Tell me about any learning opportunities where you felt your behavior changed in the classroom. Do you feel the delivery model of that training influenced that change in behavior?	

	11. Are there any barriers that prevent you from incorporating/infusing newly-acquired skills/knowledge into your teaching?	
	12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding your experiences or attitudes towards professional learning?	

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EDUCATION:
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
2004–present Assistant Principal, Elementary School

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Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) – current membership
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LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND PRESENTATIONS:
2008-2009 Delta Kappa Gamma – Vice President – Beta Gamma Chapter, Georgia

2004-2005 Presidential Fellow Student Leadership Program – Kennesaw State College, Kennesaw, Georgia

2004-2005 Leadership Academy for Prospective Administrators – Georgia

2003-2004 Teacher of the Year – Elementary School

2002-2004 Literacy Leadership Representative – Georgia

- County In-service facilitator – "Integrating Curriculum in the Classroom"
- County Staff Development trainer – "Read Aloud" redelivery
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