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Middle and High School Teachers' Perception of Professional Development

Carissa McCray
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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Middle and High School Teachers' Perception of Professional Development

by

Carissa McCray

MA, Walden University, 2012

BS, Fisk University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Within the literature, a gap exists in understanding how teacher perceptions may be used to develop, implement, and evaluate professional development. The purpose of the qualitative case study was to describe the perceptions of middle and high school teachers regarding their professional development experiences in a rural school district in Florida. Guided by Chen and Chang's whole teacher framework and Knowles's theory of adult learning, the research questions addressed teachers' needs, expectations, and perceptions of professional development. Triangulated data sources included face-to-face interviews with 10 teachers, participant journals, and professional development agendas. Data analysis included line-by-line coding, open coding, and theoretical coding. Emerging themes were (a) effective and meaningful professional development, (b) teacher contributions to professional development, (c) teacher perceptions of professional development, and (d) student achievement due to professional development. Results indicated that although teachers perceive professional development as a tool for learning, teacher leadership, analysis of student achievement data, and collaboration are needed to increase its effectiveness. This study may contribute to positive social change by improving professional development practices in school districts, leading to enhanced student academic achievement and preparation for careers.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my girls, Harley and Jackson. I know that you will go further than I will ever dream. I love you both.

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This dissertation could not have been completed without my previous education at Fisk University (B.A. in English) and Walden University (M.S. in Educational Leadership). Dr. Barbara Calabro and Dr. Asoka Jayasena have helped and supported the development of my analytical and scholarly voice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Professional development is the engagement of stakeholders in needs-based and strength-based learning to plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to improve student achievement and preparation for college and careers (DuFour, 2015; Florida Department of Education, 2015; Hargreaves & Fullan 2013; Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010; Senge, 2006; Sumter County School Board, 2015). Professional development for educators became prominent in the United States in the 1960s (Vu, Cao, Vu, & Cepero, 2014). The goal of professional development was and is to shift learning to educators to enhance the conditions of learning for students (Fullan, 2007). As the idea of professional development continued to grow and evolve, DuFour (2004) noticed a decline in the collaborative nature and learning expectations of professional development. Similarly, Fullan identified the lack of directed focus in professional development that seemed to do little to increase teacher and student learning. Professional development, as early as 2004 (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2007), became oversaturated workshop days that lacked focus on practical implementation. Presently, Hökkä and Eteläpelto (2014) observed poor professional identity, competition, lack of resources, and lack of teacher leaders as obstacles for effective and meaningful professional development.

With the varied definitions of effective professional development, there is a lack of information pertaining to teacher perceptions of professional development. An understanding of teacher perceptions of professional development may be used to improve current professional development strategies and implementations (DuFour,

2015; Saunders, 2013). In the local site of this study, professional development occurs at the school level within faculty meetings and district level based on content area.

The social implications of the study include changing the content, process, and context of professional development. Currently, professional development planning and implementation are conducted by academic coaches at district level meetings or in faculty meetings with little opportunity for all teachers to engage in collaboration and discussion of meaningful practice. It is imperative that administrators provide opportunities for teachers to develop as leaders to promote a shared vision, accomplish goals, and sustain the purpose of education (Cook, 2014). The process of professional development evolves with more information provided to master particular skills and strategies of professional development (Bates, Swennen, & Jones, 2011). Changing the context of professional development allows teachers the opportunity to practice varied strategies in the classroom with follow-ups of reflection and evaluation (Saunders, 2013). Understanding teachers' perceptions increases opportunities to enhance professional learning communities (PLCs), teacher leadership, and resources.

This study addressed teachers' perceptions of professional development. Results may allow teachers' needs to be addressed through professional learning by providing rich data on how to implement professional development that is meaningful to teachers. Understanding teachers' needs for professional learning may increase adult engagement and meaningful professional learning. Exploring teachers' perceptions as a guide for professional development may increase the transfer and applicability of knowledge from professional learning opportunities. Analysis of the rich data collected may be used to

design professional development programs that reflect the instructional strategies needed by teachers in the classroom.

Education researchers have examined the effective qualities of professional development. The purpose of professional development remains largely to increase student achievement (Lattuca, Bergom, & Knight, 2014; Owen, 2015). Cordingley (2015) identified effective characteristics of professional development that include sustained collaboration with colleague and the educators' commitment to and understanding of professional learning. Additional systems are used to develop a protocol that ensures and evaluates collaboration, input, leadership, and resources (Wilcox & Angelis, 2012). Additional systems such as “setting challenging expectations, leading teaching, learning, and the curriculum; establishing an orderly environment that promotes learning; strategic resourcing so that all activities align around key priorities; and promoting and modelling professional learning” (Cordingly, 2015, p. 7) provide stakeholders with effective means of improving student achievement. Likewise, Bleicher (2014); Cajkler, Wood, Norton, and Pedder (2014); Jita and Mokhele (2014); Tam (2015); and Watson (2014) identified different strategies to ensure engagement and collaboration for effective professional development such as professional learning communities, teacher clusters, and collaborative action research. Incorporating differentiated models of professional development allows for educators to increase their learning by identifying needs and working toward closing gaps in knowledge. Working within teams and clusters, teachers “engage much more deeply with the curriculum frameworks and also identify and attend

to their deficiencies in terms of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge” (Jita & Mokhele, 2014, p. 7).

Strategies for effective professional development include several qualities and characteristics. Researchers have noted the move from student learning to a focus on testing without further research into teacher perceptions (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014; Earley & Porritt, 2014). To redirect the focus of professional development, Zwart, Korthagen, and Attema-Noordewier (2015) suggested that effective professional development should focus on a strength-based approach to adult learning. Strength-based approaches address the strengths of teachers to provide them with information and learning to build the capacity of students. To enhance teachers’ strengths, understanding their motivation and beliefs is crucial. Pinho and Andrade (2015) found that schools must redefine the culture of learning. Understanding the motivational profiles of teachers and their engagement in professional development may shape the professional learning and culture of a school (Jansen in De Wal, Den Brok, Hooijer, Martens, & Van den Beemt, 2014). When redefining the culture of learning and building a strength-based professional development program, schools may help teachers become more comfortable leading and providing content and pedagogical knowledge to others. Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou (2015) identified attitudes, teachers’ knowledge, and a culture of reflection as effective characteristics of professional development.

Understanding teachers’ perceptions of professional development to make positive changes in professional development programs is vital to close the gap in the literature (Cook, 2014; Evans, 2014; Jimerson & Wayman, 2015). The analysis of data

may illuminate the importance of teachers' attitudes and motivation for professional learning and the characteristics of effective professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan 2012; Senge, 2006). One aspect that has been neglected in professional development research is teacher perceptions of the types of professional development provided, needs and expectations of professional development, and the application of professional development in the classroom (Hargreaves & Fullan 2012; Owen, 2015). A number of studies have addressed the expectations of professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan 2012; Watson, 2014), but teacher perceptions and the impact of professional development have rarely been considered. The U.S. Department of Education (2014) supports and encourages professional development and student learning. This study was conducted to increase the understanding of teacher perceptions of professional development and to promote further research in studying teacher quality and student achievement.

Problem Statement

Several factors contribute to effective professional development, including teacher perceptions, methods and opportunities of professional development available, school vision and mission, state regulations, teacher self-efficacy, and topics of professional development (Cherkowski, 2012; Filipe, Silva, Stulting, & Golnik, 2014; Keller-Schneider, 2014; Smylie, 2014; Zwart et al., 2015). The lack of professional development addressing teacher perceptions in its development, implementation, and evaluation is contributing to apathetic work environments, high workloads, and high turnover (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011; Moss & Brookhart, 2015).

Professional development targets teachers' needs to support students (Zhao, 2012). Teachers are expected to use the strategies and information learned in professional development in their classrooms to increase student achievement (Hsieh, 2015; Richards & Skolits, 2009; Tam, 2015). However, this is not always the case. Due to schools and districts bringing in experts outside of the local community for professional development, teachers feel as if their knowledge is not valued to meet the needs of their students (Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). The devaluing of teachers may impede the use of strategies introduced in professional development (Roseler & Dentzau, 2013; Tam, 2015). Zhao (2012) asserted that professional development that targets specific teacher needs and is facilitated by other teachers increases practical and critical reflection. However, there is a lack of data pertaining to teacher perspectives of school-based professional development (Zhao, 2012).

Several studies indicated that teachers who positively engage in and implement practices from professional development observe an increase in student performance (Nicolae, 2014; Pehmer, Groschner, & Seidel, 2015; & van der Berg, 2014). However, there are differing views on the impact of professional development. One argument of professional effectiveness relates to student academic performance. According to some researchers, the decline or stagnation of student academic performance is due to poor professional development (Nicolae, 2014; van der Berg, 2014). Other studies addressed various components of effective professional development that focus on levels of teacher engagement (Christesen & Turner, 2014) and personalized focus of professional development (Bartolini, Worth, & Jensen LaConte, 2014; Bayar, 2014; Curwood, 2014).

With various factors influencing the effectiveness of professional development, there is a lack of information pertaining to teacher perceptions of having their needs met through professional development.

In a Southeastern U.S. county, professional development is required of teachers as part of their evaluation. The evaluation awards teachers points based on the professional development the teacher has engaged in. In addition, there are professional days embedded throughout the school year in which teachers are required to participate. There are no formal documents in this county to determine the needs of professional development for individual teachers. Vernon-Dotson and Floyd (2012) suggested building leadership capacity as a means to develop formal strategies to gauge the needs and effectiveness of professional development. In the study site county, each school has content department leaders, grade-level leaders, a literacy coach, and a curriculum leader who assist in the development of professional learning.

Walk-throughs with focus on alignment, articulation, student engagement and learning, and collaboration provide data for professional development needs. These methods of data collection influence teachers and students because of connections between reforms, accountability, teacher learning, and student learning (Colwell, MacIsaac, Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura, 2014; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; & Dever & Lash, 2013). Understanding teachers' perceptions of professional development assists in interpreting teachers' expectations and implementation of the professional development. Nishimura (2014) suggested that academic coaches and

teacher leaders should facilitate the evaluation of professional development to ensure meaningful, quality, and relevant information.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to investigate and describe the views of teachers regarding professional development and the impact professional development has on teachers' professional practices. The participants were middle and high school teachers, sixth through 12th grade, at a rural Southeast school. During the 2013/2014 school year, the middle/high school received a state grade of D despite an increased amount of professional development. The information gleaned from this study describing teachers' perceptions of current professional development may be used to enhance the school's performance. With data analysis, suggested delivery methods and content for professional development were determined. This study provided guidelines to increase meaningful and relevant professional development.

Research Questions

This study exploring teacher perceptions of professional development included the following research questions (RQs) and subquestions (SQs):

RQ1: In what ways do middle and high school teachers view professional development?

SQ1: What are the expectations of middle and high school teachers for professional development?

SQ2: According to middle and high school teachers, what are the most meaningful and effective factors that should be included in a professional development program?

RQ2: Do middle and high school teachers feel that there is an impact on their professional practices during the post professional development period?

SQ1: In which areas do middle and high school teachers feel that significant changes have occurred in relation to professional development?

SQ2: Do middle and high school teachers think that there is a considerable impact on student learning during the post professional development period?

SQ3: Are middle and high school teachers able to understand the weaknesses and align their teaching strategies to meet the student requirements after their professional development period?

Conceptual Framework

The goal of this case study was to examine how a particular “phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556). The conceptual framework included elements from Knowles’s theory of adult learning (Knowles, 1975, 1984; Nohl, 2015) and Chen and Chang’s whole teacher framework (Chen & Chang, 2006; Maslow, 2013). The research questions were designed to identify teachers’ perceptions and needs of ongoing professional development.

There are five assumptions of adult learners. The adult learner is ready to learn, bases decisions on experiences, is motivated to learn, has concepts of self, and is oriented

to learn (Knowles, 1975, 1984). The teacher is the adult learner in professional development. Based on the five assumptions of a learner (Knowles, 1984), the teacher desires knowledge, is motivated to increase student learning, has the ability to understand strengths and weaknesses, aligns learning to needs, and bases future learning on experiences. According to Knowles (1975), the determination of readiness to learn occurs through the social roles and tasks of the adult. The experiences of the adult dictate the desire for specific and focused material (Knowles, 1975). Both readiness to learn and specific, focused material are used to determine the engagement levels and positive perceptions of the professional development. With specific material and readiness to learn, the adult learner has the internal motivation to learn (Knowles, 1984). Research Question 1 addressed how teachers, as adult learners, are having their needs of increasing student achievement, student engagement, and student critical thinking met from professional development.

Knowles's (1984) principles of andragogy relate to Nohl's (2015) phases of adult learning. Nohl suggested that the adult tests new ideas with their input, similar to Knowles's principle of adults wanting to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning. Knowles also suggested that adult learners determine learning activities based on experiences. Nohl suggested that adults begin with undirected inquiry to gain experiences for future learning activities. Applying the ideas of andragogy to professional development allows the teacher to determine his or her path and needs of learning. The practice of andragogy puts the teacher in control of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development. For adults to engage positively in learning,

Knowles suggested that it must make an immediate and relevant impact. Nohl stated that facilitators must understand the shifting relevance for learning and provide more focused learning. Research Question 1 addressed the meaningful and effective factors that teachers seek in professional development.

The whole teacher approach is similar to the whole student approach in which the instructor understands the feelings, knowledge, skills, and predispositions of the student. The characteristics of the whole teacher approach include multidimensional aspects, domain-specific integration of learning styles and content, and developmentally appropriate materials for teacher needs (Chen & Chang, 2006). Characteristics of the whole teacher approach to professional development derive from Chen and Chang's (2006) analysis and Maslow's (2013) study of needs and motivation. The incorporation of the whole teacher approach to learning promotes teacher leadership and may increase teacher engagement in professional development. Research Question 1 addressed teachers' feelings and attitudes toward professional development. Research Question 2 addressed the application and integration of professional development in teachers' instructional practices and whether teachers are able to determine their professional needs.

Effective whole teacher professional development is multidimensional and targets teachers' attitudes, practices, and skills (Chen & Chang, 2006). The professional development is differentiated to accommodate diverse teacher needs. Similarly, the multidimensional aspect aligns with the physiological, safety, and belonging aspects of Maslow's (2013) hierarchy of needs and motivation. Teachers have the acceptance

among peers to share ideas, and the safety to establish and incorporate leadership in their decisions, which may make participants more comfortable. Effective professional development is also domain specific with objectives based on content related to teachers' course work and performance evaluation requirements (Chen & Chang, 2006). Incorporating multidimensional and domain-specific professional development would enhance motivation among teachers due to having their initial needs met.

Whole teacher professional development includes instructional strategies that facilitate relationships of content, teacher attitudes and skills, professional requirements, and multidisciplinary instruction that can be developed through esteem and belonging (Chen & Chang, 2006; Maslow, 2013). When teachers feel respected and facilitate learning during professional development, other teachers may become more likely to integrate new ideas. Incorporating the whole teacher approach requires development of programs for beginning and novice teachers (Chen & Chang, 2006). According to Maslow (2013), self-actualization is the desire to accomplish and realize personal full potential. With professional development guided by the whole teacher approach, the adult has the desire to accomplish purposeful and relevant goals. Teachers engaging in the whole teacher approach have the opportunity to build capacity of current trends and best practices in education. Based on the literature review, understanding how adults learn develop a positive attitude toward learning.

The conceptual framework addressed teacher needs of professional development. The research questions addressed teacher perceptions of professional development that guided the interview questions. The conceptual framework also included several

components of effective professional development that guided both the literature review and the development of interview questions. The exploration of teacher perceptions of professional development may enhance professional development programs.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to analyze participants' words, thoughts, and feelings (Creswell, 2013). I implemented a descriptive case study design, which allowed for an in-depth description of teacher perceptions of professional development in a real-life context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A bounded case study design limits the location and time of the study (Creswell, 2013). This descriptive case study was conducted to alter professional development due to state investments in professional development. The purpose of this study was to explore teacher perceptions of professional development to influence future professional learning practices.

The study location was a rural middle/high school, and the period was limited to the second half of the school year. Limiting data collection to the second half of the school year ensured that teachers had time to engage in both required and voluntary professional development. In addition, teachers had time to incorporate the professional development into their instructional strategies. To ensure the sampling was representative, a purposeful sample unit was used (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

To ensure credibility and reliability, I triangulated data (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008) by analyzing transcripts from in-depth face-to-face interviews, participant journals, and agendas. Initial data analysis included inductive coding systems

to process the information into meaningful categories for consistent manipulation of data (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Definitions

The following list includes terms that were integral to this study.

Andragogy: The teaching of adult learners based on the learners' self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn (Knowles, 1984).

Case study: The exploration of a phenomenon in its context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2009).

Education: The development and integration of information, skills, standards, interests, experience, and competencies (Dewey, 1997; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Demonstration of competency: Required of middle and high school teachers to prove they know the subject they teach by “1) a major in the subject they teach, 2) credits equivalent to a major in the subject, 3) passage of a state-developed test, 4) HOUSSE..., 5) an advanced certification from the state, or 6) a graduate degree” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, para.15).

Highly qualified teachers: According to the U.S. Department of Education (2005), teachers must hold a bachelor's degree with full state certification and “prove they know each subject they teach” (para.13).

HOUSSE (High, Objective, Uniform, State Standard of Evaluation): A method to determine teachers' knowledge of the subject they teach with a combination of professional development and experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Pedagogy: The instruction of youth to connect learned and background knowledge, experiences, discussion, and critical thinking to constructive action (Dewey, 1997; Friere, 2000).

Positive social change: The application of knowledge and skills to the real world to make a difference in the lives of others and communities (Walden University, 2015).

Professional development: The comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (Learning Forward, 2015).

Professional development in Florida: Several strategies that include planning, learning, implementation, and evaluation of programs targeted to increase teacher knowledge and skills to improve student achievement (Florida Department of Education, 2015).

Professional development in Sumter County: The implementation of programs targeted to improve the knowledge of teachers, principals, staff, and administrators to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap (Sumter County School District, 2015).

Race to the Top: A national grant program that states apply for to implement educational reform according to standards and expectations outlined in the application (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Whole teacher framework: The inclusion of multidimensional aspects, domain specific learning, integration, and developmental content and pedagogical content to plan, implement, and evaluate professional development (Chen & Chang, 2006).

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs that shape how research questions are answered (Creswell, 2013). For this case study, there were three assumptions. The first assumption was honest responses from the voluntary participants. From honest communication, open and authentic dialogue occurs. I assumed the authentic and open dialogue related to the experiences and perceptions teachers had about professional development. For authentic dialogue to occur, I assumed I would be able to build trust and confidence among participants for them to speak truthfully about their perceptions of professional development. The qualitative approach allowed me to interpret data based on interviews, participant journals, and agendas. Open-ended conversations occurred to gather information to understand teacher perceptions of professional development.

Scope and Delimitations

According to Creswell (2013), delimitations establish boundaries to the study and establish a specific scope of the study. There were two delimitations of this study. The first was the confinement of data collection. Data collection occurred in three forms: interviews, participant journals, and professional development agendas. The three types of data allowed for triangulation to enhance validity and reliability. The second delimitation was the type of participants. For this study, I collected data from full-time middle and middle and high school teachers; no data were not collected from academic coaches, staff, part-time teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Limiting the participants ensured the scope of the study focused on teacher perceptions of professional development.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses in the design of the study (Creswell, 2013). This case study addressing teacher perceptions of professional development had three limitations. The first was the location of the study. I limited data collection to a small rural district in the Southeastern United States. Further studies need to be conducted to enhance the generalizability of the findings. The second limitation was the sample size. Bounded by time, location, and availability of participants, the study explored data throughout the 2015-2016 school year, limiting the length of the study, focuses on a rural/middle high school, and seeks to explore perceptions of 10 teachers. Potential researcher bias was the third limitation. I am an employee of the school district and the middle/high school where the study took place. The dichotomous role of researcher and teacher may have influenced my interpretation of results. To reduce bias, I triangulated data from journals, interviews, and agendas.

Significance

This study addressed an underresearched area of middle and high school education and professional development. Results may shed light on how professional development impacts student performance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015 U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Results may be used to address disparities between rhetorical concepts of professional development and actual practices (Gemedá, Fiorucci, & Catarci, 2014). Results may be used to develop strategies for increasing the effectiveness of professional development based on teacher needs and professional identities.

Race to the Top is a national program with four core educational reforms that include rigorous standards and assessments, effective teachers and principals, data systems to improve teaching and learning, and low-performing school turnaround (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The Florida Department of Education (2009) has been dedicated to “improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance [by] developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development” (p. 9). Florida’s dedication to increase teacher capacity resulted in the award of the Race to the Top grant. To provide effective support to teachers, Florida is committed to providing “effective, data-informed professional development, coaching, induction, and common planning and collaboration time to teachers and principals” that are “ongoing and job-embedded” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 10). The county in the Southeastern United States with seven schools (four elementary, one middle/high, one middle school, and one high school) received over \$100,000 for professional development (Florida Department of Education, 2010). However, there is no data addressing teacher perceptions of professional development. This study contributed to the literature by addressing teacher perceptions of professional development. Through the application of study findings, teachers may be able to participate in improving professional development by engaging in shared leadership decisions regarding increasing teacher capacity.

Summary

This study addressed the lack of research on teachers’ perceptions of professional development. To address this gap, I used a case study approach to explore teachers’

perceptions of professional development. The implications for social change include providing teachers with voice and leadership in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development to address their students learning needs.

In Chapter 1, I presented the research problem, background of the study, the conceptual framework, and other important elements. Chapter 2 includes a literature review addressing professional development, teacher attitudes and motivations, andragogy, and student achievement. The literature review provides further background information to validate the study of teacher perceptions of professional development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this study, I explored teacher perceptions of professional development while seeking to draw connections between research-based effective professional development and teacher experiences. Previous studies addressed effective professional development and adult learning from a leadership perspective (Darling-Hammond, 2014; DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2007; Knowles, 1984; & Senge; 2006). However, professional development often involves administratively planned sessions that address ideas and concepts in a short amount of time with limited resources and external experts (Fullan, 2007; Walker, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore middle and middle and high school teachers' perceptions of professional development at a local rural middle/high school in the Southeastern United States.

Previous research addressed effective professional development practices (Cajkler et al., 2014; Jita & Mokhele 2014; Tam 2015; Watson, 2014). An increase in testing to gauge accountability, lack of time, resources, teacher leadership, principal support, and teacher motivation has reduced the quality and meaningfulness of professional development (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014; Fullan, 2007; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014). Given the lack of research on teacher perceptions, I explored current teachers' perceptions of professional development to increase the value of professional development within a school.

This literature review is organized in six sections: (a) the conceptual framework of whole teacher professional development, (b) definition of professional development, (c) teacher perceptions of professional development, (d) professional development goals,

(e) qualities of effective professional development, and (f) andragogy and professional development. I examine the literature related to teachers' perceptions of professional development and how understanding professional development goals, adult learning/andragogy, professional development design, and qualities of effective professional development may assist in meeting teacher needs and expectations of professional development. The literature review included searches using the following databases: ERIC, ProQuest Central, Thoreau, Education Research Complete, and SAGE Premier. I examined peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2015, except for literature that addressed ongoing concerns in professional development. Key words included *effective professional development, whole teacher, andragogy, middle and high school professional learning, professional learning communities, in-service training, teacher expectations, adult learning, complications, integrated, developmental, multidimensional, developmental, culture of learning, post-professional development, perceptions, self-efficacy, and instructional strategies.*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework included elements of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1975, 1984; Nohl, 2015) and the whole teacher framework (Chen & Chang, 2006; Maslow, 2013). There are five assumptions of adult learners. The adult learner is ready to learn, bases decisions on experiences, is motivated to learn, has concepts of self, and is oriented to learn (Knowles, 1975, 1984). Knowles's (1984) principles of andragogy relate to Nohl's (2015) phases of adult learning. Nohl suggested that the adult tests new ideas,

similar to Knowles's principle of adults wanting to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning.

The whole teacher approach is similar to the whole student approach in which the instructor understands feelings, knowledge, skills, and predispositions of the student. The characteristics of the whole teacher approach include multidimensional aspects, domain specific learning, integration, and developmentally appropriate for teacher needs (Chen & Chang, 2006). Similarly, the whole teacher approach addresses the physiological, safety, self-actualization, and belonging aspects of Maslow's (2013) hierarchy of needs and motivation.

Within the conceptual framework, self-efficacy is critical in ensuring the desire to learn and application of knowledge (Chen & Chang, 2006; Knowles, 1975; Maslow, 2013; Nohls, 2015). Through professional development, learning and achievement occurs for the student and teacher (Dewey, 1997; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Professional development is intended to ensure teachers are prepared to teach students in the 21st century. My study may influence social change by using teacher perceptions/views to plan more effective professional development strategies.

The research questions presented in Chapter 1 included two subquestions partially addressed through the review of the literature: (a) What are the expectations of middle and high school teachers for professional development? (b) According to middle and high school teachers, what are the most meaningful and effective factors that should be in a professional development program? In addition, the literature review addresses questions concerning the goals of professional development. This study was conducted to fill the

gap concerning current teachers' perceptions of professional development and the incorporation of andragogy in professional learning.

What Is Professional Development?

In this study, I explored teacher perceptions of professional development to describe how teachers view particular aspects of professional development. In Florida, professional development includes planning, learning, implementation, and evaluation of programs targeted to increase teacher knowledge and skills to improve student achievement (Florida Department of Education, 2015). Sumter County defines professional learning as the implementation of programs targeted to improve the knowledge of teachers, principals, staff, and administrators to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap (Sumter County School District, 2015). Professional development is the engagement of stakeholders in needs-based and strength-based learning to plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to improve student achievement and preparation for college and careers (DuFour, 2015; Florida Department of Education, 2015; Hargreaves & Fullan 2013; Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010; Senge, 2006; Sumter County School District, 2015). When defining professional development, researchers did not address how teachers define effective and meaningful professional learning. Exploring teacher perceptions of professional development in this study may help schools, districts, and states improve their practices of professional learning.

Professional learning promotes teachers' voices. With effective adult learning, the learner is in control of his or her development. It is the adult learner's responsibility to

increase his or her knowledge to accomplish goals and solve problems. Teacher perspectives may be used to direct and create professional learning that may influence adult learners, students, and schools. The goal of professional learning is to increase teacher knowledge to increase student achievement. Through incorporation of teacher perspectives to drive professional development, learning becomes meaningful, directed, and engaging.

Teacher Perspectives of Professional Development

Teacher perspectives of professional development are necessary to create effective professional development. Incorporating teacher perspectives promotes collaboration, listening to and addressing needs, developing a culture of learning, and encouraging leadership. There is, however, little research on teacher perspectives of professional development. The studies examined below addressed aspects of teacher perspectives such as meaningful learning, school-based advantages, and risks associated with not valuing teacher perspectives. For my study, professional development involved optional or required professional learning opportunities provided by the district.

According to researchers, professional development is the engagement of stakeholders in needs-based and strength-based learning to plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to improve student achievement and preparation for college and careers (DuFour, 2015; Florida Department of Education, 2015; Hargreaves & Fullan 2013; Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010; Senge, 2006; Sumter County School District, 2015). However, the above definition may not be what teachers think of when describing professional development. This study was conducted to gain more insight into teachers'

working definitions of professional development. Becoming knowledgeable of teacher perceptions of professional development is important in ensuring that adult learning is meaningful and relevant to daily lives (Colwell et al., 2014; Qablan, Mansour, Alshamrani, Aldahmash, & Sabbah, 2015). This evidence challenges professional development definitions that do not include teacher perceptions. The value of teacher perceptions of professional development guided this study to ensure that future professional development endeavors would meet the needs of adult learners.

To ensure effective professional development, facilitators, colleagues, and collaborators must acknowledge learners' concerns that influence the motivation for learning (Christesen & Turner, 2014; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Qablan et al., 2015). This study increased understanding of the motivational factors and experiences of adult learners that support meaningful and applicable professional learning. Principals want to see their teachers using skills learned in professional development; therefore, administrators must acknowledge that adult learners desire personalized professional learning and provide them with choices (Colwell et al., 2014; Farooq, Zeshan, Hafeez, & Ul Hassan, 2015; Janssen, Kreijns, Bastiaens, Stijnen, & Vermeulen, 2013; Zimmerman & May, 2003). Allowing choice in professional development enhances focus and direction in learning while allowing adult learners to feel in control of the specific content they are learning. This aids in the production, implementation, and evaluation of professional development targeted to meet various needs of teachers. As teachers share perceptions of professional learning, school leaders are able to identify the multiple dimensions of motivation that encourage continual learning and receptivity to

professional development (Bartolini et al., 2014; Hsieh, 2015; Jansen in de Wal et al., 2014; Liu, Jehng, Chen, & Fang, 2014). When teachers' perceptions and personalities are taken into account, teachers begin to develop their own professional learning (Bleicher, 2014; Cook, 2014; Haug & Sands, 2013; Jansen in de Wal et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2014; Nichols, Young, & Rickelman, 2007). This study was intended to close the literature gap by identifying specific teacher needs and ways in which professional development meets those needs to address possible changes in planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development.

Developing a communal aspect of learning creates an immense driving force to increase student learning based on the shared vision. Teachers' expectations of community require support. Teachers expect that administrators are available, allow curiosity and leadership, and provide resources for continuous learning (Burke, 2013; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Ioannidou-Koutselini & Patsalidou, 2015; Richards & Skolits, 2009; Zhao, 2012). In my study, teachers described their perceptions of professional development that may be applied to administrative leadership, teacher leadership, and ownership in professional learning. When teachers feel as if they have a heard voice, they begin to take ownership of behaviors, experiences, and personal choices (Owen, 2015; Zwart et al., 2015). This evidence suggests that effective professional development depends on teacher planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Teachers' knowledge increases and behavior changes with collaborative relationships. Teachers are intellectually stimulated when working with colleagues in varied leadership positions (Diaz, 2013; van den Bergh, Ros, & Beijaard, 2014; Zwart et

al., 2015). Teachers begin to build upon others' ideas, evaluate their experiences, and engage in leadership. However, there is a lack of evidence to support that teachers are in leadership positions in professional development programs. This study was conducted to encourage intellectual stimulation from professional collaboration while providing a teachers a voice about professional development. Teachers who have their voices heard and are able to collaborate with colleagues due to supportive administration are more willing to take risks to increase student learning (Curwood, 2014; Dever & Lash, 2013; Farooq et al., 2015; Hsieh, 2015; Janssen et al., 2013; Lattuca et al., 2014;). Those taking risks have the ability to explore various learning styles to increase student learning.

Teachers feel as if professional development opportunities are short term and do not reflect classroom practices (Day & Gu, 2007; Feighan & Heeren, 2009; Miller, 2013; Pinho & Andrade, 2015; Zwart et al., 2015). The evidence does not support current definitions of professional development and directs future studies of teacher perceptions to gain a more reliable definition of professional learning. Involving teachers in professional development allows for meaningful professional learning based on teacher needs. Administrators should allow teachers to tap into their full potential; however, teachers do not believe that administrators provide time, resources, or support to reach goals (Diaz, 2013; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Thibodeau, 2008; Zhao, 2012; Zimmerman & May, 2003). Supportive administration focus on teacher needs collaboratively and independently. Too much focus and drive for collaboration; however, may create a monotonous and listless group that refuses to voice their opinions (Pinho & Andrade, 2015; Watson, 2014). It is important that leadership acknowledge the need for teachers to

work and learn independently in order to increase their personal learning. With too little collaboration and lack of support from administration, teachers feel their voices are minimized developing a fear of taking risks, speaking up, and changing instructional practices (Bartolini et al., 2014; Colwell et al., 2014; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Kazempour, 2009; Lucilio, 2009; Zimmerman & May, 2003). Effective professional development allows teachers to grow and learn through experiences, personalized, independent learning, and meaningful collaboration.

Professional Development Goals

Effective professional development requires an understanding of the goals of the professional learning (Wells, 2014). Introducing goals early in the professional learning process creates focused learning environment (Stewart, 2014). To ensure professional development goals are achievable, adults must engage in developing them together (Owen, 2015). Understanding the goals of professional development assist in assessing teacher perceptions by providing a foundation for professional learning expectations. Collaboration, teacher growth, and student growth are the expected goals of professional learning (Tam, 2015).

Changes in Teacher Behaviors

The purpose of professional development is to “build school and district capacity, motivation, and accountability” (Smylie, 2014, p. 20). Building school and district capacity increases the amount of motivation teachers have for professional development. In addition, the increase in school and district capacity allows for engaging learning. Learning communities provide opportunities to increase engagement and motivation. To

achieve the objectives “learning communities should meet regularly to engage in inquiry, reflection, and evaluation” (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012, p. 7) with collaborative “continuous learning and improvement” (Gemedá et al., 2014, p. 82) and opportunities for teachers to “come together to engage in open dialogue...around common interests and projects” (Qablan et al., 2015, p. 37).

Professional development promotes the changes of teacher behaviors and in pedagogical instructions (Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010). Effective and targeted professional development addresses the goals of developing a shared vision and increasing teacher leadership (Evan, 2014; Sturmer, Konings, & Seidel, 2013). By increasing teacher leadership, schools provide opportunities for increased collaboration and teachers to increase personal and professional practice. An acquired shared vision promotes teachers expanding their roles to becoming leaders outside of the classroom and increasing the knowledge and skills of other adults (Beaty-O’Ferrall & Johnson, 2010; Pinho & Andrade, 2015). Teacher leaders have current knowledge of student management, data analysis, and student engagement in which to share with others. With effective professional development, shared vision, and teacher leadership practical implementation of professional development exists within every experience of instruction (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013; Evans, 2014).

Collaborative professional development is to strengthen pedagogical practices and increase student achievement (Cook, 2014; DuFour, 2004; Smylie, 2014). With collaborative professional development, teachers have the opportunity to share ideas and become collegial problem solvers. Collaborative activities of engaging in collegial

observations, portfolio conversations, and learning clusters strengthened pedagogical practices while increasing student learning (Boyle, White, & Boyle, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Jita & Mokhele, 2014). Increasing collaborative practices provide opportunities for sharing best practices, data sharing, and creating a focus for student learning. The collaborative practice of professional development drives the goals of student achievement and teacher learning with directed and accountable attention given to improving teacher practice (DuFour, 2004; Gameda et al., 2014; Qablan et al., 2015; Smylie, 2014). As teachers collaborate and share best practices, they may become more aware of self and increase their growth professionally and personally. Since a goal of professional development is changes to teacher behaviors, it can be expected that incorporating teacher perception in professional development positively increase teachers' acclamation and implementation of behaviors.

Teacher Pedagogical Growth

Another expected goal of professional development is teacher pedagogical growth (Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010; Smylie, 2014). The expectation is that teachers attend professional development to change instructional practices that increase student achievement (Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010). However, there are concerns and challenges to this goal for professional development. According to Chomsky & Robichaud (2014), standardized testing has decreased the "development of freedom and creativity in education" (p. 3). This evidence suggests that without creativity and freedom in education, teachers are planning and instructing for a test rather than real world application of knowledge. With school accountability expectations for student

performance and reforms that address the delivery of professional development, the lack of creativity and freedom decreases the amount of change and growth in teacher instructional practices (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014; Zwart et al., 2015). The increase focus of accountability may cause an increase focus in testing reducing the amount of time spent on college and career readiness. Information from this study identifies teachers' expectations of professional development. With the emphasis on standardized testing and reforms, much of professional development targets district initiatives with little time for individualized or school-based needs (Zimmerman & May, 2003; Zwart et al., 2015). Providing time allowance for professional learning may provide teachers with practice and implementation of career and college readiness expectations and applications.

Similarly, professional development is to increase teacher research-based pedagogical practices. To increase research-based instructional practices, professional development provides practical application and offers enough practicum to change behaviors. Effective professional development is “closely connected to, and informs, the practice of teachers and visa versa” (Twining, Raffaghelli, Albion & Knezek, 2013, p. 433) in order to promote continuous growth amongst educators (Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Keller-Schneider, 2014; Nichols, Young, & Rickelman, 2007). Continuous teacher growth aids in informing practices and changing classroom behaviors. As educators' engage in practical professional development, behaviors change within the classroom and outside the classroom in pedagogical practices and continuous learners (Beaty-O'Ferrall & Johnson, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Gameda et al., 2014; Haug & Sands, 2013).

Being a continuous learner promotes teacher leadership, teacher professional development facilitation, and motivation to engage in professional learning. Teachers who engage in effective professional development change their behaviors to include increased utilization of student-centered teaching practices (Lattuca, Bergom, & Knight, 2014; Sobel, Gutierrez, Zion, & Blanchett, 2011). The information provided is insufficient to determine the role of teacher perceptions in professional development. The change in instructional practices and behaviors aids in increasing student growth.

Student Growth

Student growth is the byproduct of effective professional development. However, government expectations and standardized testing present concerns for student growth and professional development (Early & Porritt, 2014; Gleason & Gerzon, 2014). Increased possibilities for educating youth and career professional require standards of accountability. According to Gameda, Fiorucci, and Catarci (2014) the “quantitative growth [of students] had a devastating effect on the quality of education” (p. 80) that resulted in professional development’s decrease in individualized adult learning (Early & Porritt, 2014; Kazempour, 2009). According to the above view, it could be stated that decreasing individualized adult learning has caused professional development to lack motivation and engaging content. With the escalation of students, an increase of accountability and testing developed that labelled and classified students leading to inequalities and injustices to students due to labels and teachers through merit-based pay (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014; Early & Porritt, 2014; Kazempour, 2009). The

classifications, merit-based pay, and other labels decrease the collaborative community of a professional learning environment.

Effective professional development promotes an increase in student growth in academic self-concept, understanding, and application, independent learning and growth, and collaborative learning (Gleason & Gerzon, 2010; Pehmer et al., 2015). Students who are aware of their knowledge and how the knowledge applies to political, academic, or cultural experiences improve elaboration strategies, are able to evaluate propaganda, and seek to accumulate engaging and rigorous experiences (Gleason & Gerzon, 2014; Pehmer et al., 2015; Stepich & Ertmer, 2009). Effective professional development increases student-centered practices of scaffolding instruction and teaching students how to evaluate their learning with feedback and reflection (Gleason & Gerzon, 2010; Stepich & Ertmer, 2009). Incorporating several research-based strategies in the classroom, teachers provide students with life-long learning skills and strategies. Students who engage in life-long learning strategic reflection become independent thinkers and explorers (Bartolini et al., 2014; Pehmer et al., 2015). The expectation of education is to prepare students for careers and/or colleges. With meaningful and engaging professional development, teachers have resources available to prepare students accordingly. As independent learners, students develop learning communities similar to adult learners, in which students facilitate learning, transfer knowledge to applicable tasks, and build upon strengths and weaknesses of self and others (Feighan & Heeren, 2009; Owen 2015; Nichols, Rickelman, & Young, 2008). The evidence within this paragraph omits how

teacher perceptions impact student achievement. This study allowed the researcher to explore the impacts of professional development on student learning.

Upon graduation from high school, students are to exemplify college or career readiness. From the analysis of the literature cited in this section, it could be surmised that the goals of professional development include preparing students for their post-middle and high school lives, increasing student achievement, and developing life-long learning. With meaningful professional development, teachers increase their pedagogical, professional, and personal knowledge to provide students with the skills necessary.

Effective Professional Development

Professional Development Design

Professional development design is an important factor to determining the engagement levels of teachers and evaluating their perceptions (Moss & Brookhart, 2015). Effective professional development must align to a shared vision, align to data, and align to school culture (Cordingley, 2015; Jimerson & Wayman, 2015; Stewart, 2014). It is possible that effective professional development design, promotes self-efficacy.

Professional development design begins with a shared vision. Developing a shared vision requires the involvement of all involved in the school and their expectations of school success (Bradley, 2014; Cordingley, 2015). Faculty members that feel comfortable to share their opinion and have realistic expectations that assist in the development of a shared school vision. While developing shared school expectations, faculty, and administration are effectively collaborating providing school cultural

expectations. Shared school expectations drive the type of professional development teachers should engage in and facilitate (Janssen et al., 2013; Sturmer, Konings, Seidel, 2013). Professional development opportunities driven by a shared vision promote increased student learning due to an increase in research-based and student-centered pedagogical practices (Cordingley, 2015; Lattuca, Bergom, & Knight, 2014; Sturmer et al., 2013). Visions created collaboratively also encourage the utilization of data. There is a lack of evidence to support whether or not teachers' perceptions are being incorporated in the design of professional development design.

Valuing teacher perceptions is important because a shared vision drives professional development; therefore, causing the data to have direction and meaning. Multiple sources of data enrich professional development providing concrete actions to accomplish the shared vision (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013, Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). Teachers are able to provide the data in which they would like to utilize to develop the shared vision to promote effective and focused professional development. Data-driven professional development assists in identifying the needs of teachers and validates professional development opportunities. Using data to drive professional learning, allows teachers to engage in the process of professional learning with the possibility of collaborative opportunities for development. Vision and data driven professional development provides "specific action for teachers to perform" (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013, p. 70) that sets student and teacher expectations, guides the curriculum, and determines key priorities (Day & Gu, 2007; Jimerson & Wayman, 2015). The evidence mentioned in this paragraph omits teacher directed or oriented data. The possible

incorporation of teacher perceptions of professional development assists in understanding the role quantitative data has in their professional development needs. Within this study, teachers have the opportunity to describe their concept of effective professional development in order to address the gap of teacher perceptions, views, and experiences driving professional development. Involving teachers in decision-making, data sources, or information of needs, allows meaningful vision development that develops into meaningful professional development.

As teachers engage in professional development that targets a shared vision and multiple sources of meaningful data, the school culture changes to one of continuous learning for personal and student growth (DuFour, 2004; de Vries et al., 2014; Jimerson & Wayman, 2015). Directed professional development increases learning opportunities that align to initiatives and goals within and outside the school (Stewart, 2014; van den Bergh, Ros, Beijaard, 2015). The alignment of initiatives and goals assists with organizing to provide teachers with learning opportunities based on needs alignment. To develop a culture for learning within and outside the school, professional learning communities create structures, environments, and flexibility for long-term learning (Coldwell, MacIsaac, Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura, 2014; DuFour, 2004; de Vries et al., 2014). Since long-term learning determines the format of professional development, it is expected that teacher previous knowledge is incorporated into the design of professional development. A school environment and culture increases student learning due to adult professional learning having a shared vision, targeted focus on students, and sufficient

time and support for teachers (Jimerson & Wayman, 2015; Stewart, 2014). The increased organization allows for resources and time to be effective.

Resources provide tools and strategic items to increase the effectiveness of professional development. Effective professional development incorporates wisely allocated resources that address the shared vision (Abilock, Harada, & Fontichiaro, 2013; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). Providing relevant resources such as materials, money, technology, and human labor encourages situational learning to occur (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012; Pehmer et al., 2015). Relevant resources act as a conduit to learning allowing practical application of knowledge provided. Providing time for professional development encourages needs-assessments, reflection, collaboration, and planning (Janssen et al., 2013; Lucilio, 2009). After understanding needs from reflection, collaboration, and planning, the allocation of resources occurs. Allocation of resources promotes leadership and places teachers in control of their learning process (Abilock et al., 2013; Burke, 2013; van Genderen, 2013). The evidence above is insufficient to determine whether teacher perceptions are incorporated in determining school-based needs. When facilitators of professional development are aware of teachers' time, they may provide choices to various types of professional development opportunities. This study questions the most meaningful and effective factors of professional development to examine various resources and its importance on professional development.

Choice provided to teachers for professional development assists in ensuring engagement throughout all stages of learning. Teachers who engage in the learning process of determining the types of professional development offered, facilitating

learning, and engaging in reflection changed instructional practices (Bradley, 2014; Cook, 2014; Jita & Mokhele, 2014). Choices in professional development promote personal motivation and engagement to increase professional knowledge and increase instructional practices. Top-down mandated professional learning does not address the concerns or needs of teachers (Bradley, 2014; Christesen & Turner, 2014; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). By incorporating teachers' voice, professional development may gain more meaning. Teachers seek various types of professional development. Professional development incorporates the observation of colleagues, sharing practices, on-site courses, mentoring and workshops, and research and inquiry that address individual teachers' thinking (Boyle et al., 2004; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). Teachers also expect professional development to include episodic or references to real problems within the classroom (Filipe et al., 2014; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). This evidence challenges the top-down professional development due to facilitators and school leaders lacking current classroom experience. The desire to engage in professional learning involves applicable learning and practices that are met when teacher perceptions are included.

Teachers also expect learning to be active. As teachers engage in professional learning, one must realize that knowledge interacts with previous learning that creates new meaning through transparency, confidence, vulnerability, and demonstration of student learning (Muijs, Kyriakides, van der Werk, Creemers, Timperley, & Earl, 2014). Teachers engage in active learning and identify the relevance and application of the learning. Making shifts in collaborative groups, the nature and demands of learning, and the personalization of learning allows the participants to move beyond passive

participation (Haug & Sands, 2013; Muijs et al., 2014). Active learning involves the learner as the central figure rather than the instructor to increase engagement, practicum, assessment, reflection, and support (Farooq, Zeshan, Hafeez, & Ul Hassan, 2015; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). Active and personalized learning requires continual learning. However, this evidence does not address personal learning styles. Since teaching is often a solitary activity, it is important that this study examines individual perceptions to determine individualized needs that develop themes of school-based necessities.

Effective professional development requires continual support. Years of experience develop professional identity and increases desire for promotion; however, both are not necessarily associated with stage of teaching skills (Antoniou, 2013; Day & Gu, 2007; van den Bergh et al., 2015). Learning is continual and essential in a fast changing world. To engage fully in professional development adults apply the information, gain feedback, and have ongoing support while adapting knowledge with experiences (Sobel et al., 2011; van den Bergh et al., 2015). The adaption creates learning opportunities for the adult learner and the students. In order for continual support to be effective, teacher expectations and needs should be included. Teacher expectations of continual support address the collaborative nature needed to increase the learning culture to provide opportunities for input, practical application, and reflection (Childs, Burn, & McNicholl, 2013; Visser, Coenders, Pieters, & Terlouw, 2013). Developing the culture of learning with continual support encourage shared vision statements established by the school.

Continual support is a necessary component to ensure the professional development is effective and targets the shared vision. There are teacher concerns and expectations of support for their continual learning. Administrators can informally support efforts by providing time, allowing for curiosity, and providing resources (Bartolini et al., 2014; van den Bergh et al., 2015). Teachers may expect that administrative support is available and supportive of their learning. The concern with continual support is the lack of availability from academic coaches to support teacher professional learning and growth (Feighan & Heeren, 2009; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Teachers expect academic coaches to provide professional development that incorporates practical hands-on application with follow-up rather than passive workshops without continual support (Richards & Skolits; 2009; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). With continual support and time, professional learning becomes a cyclical process that involves reflective thinking to ensure the benefits of learning. When determining the effectiveness of continual support, teacher perceptions are needed. This study questions what qualities make professional development effective. With teacher perceptions, the researcher has information regarding the quality of support.

Reflective practice ensures that continual support is purposeful and applicable to practice. Reflective practice promotes curiosity, analytical thinking, and critical inquiry through learning journals and evaluation (Abilock et al., 2013; Blaschke, 2012). Portfolios and journals are effective strategies for ensuring that analytical and critical thinking occurs. Developing a portfolio of professional development's applicability and value to practice shapes participatory learning with textual, visual, audio, or graphic

perception of professional development (Curwood, 2014; Frunzeanu, 2014). The portfolio assists in determining the value of professional development and the outcomes of learning for the adult. The development of a portfolio allows the teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses of professional knowledge while assessing their growth within the profession (Frunzeanu, 2014; Nohl, 2015). Assessing professional growth aids in the transformation of the educator, further inquiry, and true adoption of professional development (Nohl, 2015; Richards & Skolits, 2009). This evidence omits whether or not teachers perceive that their professional development is valued. As this study examines teacher perceptions, data may be gained of how teachers perceive reflection and its impact to their personalized professional learning.

Effective professional development incorporates several design elements. Those elements include alignment of data, culture, and vision, effective utilization of resources and time, choice, active learning, continual support, and reflection. Professional development design is important to ensure that adult learners are having their needs met. Understanding professional development design promotes the adult learner at the center of the learning processes.

Elements of Effective Whole Teacher Approach

Stimulating the needs of adult learners require an understanding of professional development design and andragogy (Chan, 2010; Peterson & Ray, 2013). The design of professional development is imperative to assist in placing the adult learner at the center of the learning process (Marzano et al., 2011). Incorporating teachers in professional development utilizes whole-teacher learning (Chen & Chang, 2006; Maslow, 2013).

Examining the whole teacher approach provides guidelines for assessing teacher perceptions of professional development. Whole teacher learning incorporates collaboration, is multidimensional, has developmental learning, is domain-specific, and integrates learning across disciplines, environments, and behaviors (Chen & Chang, 2006). However, these aspects are not based on teacher perceptions of professional development.

Multidimensional professional development. According to Sibley and Sewell (2011) multidimensional professional development targets attitudes, skills, and practices of teachers (Maslow, 2013). It is important that multidimensional learning provide time, personalization, and collaboration to achieve the school vision. Time and space allotted for teachers to have in-depth and targeted discussions develop a culture of building upon strengths and weaknesses (Valerie, 2012; Watson, 2014). Professional development targets teachers' values, skills, and practices with mutual trust and respect, openness, and partnerships (Childs et al., 2013; de Vries et al., 2014; Liu, Jehng, Chen, & Fang, 2014; van den Bergh, Ros, & Beijaard, 2014; Watson, 2014). When identifying the targets of professional development, the authors omit how teacher perceptions are included and directed the expectations of professional learning. In order for professional development to be effective and personalized, it should target the values, skills, and practices teachers already hold. Multidimensional professional development provides the framework of individual and cohesive thoughts and actions of participants that may support or weaken motivation, job satisfaction, and morale (Curwood, 2014; Liu et al., 2014; Valerie, 2012). With an effective leadership addressing teachers' attitudes, skills, and practices, teachers

become focused on professional growth, classroom practices, and student learning (de Vries et al., 2014; Haug & Sands, 2013; van den Bergh et al., 2014; Zwart et al., 2015). With a variety of learning styles and purposes, professional development addresses adult learner needs.

Multidimensional professional development also provides multiple ways to learn and to develop (Sibley & Sewell, 2011). When learning occurs, the adult learner has the ability and resources to action in their career and personalized learning. Teachers taking action to define professional learning goals and needs based on school vision is critical to determining the multiple ways to learn and develop (Bleicher, 2014; Cordingley, 2015; Filipe et al., 2014). Once teachers define goals and needs of professional learning they actively seek peer support, facilitate professional development for others, and guide school leaders with needs assessments for individualized, teacher-centered, and school-based learning (Evans, 2014; Hsieh, 2015; Lattuca, Bergom, & Knight, 2014). Professional development then becomes a personalized learning that increases active learning and engagement. Professional development that provides multiple ways of teacher learning and development models critical thinking, differentiation, and collaboration expected of students in the classroom (Cordingley, 2015; Earley & Porritt, 2014; Paraskevas & Wickens, 2003). Based on the cited evidence above, one could deduce that personalized multidimensional professional development meets the needs of the adult learner in a variety of ways.

Targeting school culture and diverse learning assists in accommodating teacher needs and motivating school-wide success (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). It is critical that

nonjudgmental, active listening occurs to promote discussion of needs and development of realistic aspirations and goals (Evans, 2014; Sobel et al., 2011). There is a lack of evidence to support if teachers feel their voices are heard in the development, implementation, and evaluation of professional development. The expectation is that people become more aware and willing to share ideas and concerns. With administrative support and accountability, teachers focus time and resources on evaluating data, creating and facilitating professional learning, and building a positive school culture (Bradley, 2014; Diaz, 2013; DuFour, 2004). Accommodating diverse needs of teachers with flexibility, equity, and understanding builds motivation and empowers teachers to “reach goals on higher levels of complexity” (Keller-Schneider, 2014, p. 156; Bradley, 2014). One can deduce that by understanding and examining teachers’ perceptions of professional development that motivation and other goal-attainment increase. Professional learning that appeals to many aspects of learning increases the growth of the adult learner.

Effective professional development supports teacher growth as a teacher advances from a novice to an expert in their field of practice (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). In order to make professional development a continuous experience, it is critical that it relates to teachers’ past, present, and future teaching experiences and goals (Nichols et al., 2008; Samaroo, Cooper, & Green, 2013; Twinning et al., 2013). Professional development can improve teaching skills allowing teacher to achieve professional goals (Boyle et al., 2004; Twinning et al., 2013). The above evidence suggests that teacher perceptions of professional development should be used as a guide to plan, implement, and evaluation

professional learning. In developing effective professional development, one must consider how the learning environment shapes experiences. The learning environment engages and stimulates the adult learner and is supportive of progressing adult learners to the next stage of their development (Antoniou, 2013; Beaty-O’Ferrall & Johnson, 2010; Blaschke, 2012). The learning environment becomes a catalyst to learning and provides opportunities for improvement. With an engaging and stimulating learning environment, adult learners become receptive to giving and receiving feedback and support others with continuous development professional learning (Dever & Lash, 2013; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Feedback and continuous development allows for collaborative motivation for increased effective learning.

Developmentally appropriate and domain-specific professional development.

Developmental professional development also includes peer support. Developmental professional development should no longer force teachers to attend workshops or engage in passive learning (Stewart, 2014; Thibodeau, 2008). With developmental professional development, teachers learn based on needs with collaboration. Collegial supportive professional development allows teachers to support, lead, and evaluate one another while learning from those who are in the classroom with them (Childs et al., 2013; Diaz, 2013; Lucilio, 2009). Involving colleagues in “quality reciprocity” allows collegial support, collaboration, and leadership (Childs et al., 2013, p. 45; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Farooq et al., 2015). Collaborative learning increases motivation and accountability of learning. With effective learning environments, developmental learning is meaningful and addresses needs of the learner. Peer teaching and learning increases

motivation of teachers for long-lasting professional development and improvement in teaching practices (Dever & Lash, 2013; Diaz, 2013; Frunzeanu, 2014). Supportive environments, classroom connections, and reflective practices promote individualized and continual professional learning (Bradley, 2014; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). As the evidence suggests, involving teachers in professional development, at all levels, promote leadership. By examining teacher perceptions, one can evaluate the level of involvement desired. With continued professional learning, teachers gain skills and knowledge to address classroom objectives.

Effective professional development addresses the objectives based on curriculum, standards, and performance expectations (Grigg, Kelly, Gamoran, & Borman, 2012; Sobel et al., 2011). Professional development addresses domain-specific classroom practices to improve student performance. There are several concerns teachers address as professional learning does not cater to domain-specific needs. In middle school classrooms, teachers identified the lack of preparation and planning to develop strategies to accomplish vision statements (Abilock et al., 2013; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Nichols et al., 2007). This evidence supports the need of teacher perceptions in many stages of professional development. Scripted curricula are also a concern for personalized professional learning. The emphasis on scripted curriculum programs attempt to replace domain-specific learning (Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Nichols et al., 2008). The opportunities for domain-specific professional learning are necessary. Teachers who have opportunities to focus professional development on critical professional practices, change classroom practices based on the research-based practices learned from professional

development (Bleicher, 2014; Nichols et al., 2008; Nishimura, 2014). This evidence challenges top-down professional development opportunities and draws attention to teacher focused professional learning. Professional learning deepens teachers' approach to student development that incorporates a variety of resources, addresses specific changes in practice, and models expected strategies (Filipe et al., 2014; Gleason & Gerzon, 2014). Domain-specific professional development caters to the diverse needs of teachers through evaluated, integrated, and multidimensional learning (Klein & Riordan, 2011; Twining et al., 2013). With personalized professional learning plans that address domain-specific concerns, teachers are able to share experiences to strengthen the knowledge of each other.

Integrated professional development. Professional development that investigates strengths and weaknesses of teachers offer varied professional learning opportunities (Bayar, 2014; Nichols et al., 2007; van den Bergh et al., 2015). With a diagnostic of teacher needs, professional development incorporates the needs through delivery and training of leaders to improve educators' accessibility to resources, knowledge, and skills (Bayar, 2014; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; van den Bergh et al., 2015). Professional learning has the opportunity to exist at any moment of the day to increase knowledge and practical application of knowledge. Grounded in teachers' problems in practice or domain, effective professional development occurs outside of workshop settings and occur in any context during any part of the day (Colwell et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). Domain-specific professional learning guides teachers' needs and resources for student achievement. Teachers allowed

to define their own professional learning based on the school vision develop autonomy and strength knowledge and input to evaluation systems (Colwell et al., 2014; Diaz, 2013; Evans, 2014). One might argue, from the evidence above, that examining teacher perceptions of professional learning is a very important aspect to ensuring professional development is meaningful and effective. The expectation of domain-specific learning is to strengthen classroom practices.

Targeting classroom practices, professional development aims to improve students by preparing them for college and/or careers (Earley & Porritt, 2014; Muijs et al., 2014). Focused and aimed professional learning utilize data as important resources. Analyzing data is necessary to identify student needs and possible additions to teachers' pedagogical knowledge (Bleicher, 2014; Twining et al., 2013). Effective professional development examines diverse data to identify relevant and collaborative strategies for facilitating learning, evaluating lessons, and development powerful tools to assess student learning (Earley & Porritt, 2014; Klein & Riordan, 2011; Nishimura, 2014). Data should be domain-specific and assists in direction, needs assessments, and meaningful learning. It is critical that professional development is relevant to real-world classroom practices in order for professional learning to have the greatest influence (Muijs et al., 2014; Nichols et al., 2008; Nishimura, 2014). The information provided is insufficient in determining the value of teacher perceptions in the processes of professional development. Incorporating various forms of data, the adult learner has the ability to integrate ideas within their domain.

Integrated professional development requires facilitators and participants to understand the relationship amongst skills, practices, and attitudes (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2015; Thomas et al., 2012). Several strategies assist with the integration of learning such as professional learning communities, shared vision, and reflection. Professional learning communities collaboratively creates a vision, allows opportunities to work toward the vision, finds resources to support the work, and reflect on professional learning (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Earley & Porritt, 2014). Developing the shared vision guides the purpose of professional development and influences reflection of teaching practices and learning (Antoniou, 2013; Cordingley, 2015; van den Bergh et al., 2014). This evidence omits whether or not teacher perceptions were incorporated in developing a shared vision of learning throughout the school. With shared vision, adult learners have opportunities to reflect on learning and its application to daily activities. Reflection is an activity that takes into account personal experiences, beliefs, knowledge, and learning to evaluate professional needs (Bleicher, 2014; Klein & Riordan, 2011). Researchers' findings suggest that reflection adds value to professional learning, alters professional practice, and requires critical thinking and application (Ioannidou-Koutselini & Patsalidou, 2015; Sanchez, 2012; Valerie, 2012). With reflection, adults understand their strengths and weakness with assessments on improving learning. Developing the whole-teacher approach incorporates reflection to ensure the integration of ideas, learning, and implementation. Collaborative and guided reflection determines the integration of professional development on classroom practices (Cajkler et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Frunzeanu, 2014). However, the above suggestions have been

determined as effective and highly effective without schools evaluating the needs of their teachers or seeking their perceptions of professional learning.

Integrated professional development also engages the whole teacher on large goals rather than the isolated goal of the professional development session (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2015; Thomas et al., 2012). Guided reflection allows teachers to determine the value of their professional practices and promotes an increase in student learning (Cajkler et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Lattuca et al., 2014; Nichols et al., 2008; Sanchez, 2012; van den Bergh et al., 2014). Integrated transfer of professional development to classroom practices promotes critical thinking and student-centered learning practices (Lattuca et al., 2014; Sanchez, 2012). The evidence above suggests that when teacher perceptions are incorporated, professional development becomes integrated into the professional life of the teacher. It is important to be able to identify how professional learning integrates in classroom practices. Researchers identified that integrated professional development engages teachers and has meaning to the professional lives of the adult learner (Feighan & Heeren, 2009; Richards & Skolits, 2009; van den Bergh et al., 2015). As adult learners attempt to accomplish their professional goals, leaders emerge. Integrated and engaging professional development allows teacher leadership and high-quality practice of learned skills (Bayar, 2014; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Keller-Schneider, 2014; Stewaart, 2014; van den Bergh et al., 2015). As teachers provide their perceptions of professional development and those perceptions are valued, teachers become leaders in schools and

assist in meeting the needs of each other. Increased knowledge aids in understanding the value of integration.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the whole teacher approach of professional learning addresses collaborative and independent needs, integration of learning, increased developmental knowledge, multidimensional learning, and domain-specific skills. Employing the whole teacher approach engages teachers in their learning by teachers assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Administrators and academic coaches become supporters of knowledge rather than facilitators of professional learning. Teachers become leaders of their knowledge aiding each other in professional learning.

Andragogy and Professional Development

Professional development incorporates adults learning. To ensure effective professional development, understanding, and incorporating themes of adult learning is critical. Assessing teacher experiences, motivation, self-concept, readiness to learn, and application of knowledge assist in designing professional development that is engaging and meaningful. As adult learners, teachers engage in professional development. This study explored how teachers perceive professional development.

Experience is a foundational assumption for the adult learner. The vast and varied experiences allow the adult learner to set parameters of learning in order for learning to be capitalized (Chan, 2010; Green & Ballard, 2011; Nohl, 2015; Samaroo et al., 2013). The parameters include the experiences of the adult learner and what the adult learner believes is necessary to learn. Based on experiences, the adult learner determines the value of their learning and working (de Vries et al, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Muresan,

2014). This evidence omits andragogy practices related to the professional learning of educated adults. With value to specific learning and skills, the adult learners' motivation to complete tasks increases. As the adult learner matures in knowledge and experiences, the complexity of the life experiences encourages further understanding of self and increases motivation for knowledge (van Genderen, 2013; Weber, 2014). Due to the experiences of the adult learner, they are able to engage in the development of their learning while facilitating the learning of others (Chan 2010; Nohl, 2015; Samaroo et al., 2013). The adult who engages in learning that relates to experiences and motivations are able to understand the importance of motivation in excelling in tasks. The expectation is true of teachers. Teachers who engage in learning that relates to experiences and motivations apply the professional development to instructional practices. According to Knowles (1980), the vast amounts of experiences promote problem solving, critical thinking, and discussion with application in several environments. Having the ability to apply professional development to instructional practices includes the teacher engaging in learning and using experiences to guide needs-based learning. This study aims to explore whether or not andragogy practices are or should be incorporated into the professional learning of teachers by examining perceptions of professional development.

In order to effectively learn, the learning environment must be conducive to the learning (McGrath, 2009; Moore, 2010; Nohl, 2015; Samaroo et al., 2013). According to Moore (2010), the learning environment must be conducive to development connections between "adult learning, critical, thinking, and decision-making" (p. 9). Examining teacher perceptions provide data to determine the connections current or needed to make

an effective and meaningful learning environment. A conducive learning environment allows the adult learner to draw connections between experiences and the skills that acquired during learning. It is beneficial to have a learning environment mimic the environment in which the skills learned are applied. To enhance the conduciveness of the learning environment, the learning environment should allow for diverse types of learners as well as promote positive, applicable learning experiences (Gleason & Gerzon, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Nohl, 2015). Increasing diversity in the learning environment promotes learners gaining the skill to address diversity in practical application of the learned skill. This study, by addressing diverse perceptions of professional development aims to address how the learning is applicable and practical to the classroom.

It is equally important to value the type of learner. There are various types of learners including those who need guidance to facilitate learning and those who are motivated enough to facilitate their own learning (Paraskevas & Wickens, 2003; Nohl, 2015). Conducting this study explored the type of learner a teacher is and provide a catalyst for further discussion. For adult learners, the facilitator must deliver the information in a way that makes the adult learner feel comfortable and engaged (Moore, 2010; Nohl, 2015). Increasing the comfort level of an adult learner requires understanding the experiences and motivational aspects of the learner. It is important to know, as an adult learner facilitator, what the adult learner has mastered in order to prevent redundancy and displayed unawareness of the learner. Based on the type of learner, the facilitator and learner are able to “question, evaluate, and come to informed conclusions” (Moore, 2010, p. 2) about how the learning influences their type of learning

and needed knowledge (Muresan, 2014; Paraskevas & Wickens, 2003). Understanding the type of learner aids in the facilitation of professional development. One might argue that exploring teacher perceptions of professional development allow teachers to question and reflect on their professional learning in order to development and implement a plan for their personalized professional development. With collaboration between the facilitator and learner, learning and engagement is encouraged. As teachers increase their involvement in professional development, learning becomes meaningful.

Adult learners require intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to encourage learning. Intrinsic motivation is the driving factor for adult learners (Knowles, 1984; Nohl, 2015). This evidence challenges non-teacher planned and led professional development and supports voluntary teacher professional learning. The evidence suggests that teacher perceptions of professional learning may assist in developing professional development that intrinsically motivates teachers. The motivation of adult learners stems from various factors. The surrounding context of social, economic, cultural, and political power drive the decision-making and motivation of the adult learner (Chan, 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Weber, 2014). Facilitating adult learners also requires knowledge of outside responsibilities and experiences that may alter adult learner thinking. Adult learners have pressures of family and full time jobs that further promote the desire to increase learning for intrinsic success (McGrath, 2009; Nohl, 2015; Peterson & Ray, 2013). Increasing discussion about professional development, teachers, and other school-based stakeholders may have the ability to increase supplemental application of knowledge that transfers outside of the classroom. The motivation that stems from goals and learning expectations

increases the appreciation of learning and the value adults have of learning (Chan, 2010; Chinnasamy, 2013; Peterson & Ray, 2013; Weber, 2014). When addressing perceptions of professional development, I gained insight into what teachers find valuable, meaningful, and relevant for their learning. Building value and appreciation of learning increases the readiness to learn and the application of knowledge.

Building on motivation and experiences, the adult learner develops self-concept. According to Knowles (1980), the adult learner is more self-directed, strives for independence, is responsible for learning, and is aware of strengths and weaknesses. With awareness of self, the adult learner critically reflects on practices and directs research into self-education (Blaschke, 2012; Green & Ballard, 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Nohl, 2015). This evidence omits how much time teachers perceive is necessary for the implementation of professional development strategies and concepts. Reflection of practices includes understanding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Understanding strengths and weaknesses prompts the self-directed adult learner to develop learning contracts, facilitate flexible curriculums, and negotiate learning needs and programs (Chan, 2010; Moore, 2010; Muresan, 2014). However, this evidence does not identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses. In schools, teachers who are able to assess their strengths and weaknesses seek personalized professional development to increase their learning. The adult learner engages in personally designed learning that is self-directed, goal-oriented, and practice-based in order to accomplish goals (Filipe et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Nohl, 2015). Goal-oriented programs provide direction and expectations for the adult learner to have control over learning. One goal of professional

development is to provide teachers with needs-based learning, understanding the goals and expectations of the classroom prompts targeted professional learning. As self-concept increases, the adult learner has a reduction in anxiety and develops more control over their learning and progress (Chan, 2010; van Genderen, 2013). This study aims to discuss teacher perceptions of professional development to narrow the gap in the exploration of teacher strengths and weaknesses to create targeted and teacher-led professional development. Increasing control of learning also increased the personalization of adult learning.

Due to adult learners developing personalized learning programs, there is a readiness to learn (Knowles, 1975; Nohl, 2015; Samaroo et al., 2014). Readiness to learn ensures that the adult learners' curriculum meets their needs and revolves around the application of knowledge (Knowles, 1980). However, there is a lack of evidence to support what teachers define as their readiness to learn and engage in professional learning. It is important to note that the adult learning requires individualized critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making that promotes personal goals while increasing collaborative agendas (Akin, 2014; Blaschke, 2012; McGrath, 2009; Nohl, 2015). With collaboration; however, the adult learner desires to increase their personal growth. There is a lack of evidence to support that teacher's perceived collaboration as an effective component of professional development. Teachers who notice a positive change in student achievement or behavior due to professional development may encourage others to think critically of how professional development strategies influence their classroom. In order to promote individualized professional development, learning should

be voluntary, appeal to experiences and motivation, and equally collaborative (Peterson & Ray, 2013; van Genderen, 2013). With this study, I hope to explore that with diverse opportunities to learn, the adult learner has the ability to align learning with experiences and expectations.

Adult learners have complex experiences that involves parenting, advancing in careers, and personalized goals; therefore, learning for adults require the application of knowledge. Adult learning is for performing tasks and solving problems (Chinnasamay, 2013; Knowles, 1980; Nohl, 2015; Samaroo, 2013). This evidence challenges ideas and implementations of professional development that reduces teachers to passive students. Engaging the adult learner/educator, professional development should assist in solving problems and performing tasks in the classroom. Adult learners are lifelong learners that seek a learning environment that facilitates decision-making in order to solve problems of personal and career orientation (Akin, 2014; Chan, 2010; van Genderen, 2013). This evidence suggests that incorporating teacher perceptions of professional development results in teachers becoming leaders, problem-solvers, and critical thinkers of their own needs. Decision-making and career connections require active engagement of learning. For the adult learning to be successful in the learning environment, Chan (2010) states that the learning needs to become “more than passive transfer of knowledge” (p. 33) and the learner must actively engage in the development and acquisition of knowledge (Nohl, 2015; van Genderen, 2013). This evidence omits the qualities teachers recognize as effective components of education. Teachers should engage in learning rather than passively attend professional development opportunity to gain points for evaluation or

due to its required attendance. Based on motivation, self-concept, application of knowledge, and experiences, the adult learner actively engages in learning and its application.

Based on current research, professional development requires the motivation, self-efficacy, and positive environments for life-long learning to be effective (Akin, 2014; Nohl, 2015, Weber, 2014). In addition, professional development must incorporate personalized teacher-led decisions and address how the knowledge gained is applicable to daily classroom practices (Nohl, 2015; van Genderen, 2013). Therefore, researchers concur that professional development incorporates teacher leadership, is meaningful, and promotes applicable information for daily utilization. One existing gap found in the literature is the lack of teachers' working definition of professional development. With interviews, I had the ability to create a working definition from teacher perceptions. Another gap found in the literature is teacher perceptions of current professional development opportunities and ideas for meaningful and relevant professional learning. This study used data from interviews, participant journals, and agendas to discuss the above gaps.

Summary

The intention of this literature review was to provide background to the study of professional development and middle and high school teachers' perceptions of professional development. The review of literature provided insight into the continued conversation about effective professional development, adult learning, and professional development design. This section reviewed literature of andragogy, professional

development goals, professional development design, effective professional development, and teacher perceptions of professional development to provide a framework from which to develop methods of research and to analyze teachers' perceptions of professional development.

Through the analysis and synthesis of the literature, several ideas emerged. Those themes included that teachers are treated as adult learners to plan and implement their professional learning, goals of professional development are similar across content areas, and there are varied perceptions of professional development. Regarding teachers' perceptions of professional development, the literature identified an observable gap. This study examined teachers' perceptions about professional development with the goal of reducing the gap of teacher leadership in professional development design and implementation.

Chapter 3 addresses the design and rationale of a case study method. The next section identifies the study population, procedures for collecting and analyzing data. The methodology in Chapter 3 is consistent with qualitative studies seeking to uncover and examine school specific phenomenon that may influence K12 education.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Professional development includes optional and required learning opportunities provided by the district. Researchers have identified what school leaders and researchers define as effective professional development (Bayar, 2014; Pinho & Andrade, 2015; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013); however, teacher voices have been ignored. This study was conducted to gain insight into teacher perceptions of professional development.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle and middle and high school teachers' perceptions of professional development in a rural middle/high school in the Southeastern United States. Teachers were asked their definitions of professional development, their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of professional development, and how professional development has changed their curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. The data collected from interviews and participant journals and agendas were evaluated to enhance current professional development practices. The conceptual framework of this study included elements of Knowles's theory of adult learning (Knowles, 1975, 1984; Nohl, 2015) and Chen and Chang's whole teacher framework (Chen & Chang, 2006; Maslow, 2013).

This section presents a detailed description and rationale for using a case study design to explore teachers' perceptions. I conducted recorded interviews and had participants write in participant journals. I also collected artifacts such as participant agendas to describe teachers' perceptions of decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of professional development. Both the interview transcripts and participant journals provided information pertaining to adult learning theories of Knowles (1975,

1984) and Nohl (2015) and the whole teacher framework of Chen and Chang (2006) and Maslow (2013).

In addition to providing a detailed description and rationale for using a case study design, I describe the role of the researcher, participant selection logic, instrumentation, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness and ethics. I also justify using a qualitative rather than quantitative method, and explain why a case study was the most appropriate design for this study.

Research Design and Rationale

The research method used to explore teacher perceptions of professional development was qualitative. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is used to identify emerging themes from responses to open-ended questions and other types of data. Qualitative research allows for the exploration of how people interpret experiences, perceive their world, and understand their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The purpose of this study was to explore and attribute meaning to teacher perceptions of professional development. Due to the need to explore participants' perspectives and feelings regarding the strengths and weaknesses of professional development, a qualitative approach was best suited for this study.

I used a case study design. A case, according to Yin (2012), is the bounded unit of analysis. According to Lodico, Spalding, and Voegtle (2010), a case study allows the researcher to explore meaning, identify procedures, and gain understanding of an individual group or situation. The case may include people, occasions, time, institutions, and policies that cannot be manipulated by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The case in

this study was professional development. Principals require teachers to attend professional development sessions within teacher workdays. Faculty meetings may serve as professional development opportunities, and think-tank Thursdays may address various professional learning tools and strategies. Attendance at professional development meetings is required.

I used an embedded, single case study to explore teachers' perceptions of professional development. An embedded case study incorporates data from participants to aid in understanding the unit of analysis (Yin, 2012). This study included descriptive case study analysis. According to Yin (2014), a descriptive case study asks "what" questions, does not allow the manipulation of events, and focuses on contemporary events. Rowley (2002) stated that case studies allow for exploration into "contemporary events when the relevant behavior cannot be manipulated" (p. 17). Within the exploration of teacher perceptions of professional development, I included a survey to collect demographic data about the participants. These data included number of years in the teaching profession, degree level, course of instruction, and number of years teaching a course.

For case studies, the use of theory assists in organizing data, developing and building research questions, and guiding the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). The theories identified in this study included whole teacher professional development based on the exploration of teachers' perception through various forms of data collection. The expectation of this study was to build, extend, or challenge the theories found in the literature with the identification of emerging themes.

Other qualitative designs were not appropriate for exploring teacher perceptions of professional development. The narrative design focuses on one or two individual stories and does not allow several participants to convey their perceptions of professional development. Ethnography addresses a culture-sharing group, which was not the purpose of this study. Grounded theory is used to develop a theory based on the data; however, this study did not involve the development of a theory (Creswell, 2009).

In comparison to a quantitative approach, a qualitative approach provides the opportunity to explore participants' perspectives in their natural setting (Creswell, 2009). Exploring teacher perceptions through qualitative methods allowed themes to emerge based on participants' experiences, feelings, and judgments (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative and mixed-methods researchers seek to test hypotheses using statistical analysis of data; neither approach would have supported the subjective interpretation of teachers' views of professional development (Creswell, 2009). I did not collect numeric data related to professional development and did not test a hypothesis regarding professional development; therefore, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches were not appropriate. I explored teacher perceptions of professional development to address the gap in the literature regarding teacher viewpoints of professional learning. The value of this study derives from the thick, rich description of teachers' perceptions of professional development.

Site Selection

Exploring emerging and relevant themes required context sensitivity. According to Patton (2015), context sensitivity refers to placing the findings in a social, historical,

and temporal context to emphasize the meaningfulness and sensitivity of the environment. The district selected was a small district that was chosen due to its efforts in professional development. Each year, this district has scheduled teacher workdays, half-day professional development opportunities, optional weekly professional development, and required monthly professional development. To increase the effectiveness of professional development, voices and perspectives of participants must be heard (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2012). According to Patton, the researcher is reflective about the participants' perspectives with a voice of authenticity, trustworthiness, objectivity, and balance. This study was expected to provide authentic teacher perceptions of professional development.

Research Questions

To explore teacher perceptions of professional development there are two research questions and five sub questions. The research and sub questions are:

RQ1: In what ways do middle and high school teachers view professional development?

SQ1: What are the expectations of middle and high school teachers for professional development?

SQ2: According to middle and high school teachers, what are the most meaningful and effective factors that should be included in a professional development program?

RQ2: Do middle and high school teachers feel that there is an impact on their professional practices during the post professional development period?

SQ1: In which areas do they feel that the significant changes have occurred in relation to professional development?

SQ2: Do middle and high school teachers think that there is a considerable impact on student learning during the post professional development period?

SQ3: Are the teachers able to understand the weaknesses and align their teaching strategies to meet the student requirements after their professional development period?

Participants and Criteria

I employed purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling in qualitative research allows the researcher to select “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). Using purposeful sampling, I gathered and analyzed rich data from similar participants (Patton, 2002). The criteria for participant inclusion were the following: middle and high school teachers, Grades 6 to 12, varying years of experience, college degrees, and professional training. The purposeful sampling was used to explore teachers’ perceptions of professional development. The findings from the study may be used to reduce turnover of teachers at this local school.

To recruit participation for the study, I distributed notifications in teacher mailboxes including my name and contact information, a summary and purpose of the study, and confidentiality procedures. I anticipated needing at least 10 participants to achieve data saturation. Those who were willing to participate in the study sent a text

message to me with their name. According to the school's master schedule, 45 teachers had the opportunity to participate in the study. If a large number of participants had agreed to participate, I would have used random sampling to select 10 participants. I conducted debriefing via personal emails or face to face in which participants were asked their reaction to and feelings about the study and whether there were lingering questions or confusions. As they exited the study, participants received a summary of their particular member-checked responses, a statement of confidentiality, a statement of gratitude, and contact information. In addition, the district and participants received an executive summary and information on how to access the full study.

Researcher's Role

I was the sole investigator. My role included collecting, recording, transcribing, analyzing, and storing all data. I am a teacher certified in 6th-12th grade English. My employment with the district began July 2014. A relationship of trust and confidentiality of professional relationships had been developed and maintained. Participants expressed their willingness to participate via a text message to me after invitations were sent via LinkedIn to full-time teachers. The participants were allowed to choose the location and time for their interviews.

To be an effective researcher, it is important to identify and manage bias (Patton, 2015). Acknowledging and controlling bias creates valid and trustworthy research. I needed to ensure that bias did not affect the study through language, participant selection, or data collection. Jansen and Laurie (2016) identified five categories of bias: moderator, question, answer, sample, and recording. To reduce moderator bias, I dressed neutrally in

business attire and refrained from voicing opinions or using opinionated facial expressions and body language. I reduced questioning bias by incorporating questions free of background opinions, asking clear and coherent questions, selecting participants who had personal knowledge to answer questions due to their engagement in professional development, and following the order of questions from general to specific. To reduce sample bias, I opened the study to full-time teachers of any subject at the school. To reduce reporting bias, I triangulated data by analyzing interview transcripts, professional development agendas, and participant journals.. In addition, triangulation occurred with three sets of coding data that included individual documents, sets of documents, and crosschecking all documents for both initial and emergent codes. I also conducted member checking, kept a research journal, and included peer debriefing.

Instrumentation

This study incorporated the seven-step cyclical framework of data collection (Creswell, 2009). The cyclical data collection process involves locating site and individuals, gaining access and making rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data (Creswell, 2009). Below is the explanation and details for the data collection process identified above.

Locating Site and Individuals

Prior to conducting any study, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University must be received with an approval number. The IRB is a board made of members from the campus community that reviews research for possible

harm to participants of the research. The IRB approval number was identified when approval was granted.

This study was conducted at a site in the southeastern part of the United States. The district is composed of four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one middle/high school, and one alternative/virtual school. The school in this study was selected for several reasons that include proximity and easy access to participants, already gained confidence from possible participants, district needs of alignment and articulation that can purposefully be examined at a middle/high school. At the middle/high school, there are 40 teachers with several teaching across content and grade levels.

Gaining Access, Making Rapport, and Purposefully Sampling

Prior to submitting the proposal and the IRB application, I contacted Walden University's IRB to inquire if signed letters of cooperation were needed even if interviews were not conducted on the school site. The IRB may state that it would be in the researcher's best interest to have signed letters of cooperation from both the district superintendent and the school principal. Therefore, a letter seeking permission to conduct the study (Appendix A) that included a copy of the proposal and a letter of cooperation (Appendix B) were sent to and signed by the superintendent and the site's principal.

Development and maintenance of rapport with faculty members are due to the collegial position and discussions about personal and professional ideas. Opportunities to develop and maintain rapport are achieved with department and grade level meetings, interdisciplinary discussions, leadership meetings, and non-work related conversations. In

addition, a small worksite contributes to developing and sustaining working relationships amongst teachers.

Purposeful sampling incorporates the voluntary participation criteria of full-time middle and high school teachers. Gaining access to participants includes signed letters of cooperation and a proposal sent via mail to the superintendent of the district and principal of the school. After IRB approval, as stated previously, participants received an invitation via flyers in the teachers' lounge for voluntary participation with a number to contact if they are willing to participate. The final data pool included a random sampling of 10 participants. Based on previous case studies, 10 participants (25% of teacher population at site) provide enough of a sample size for the research questions.

Criterion sampling allowed the researcher to select participants based on certain criteria. For this study, criterion included that study participants must be full-time, middle and high school teachers at the school site. All potential participants who meet the criteria were asked to participate in the study with random sampling to obtain 10 participants with participant journals and interviews.

Collecting Data and Recording Information

Data collection incorporated participant journaling, agendas, and individual face-to-face interviews. The convergence of participant journaling, interviews, and agendas assisted in triangulation of the data to increase trustworthiness and credibility of data (Franfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I recorded and transcribed interviews using MAXQDA, a computer software program. I used participant documents such as participant journals and professional development agendas as written artifacts. In

addition, the researcher maintained confidentiality with numerically coding the data that is stored for five years in a locked storage trunk in a locked storage unit with security sustained throughout the study. Upon approval from Walden University's IRB, I collected data over the course of four to six weeks in the form of agendas, participant journals, and interviews.

Participant journals provided a subjective account of an event from the participant's point of view (Turner, 2010). Teachers used the researcher produced reflective journals for five weeks. On the participant journal document, teachers have expectations outlined and various prompt options. While completing the journal, the expectation was that teachers respond thoroughly with examples of benefits, enhancements, and/or their contributions to lesson planning, instructional practices, and assessment practices. In addition, teachers were asked to explain thoroughly how professional development met their needs or can be enhanced. A thorough response included notes about the topics, questions they may have, possible solutions to confusions or problems, new insights, and a critical view of their learning. Teachers responded in their reflection journals over a four-week period of the professional development they engaged in throughout the year to ensure that enough time has transpired to document valuable data about professional development and classroom process. Teachers reflected on teaching practices related to the professional development throughout the year as identified in Appendix D. Various professional development throughout the year incorporates collaborative pairs, Cornell Notes, teacher evaluation, observations, and various Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies. After notification

of participants and signed consent forms, participants received their journal to document after-thoughts and reflections. Participants had three weeks to document after-thoughts in the participant journal based on research sub-question two. Participants responded to six prompts that address perceptions of professional development on lesson planning, instructional practices, assessment practices, strengths and weaknesses, and alignment. The participant journal (Appendix D) provides insight into the implications of professional development in the classroom.

Interviews provide an in-depth viewpoint into the perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2013; Turner, 2010). Ten individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in locations comfortable for the participants such as outside the school environment during the weekends, before school in a private location, or after school in a private location. I reminded the participants before the interview begins that participation in the study is voluntary.

Each interview consisted of seven open-ended questions based on the research questions to complete within a timeframe of 30-45 minutes (see Appendix C). If needed, I asked probing and clarifying questions to ensure sufficient data collection. Each interview question related to the sub-questions of this research. Interview questions pertained to teacher perceptions of current professional development, expectations of professional development, and classroom practices post professional development.

Prior to the interview, the recorder was set up on the table of the interviews. At the beginning of the individual interviews, participants received an additional copy of an overview of the study, an additional copy of the signed informed consent forms, and the

repeated statement of the recording of the interview. Interviews proceeded after initial courteous exchanges.

During the interview, the research maintained an unbiased posture, paid attention with the use of nonverbal communication, such as nods and eye contact. As the interview began, a recorder was used to record the interview, with consent of the participant, while I wrote notes by hand. I used the side bar to capture thoughts, reactions, and observations of nonverbal communication during the interviews. The self-reflections during the interview assisted in identifying themes and key words and phrases. MAXQDA, a digital and computerized program was planned for assistance in transcribing the recorded interviews. However, Microsoft Word was used to transcribe interviews. At the end of the interview, I asked further clarifying questions, engaged in a member check for the participant to add or omit information, and reviewed the methods of results dissemination, storage, and confidentiality.

Resolving Field Issues and Storing Data

According to Maxwell (2013), it is valuable for the researcher to anticipate field issues prior to conducting research. An area the researcher had to understand and reduce was personal beliefs about professional development influencing participants in the study. In order not influence to participants' perceptions of professional development based on the researcher's belief, I declined from engaging in conversation regarding perceptions and definitions of professional development 2015-2016 school year. It is also important to note possible apprehension of a study conducted on the school site. This concern was covered in detail with a letter seeking permission to conduct the study with a

draft of the proposal. Similarly, teachers may be concerned with participating in the study. This concern is addressed with voluntary participation, anonymity, and storage of data. All data and correspondence will remain locked on the home property of the researcher for five years.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative data analysis follows several steps. According to Creswell (2013), component of data analysis includes organizing and preparing data, reading and reflecting on overall meaning, conducting analysis based on method, generating a description of the people and identifying themes, representing data, and interpreting the larger meaning of data. Baxter and Jack (2008) identify five case study analysis techniques. Those techniques include pattern matching, linking data, building explanations, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It is important that the data analysis does not focus on one data source but that the sources are synthesized (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For case study data analysis, the synthesizing and converging of data answers the research questions.

In order to analyze data effectively, specific questions relate to targeted research questions. The matrix below identifies how the research questions align to data collection methods.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Collection Correlation

<p>RQ1: In what ways do middle and high school teachers view professional development?</p>		
<p>SQ1: What are the expectations of middle and high school teachers for professional development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Question 2: What are your expectations of professional development? • Journal 4: List both strengths and weaknesses in your professional practice. • Journal 5: Participants explained how professional development aligns to or could align better to your content area. 	<p>SQ2: According to middle and high school teachers, what are the most meaningful and effective factors that should be included in a professional development program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Question 3: Tell me what the qualities of effective and meaningful professional development. • Journal 5: Participants explained how professional development aligns to or could align better to your content area. 	
<p>RQ 2: Do middle and high school teachers feel that there is an impact on their professional practice during the post professional development period?</p>		
<p>SQ1: In which areas do they feel that the significant changes have occurred in relation to professional development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal 1: Participants explained how professional development influences lesson planning. • Journal 2: Participants explained how professional development influences instructional practices. 	<p>SQ2: Do middle and high school teachers think that there is a considerable impact on student learning during the post professional development period?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Question 4: How do students react to strategies that you've learned from professional development? • Interview Question 5: Have you noticed any changes in student performance after using the strategies 	<p>SQ3: Are the teachers able to understand the weaknesses and align their teaching strategies to meet the student requirements after their professional development period?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Question 6: Have you received professional development that you have experienced as effective and meaningful? Please explain.
<p><i>(table continues)</i></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal 3: Participants explained how professional development influences assessment practices. 	<p>you've learned in professional development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal 5: Participants explained how professional development aligns to or could align better to your content area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview Question 7: Explain how the qualities you described of effective and meaningful professional development address gaps or strengthen your professional practice. Journal 4: List both strengths and weaknesses in your professional practice. Journal 5: Participants explained how professional development aligns to or could align better to your content area.
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I coded interviews and participant journals for analysis. Codes provide words or phrases that symbolically represent data (Saldana, 2009). Coding is cyclical and includes successive iterations of finer levels of coding. Initially, there was open coding. During interviews, the notes taken provided initial concepts to identify in the transcripts of the interviews and participant journals. The coding during the interviews assisted in initial isolation of what is important (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). With more data collected, more codes may develop. The second identification of codes occurred with reading the transcripts of interviews and participant journals. Computer programs provide

an organized storage system that allows the researcher to locate material easily by sentence, phrase, or word; therefore, NVivo was used (Creswell, 2013). The ability to easily search for particular phrases or words allows the researcher to identify emerging themes, to prepare different data collection methods for triangulation, and to reduce time. Computer software also promotes critically analyzing all points of data due to the easy retrieval of information and concept mapping (Creswell, 2013). A researcher garners the ability to take apart, constantly, consistently, and effectively, data without wasting time reading or skimming transcripts looking for pertinent information. Using computer-based coding to reduce research bias due to researcher only identifying codes, a third analysis of the data occurred. Using NVivo, I used free nodes to gather emergent ideas, tree nodes to identify hierarchal ordered categories, and case nodes to capture other information (NVivo). After creating an initial set of nodes, I had the ability to explore all codes within the project. In addition, I used the nodes to code the documents within the program. The software to identify undocumented codes to search documents. A text report was used to produce a document that identifies the numerical expression of codes identified throughout the texts. Next, I viewed coding strips to identify where the codes are located in the document in addition to assessing the evenness and density of the codes (NVivo).

The data analysis process was concurrent and began with the interview process. The coding process facilitation begins with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and develops fully with NVivo software. Data analysis requires an intricate understanding of codes, examining silences, and representing data visually (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative data analysis supports or dismantles concepts or ideas with a thorough investigation of

perceptions and observations. During the interviews, note-taking occurs that isolates words based on the literature review's concepts of effective professional development that include domain-specific, collaborative, time, and reflective. On the interview form, during the interview, I circled key words and phrases based on the similarities across the interviews. To aid in the initial coding, I used NVivo software to identify repeat key words and phrases. Relating key words and literature to the collection of data assists in the justification of the research and the possible value of incorporating teacher perceptions in professional development. It is important to ensure that data analysis is conducted thoroughly in this case study to understand and explore teachers' perceptions of professional development. To ensure that data analysis is conducting thoroughly, I examined and coded documents separately based on initial codes and emergent codes. I examined and coded interviews together, agendas together, and participant journals together with initial codes drawn from the literature, research questions, and conceptual framework and emergent codes. Lastly, I crosschecked all forms of data collection with the initial codes and emergent codes. The repeated examination of the documents allowed thorough research to occur to determine patterns in teacher perceptions of professional development.

I created codes by reviewing the interviews, agendas, and participant journals. The artifacts were broken into segments, categorized using codes, and then breaking down the codes into manageable themes (Creswell, 2013). For the interviews and participant journals, I identified similar themes that are connected to the research

questions and sub-questions. As I identified common themes, a deeper understanding was gained of teacher perceptions.

Case study data analysis occurs in a three multi-layered steps: describing experience, describing meaning, and analysis (Zucker, 2009). Describing experience requires the use of open-ended interviews and journaling with attention to varied data sources (Zucker, 2009). For this case study, sources of data included literature that provides a foundation for this study, interviews and participant journals to gain access into teacher perceptions of professional development, and agendas that outline focus and direction for professional development. Mapping assists with analyzing case study data (Zucker, 2009). The mapping of data incorporated a chart in which each research question, paired with interview questions, had coded words and phrases attached from each participant to draw comparisons and connections.

Describing meaning addresses reviewing literature and linking the research questions to the conceptual framework (Zucker, 2009). Multi-leveled labeling and mapping occurred to identify links. The first label is the meaning of signs and symbols (Zucker, 2009). Within this first label, I defined, based on the literature and research question one, the expectations of middle and high school teachers. In order to determine this, I used NVivo search documents for various definitions of professional development based on the agendas, interviews, and participant journals. The second label consists of the meaning of people, things, and events (Zucker, 2009). This meaning addresses research question one and the sub questions of research question one in which the research explores teacher perceptions and expectations of professional development. To

identify teacher perceptions and expectations of professional development, NVivo software was used to identify key words and phrases captured from interviews. The third label is the meaning of education as a whole (Zucker, 2009). Research question two and its sub questions address the implementation of professional development. Codes were determined from the participant journals with cross analysis with the interviews. I explored the implementation of professional development in the classroom and its changes in student learning for college and careers and changes in instructional practices.

Analysis for case studies is the context-specific generalization (Zucker, 2009). Professional development is the central concept of study with the exploration of teacher expectations, perceptions, and implementations. There are several strategies to generate meaning for analysis. Noting patterns and clusters allows the researcher to make metaphors based on the integration of diverse pieces of data (Miles et al., 2014). The documentation of patterns and clusters was achieved by coding interviews, agendas, and participant journals in their respective sets to determine the initial codes. Then those documents were crosschecked to note patterns and clusters across documents. Counting repetitive words and phrases sharpens the researcher's understanding and the ability to make comparisons (Miles et al., 2014). I used NVivo software to locate repetition within document sets and across documents. Noting relationships between variables allows the researcher to see things and their relationships abstractly in order to build a logical chain of evidence and develop conceptual coherence (Miles et al., 2014). Using the information from patterns, clusters, and repetitious phrases, I used the data to answer the research questions with next steps for research and education.

Issues of Trustworthiness

There are several components to consider for trustworthiness in the study such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Below, credibility describes appropriate strategies to establish credibility, such as triangulation and member checks. Transferability is described as appropriate strategies to establish transferability such as thick description and variation in participant selection. Appropriate strategies to establish dependability include audit trials and triangulation. This study also established confirmability using reflexivity.

Credibility and dependability were established with triangulation, member checking, and audit trials as explained below. Triangulation is the collection of multiple data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Triangulation assisted in establishing this study as credible and dependable. This study employs participant journals, interviews, a research of literature, and professional development agendas in order to create triangulation. In addition, member checking occurred. Member checking allowed the participants to critically analyze the findings and comment on them (Creswell, 2009; Harper & Cole, 2012). Member checking occurred after the interview based on the notes obtained. During that time, participants were able to provide additional information on the topic. For audit trials, there is the raw data, transcribed interviews, participant journals, data reduction and analysis, and process notes. Audit trials provide trustworthiness and dependability due to its transparency (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Thick, rich description, variation in participant selection, and reflexivity establishes transferability and confirmability. Thick, rich description is the ability to describe a phenomenon with sufficient detail that encourages the transferability of the analysis to various times, settings, situations, and people (Harper & Cole, 2012). The analysis draws connections to cultural and social relationships and puts them in context of the research (Harper & Cole, 2012). Variation in participant selection occurred in this study with participants stemming from various content areas with various years of experiences and diverse demographics. According to Creswell (2013), reflexivity addresses bias and preconceptions throughout the research. To assist in addressing reflexivity, the researcher kept a reflexive journal.

Ethical Procedures

Approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board was obtained before the study was conducted. An NIH certificate has been obtained by the researcher that expires in 2018 with certificate number 1142611. In order to conduct the research, a clearly defined letter asking for cooperation must have the approval of the school administrator (Appendices A and B). Recruitment of participants is non-coercive and occurs with flyers in the teachers' lounge with information regarding contact. Participants of the interview signed a letter of informed consent to ensure rights to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, safety, optional withdrawal, and contact information for the researcher and Walden's IRB (Appendix C). This study ensured anonymity and addressed findings in a way to encourage and sustain effective professional development rather than undermine current professional development efforts. This study increases

discussion of professional development with the incorporation of interviews and participant journals. The ethical concerns related to data collection and intervention activities include participants who withdraw early from the study.

Participants may withdraw from the study early without penalty due to the voluntary nature of the study. The researcher, for evaluation and reporting purposes, will ask the participant the reason for withdrawing from the study. Those who withdraw from the study will only have their experience. There were no participants who withdrew from the study. The equipment to record interviews and the participant journals will remain private and secure at all times on a secure USB using a password-protected computer. A numerical coding system assisted in identifying participants in order to maintain anonymity. All data and correspondence will remain locked on the home property of the researcher for five years in a locked shed and locked file cabinet.

Summary

Section 3 provides an overview of the case study methodology used for this research study. A case study includes the bounded unit of professional development and the exploration of ‘what’ questions. This study examined middle and high school teachers’ perceptions of professional development. This study’s location is a rural area in central Florida. Voluntary criteria sampling promotes focused and rich data from participants. The instrumentation of this study included participant journals and interviews. Trustworthiness ethical considerations of this study was obtained with triangulation, thick and rich description, variation in participant selection, member checking, audit trials, reflexivity, and anonymity.

In Section 4, there are the research findings of this study. Explicit details and analysis aid in providing rich, thick description. Section 5 of this study includes a thorough discussion of the future of this study. The discussion includes social implications of the findings, application of results, and recommendations of future research.

Chapter 4: Findings

Professional development is a learning experience targeted to a specific professional practice. Although there is a great deal of research of what professional development is, little research has been undertaken that examines teachers' perceptions of professional development and its impact (Diaz, 2013; Fullan, 2007; Watson, 2014; Wells, 2014). In addition, the quality of professional development has decreased due to an increased focus on testing with a lack of time, resources, teacher leadership, motivation, and support (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014; Fullan, 2007; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate and describe the views of teachers regarding professional development and its impact on teachers' professional practices. This study is significant because results may be used to improve professional development practices in education. Chapter 4 includes the study setting, participants, data collection, results, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

This case study included 10 teachers from a middle and high school setting in rural central Florida. The pool for participant selection was 45 teachers in the school. At this site, over 100 hours of professional development had been provided, including the optional professional development during the school year. The setting was important to the study due to the number of hours provided for professional development, the amount of money invested in professional development, and the location of the county. Following the guidelines stated by Patton (2015), I was able to remain sensitive to the social, historical, and temporal context of the environment.

The study was conducted after the 2015-2016 school year. All interviews were conducted privately with constant assurance of confidentiality. Private locations included participants' homes or the library. At the end of the school year, teachers were given different positions of instruction for the upcoming school year. It was important that participants understood that this study focused on their employment prior to position changes.

Demographics

I employed purposeful sampling to increase understanding of the research problems (Creswell, 2013). The criteria to select participants included the following: full-time middle and high school teachers, Grades 6-12, varying years of experience, college degrees, worked at the school site for the entire 2015-2016 school year, and participated in professional development at any point in their teaching career. These criteria excluded a very low number of teachers and permitted the exploration of perceptions from novice and experienced teachers. In addition, participants were diverse with varied ethnicities and racial identifications. Data gleaned from these participants may increase teacher retention due to increased understanding and support of their pedagogical skills. Results may also be used to increase teacher-led professional development discussion on a national scale.

Data Collection

All procedures for data collection were completed under the guidelines of the Walden University Institutional Review Board, number 06-30-16-0247467, the permission from the district superintendent (Appendix B) and the school principal

(Appendix B). There were 10 participants in this study. Data were gathered from several sources that included participant journals, interviews, and agendas for professional development. Throughout the data collection process, each research question and subquestion were connected to the three data sources.

Individual Interviews

One phase of data collection for this study was a seven-question, individual, face-to-face interview. The interview questions (Appendix C) were aligned with the research questions and subquestions. The final random sample included 10 participants who met the criteria for the study. Ten participants constituted 25% of the population of teachers at the study site and ensured data saturation (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Yin, 2012). Twenty teachers expressed interest in participating in the study. To ensure equality, a random sampling method was adopted to select the final sample. Each willing participant was given an identification number and placed in an Excel spreadsheet. Using www.random.org, 10 numbers were randomly generated to reduce bias and determine those who would be participants. Each willing participant was notified of his or her participation in the study. Ten participants engaged in the interview process with diverse educational background, ethnicity and race, and gender (five male and five female). All core content areas were represented including science, humanities, language arts, and mathematics. Electives were included as well. All responses were number coded to ensure confidentiality.

The individual face-to-face interviews began 10 days after IRB approval. The interviews were conducted over a 2-week period from July 10, 2016 to July 25, 2016.

Each participant was contacted by phone, email, or in person to schedule an interview. It was important for the confidentiality of this study that participants were able to choose a location that would ensure their privacy. Participants could opt for the interview to occur in their home or in the public library. Interviews were scheduled outside the summer school working hours.

Prior to beginning each interview, I reviewed the consent form with participants and informed them that they could leave the study at any time. Each participant was asked for his or her consent to record the interview and was notified that I would be the only one to listen to and transcribe the recording. Participants were informed that any identifying information would be removed, such as content-only professional development, race/ethnicity, content area taught, and gender. Prior to the interview, each participant felt comfortable and confident in the confidentiality, consent, and right to leave the study. Each interview took 30 to 45 minutes. Participants openly discussed professional development experiences, expectations, and perceptions of student achievement due to professional development. After each interview, a transcript review and member check occurred in which the participant verified the information they stated by listening to the recording.

Data were recorded using MAXQDA software with the consent of all the participants. I transcribed the interviews verbatim within six hours of each interview, using Microsoft Word. Using Microsoft Word was a variation of the original data collection plan. The original data collection plan involved using MAXQDA to transcribe the interviews as well; however, Microsoft Word allowed for more conversions into other

programs. All files are stored on a password-protected personal computer with all identifying information removed.

Participant Journals

Another aspect of data collection for this study was the participant journal. The participant journal (Appendix D) consisted of five open-ended writing prompts. Each question in the participant journal targeted a specific research question and subquestions. The same 10 participants who were interviewed completed participant journals. The participant journals prompted participants to explain in detail how professional development influenced them in lesson planning, instruction, and assessment practices. Participants were also prompted to discuss the alignment of professional development to their strengths, weaknesses, and content areas. This additional information added further insight into teachers' perceptions of professional development. All responses were number coded to preserve confidentiality.

The participant journals were emailed to the participants' personal email addresses on July 10, 2016 and were due back to me July 25, 2016. In the email, I included instructions for completing the journal. All participants were required to reflect on the questions without input from others. The same consent protocol was followed for the participant journals with participants being provided an additional copy of the consent form, informed of their ability to leave the study, and reassurance of confidentiality. Participants openly wrote about their experiences and perspectives of professional development during the 2015-2016 school year as it related to lesson planning,

instructional practices, assessment practices, and alignment with content, strengths, and weaknesses.

Agendas

Professional development agendas are documents that identify the type of professional development provided and the amount of time provided for that learning opportunity. The agendas were used to determine whether varied and optional professional development opportunities were provided for all teachers. Agendas are public records and were obtained from my work email identifying the various types of professional development opportunities. Agendas obtained from public records included leadership agendas that included “Think Tank Thursday,” district level agendas, summer professional development emails, half-day professional learning, and teacher workday agendas. Each agenda obtained provided the titles of professional development opportunities including when they would be offered. Based on agenda data, over 100 hours of professional development were offered throughout the 2015-2016 school year.

Discrepancies

Deviations occurred during the transcription process but not during data collection. Rather than using MAXQDA to transcribe interviews, I used Microsoft Word because it provided the ability to search for particular words and phrases and import the documents into NVivo. Additionally, MAXQDA did not provide the verbal recognition transcription services that I thought were part of the software program. Therefore, MAXDQA was not used at all to transcribe data. Another variation was the sampling

process. The random sampling occurred in this study by assigning each willing participant a number and allowing www.random.org to randomly choose a number.

Unusual Circumstances

The data collection for this study was conducted during the summer months when teachers are not usually on campus. However, due to the high number of teachers participating in summer school and attending meetings and professional development opportunities, all teachers were given a fair opportunity to participate in the study. The information regarding who was on campus during the summer months was documented with a sign-in sheet indicating all but two of the 40 teachers were on campus at least once during the summer.

Data Analysis

Initial Themes and Categories

The initial phase of data analysis involved determining the relationship between interview and participant journal content with the research questions and subquestions to comprehend individual responses outside of other participants and their responses (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). Following transcription of individual interviews and participant journals, data were analyzed with pattern coding and line-by-line coding to determine codes that would create a meaningful analysis (Houghton et al., 2015). With the initial coding of comprehending and then pattern coding the data, several themes were identified. Those themes included (a) effective and meaningful professional development, (b) teacher contributions to professional development, (c) teacher perceptions of professional development, and (d) student achievement due to professional

development. Within those four themes, 10 concepts were developed as nodes that required additional analysis. Analysis was an ongoing process as each source of data was transcribed.

Interview Pattern Coding and Linking Data

Within 6 hours of each individual interview, I transcribed recordings using Microsoft Word. According to Clifford, French, and Valentine (2010), transcribing interviews as soon as possible will ensure accuracy and assist in coding. Each interview question was linked to a research question and subquestion. This connection allowed for initial codes to be identified. The initial codes in the open coding process consisted of the definition of professional development, expectations of professional development, qualities of effective and meaningful professional development, student reactions and performance, and effective and meaningful professional development that addressed strengths and weaknesses. After importing the documents into NVivo, I created nodes and conducted line-by-line coding. Each interview question was coded by created nodes developed from the research question (Charmaz, 2006). Queries were then conducted for each node to determine word frequency and emerging themes. Initial coding nodes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Initial Coding/Nodes for Interviews and Research Question Correlation

Research Question and Sub-Question	Interview Question	Node
Foundational	Tell me what your concept of professional development is.	Definition of professional development
RQ 1. SQ 1	What are your expectations of professional development?	Expectations of professional development
RQ 1. SQ 2	Tell me what the qualities of effective and meaningful professional development are.	Qualities of effective and meaningful professional development
RQ 2. SQ 2	How do students react to strategies that you've learned from professional development? Have you noticed any changes in student performance after using the strategies you've learned in professional development?	Student reactions and performance due to professional development
RQ 2. SQ 3	Have you received professional development that you have experienced as effective and meaningful? Please explain. Explain how the qualities you described of effective and meaningful professional development address gaps or strengthen your professional practice.	Received effective and meaningful professional development that address strengths and weaknesses

Participant Journal Pattern Coding and Linking Data

Each participant journal was emailed and then imported into NVivo. Each participant journal content was linked to a research question and sub-questions. This connection allowed for initial codes to be identified. The initial codes consisted of a break-down of the participant journal content and options for response. In order to effectively analyze the data, the initial codes consisted of each option related to the responses. After importing the documents into NVivo, nodes were created followed by line-by-line coding. Each participant journal response was coded using specific key words and phrases pulled out of each option focused on the node that as developed (Charmaz, 2006). Queries were then conducted for each node in order to determine word frequency and emerging themes.

Table 3

Initial Coding/Nodes for Participant Journals and Research Question Correlation

Research Question and Sub-Question	Participant Journal Questions	Node
RQ 2. SQ 1	<p>Lesson Planning for 2015/2016 (Choose One)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how professional development influenced your lesson planning. • There was no change in my lesson planning. Explain how professional development can be enhanced to improve your lesson planning. • Explain how you can contribute to the professional development of others in lesson planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Planning Changed • Lesson Planning No Change and Enhancements • Lesson Planning Mastery and Contributions
RQ 2. SQ 1	<p>Instructional Practices for 2015/2016 (Choose One)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how professional development influenced your instructional practices. • There was no change in my lesson planning. Explain how professional development can be enhanced to improve your instructional planning. • Explain how you can contribute to the professional development of others in instructional practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Practices Changed • Instructional Practices No Change and Enhancements • Instructional Practices Mastery and Contributions
RQ 2. SQ 1	<p>Assessment Practices for 2015/2016 (Choose One)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how professional development influenced your assessment practices. • There was no change in my lesson planning. Explain how professional development can be enhanced to improve your assessment practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Practices Changed • Assessment Practices No Change and Enhancements • Assessment Practices <p><i>(table continues)</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you can contribute to the professional development of others in assessment practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery and Contributions
RQ 2. SQ 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists both strengths and weaknesses in your professional practice. • Explain how professional development addressed both your strengths and weaknesses. • Explain how professional development could have been enhanced to address both your strengths and weaknesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths • Weaknesses (<i>table continues</i>) • PD addressed strengths and weaknesses • PD could be enhanced to address strengths and weaknesses
RQ 1. SQ 1 RQ 1. SQ 2 RQ 2. SQ 2 RQ 2. SQ 3	<p>Overall Professional Development for 2015/2016 (Choose One)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how professional development aligned to content area. • Explain how professional development could better align to your content area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD aligned • PD could align better

Agenda Pattern Coding and Linking Data

The agendas were imported into NVivo. Due to the format, bullet points and abbreviated text, the type of professional development offered was located efficiently. The agendas were coded with key words and phrases that related to the types of professional development offered such as collaborative pairs, writing in all content areas, and Danielson evaluation. In addition, district-level professional development was included such as Study Island, Core Connections, and SpringBoard.

Building Explanations

According to Yin (2003), building explanations ensure that the focus does not drift away from the original topic and explain the iterative nature of data analysis. The purpose of this case study was to investigate and describe the views of teachers regarding professional development and the impact professional development has on teachers' professional practices including lesson planning, instructional and assessment practices, and student achievement. For this study, each form of data collection was linked to a research question in order to ensure that focus remained on teachers' perception of professional development and its impact.

An in-depth iterative process was conducted throughout the entire data analysis process from the time data was collected (Yin, 2003). Each response to each research question was individually analyzed looking for specific information that related to the focus of teacher perceptions of professional development to ensure on-task discussion and/or the need to ask follow-up questions. With continued cyclical analysis of the data, several themes related to effective and meaningful professional development were identified as teacher contributions to professional development, teacher perceptions of professional development, and student achievement due to professional development.

Logic Model Analysis

Logic models focus on a chain of events over time and evaluates the effectiveness of a program (Yin, 2003). Within the purpose of describing teachers' perceptions of professional development and its impact, teachers began to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development. Teachers defined professional development, described the

qualities of effective and meaningful professional development, explained how professional development changed their practices, and how professional development could be enhanced.

The logic model supports planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs (Shakman & Rodriquez, 2015). This case study was an alternative configuration organizational-level logic model that traces the events within an organization that do not progress linearly (Shakman & Rodriquez, 2015). The logic model occurred by analyzing the data from each of the nodes and determining that teachers generally perceive professional development as both positive and needs improvement. There is very little data focused on only negative aspects of professional development. By using the logic model, I was able to identify gaps in the program of professional development, promote consensus in teacher perceptions being used to develop professional development, and develop underlying beliefs within the professional community (Shakman & Rodriquez, 2015).

Discrepancies

Interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word rather than MAXQDA. The interviews were transcribed with Microsoft Word to smooth the importation of the data into NVivo. In Chapter 3, I stated that case study research involves time-series analysis; however, due to the lack of tracing changes over time and dependent and independent variables, there was no need to conduct a time-series analysis. Cross-case synthesis will not occur due to the need for this study to consist of at least two cases. Additional

synthesis of the data will occur when analyzing the connections between the literature review and data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was important for this study in order for the research to be “accepted in the pantheon of knowledge” and to ensure that the research remains suitable for use (Loh, 2013). Ensuring trustworthiness in research allows others to value the integrity of the research (Anney, 2014). Trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. There were diverse approaches to ensuring trustworthiness such as triangulation, member checks, thick descriptions, variation in participant selection, audit trials, and reflexivity.

Triangulation, member checking, and audit trials established credibility and dependability. Triangulation occurred with the analysis of the literature in conjunction with the participant journal, interviews, and professional development agendas with multiple sources of data to enhance the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Member checking occurred at the end of each interview in order for participants to analyze findings and comment on them to ensure the credibility of the data (Creswell, 2009; Harper & Cole, 2012). In lieu of audit trials, the transcribed interviews, participant journals, data analysis and process notes will be kept secure to provide dependability and transparency (Harper & Cole, 2012).

According to Harper and Cole (2012), transferability was provided in this study with thick, rich descriptions from the participant in order to allow the study and results to transfer to various times, people, situations, and settings. This study was able to draw

upon various teachers' perceptions about professional development and its impact to provide varied, rich, and thick descriptions. With the data from participants, I was able to draw connections to cultural and social relationships within and outside the context of the study (Harper & Cole, 2012). In order to address reflexivity, I kept a reflexive journal in which I wrote down my biases related to professional development (Creswell, 2013).

Results

. With the analysis of the data, this study will also address effective and meaningful professional development, teacher contributions to professional development, teacher perceptions of professional development, and student achievement due to professional development. The results of the data analysis are also presented in this section. The information below that discusses the results is presented first by the research question and then the sub-questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: In what ways do middle and high school teachers view professional development? Two sub-questions were used to answer the above research question in order to describe how middle and high school teachers view professional development. The sub-questions focused on the expectations of professional development that involved teachers' definition, expectations, the qualities of effective and meaningful professional development, and how professional development aligns to their content area.

Definition of professional development. In order to engage in discussion of professional development with participants, it is important to understand their definition of it (see Table 4). Participants defined professional development as learning to address

their strengths and weaknesses to become better educators. Participant 1 stated that professional development is the “betterment of the educator purpose”. Participant 3 shared a similar definition of professional development stating that it is to help “me to become a better practitioner”. Participant 6 stated professional development is to “enhance me to become a better teacher”.

Participants also described professional development as valuable, purposeful, and related to their professional needs. Participant 1 stated that professional development needed to be “something of value”

To feel that both students and I have learned something of value that can be used in any environment. In my case the value of understanding and comprehending the reason for the works of literature that have influenced our history.

Similarly, Participant 5 stated that professional development must be “related to your profession for it to have value”. Participant 8 also addressed that professional development “only becomes valuable when it relates to my professional purpose”.

The discussion of professional development being related, purposeful, and valuable led teachers to discuss learning new strategies as part of their definition of professional development. Participant 7 described professional development as having “different and applicable strategies that will translate well in the classroom”. Participant 4 expressed the need to “learn about different concepts to use in the classroom”. Similarly, Participant 2 stated that professional development “needs teachers to model diverse strategies and ideas that work within their classroom”.

Table 4

Definition of Professional Development

Theme	Categories	Frequency %
Definition of Professional Development	A better practitioner	20.5
	Valuable, purposeful, and related	17.6
	Different concepts and strategies	14.7
	Teacher participation	11.7
	Individualized and Personalized	8.8
	Conducting research, attending professional conferences, and visiting schools	8.8
	Comprehension and understanding	5.8
	Student growth	5.8
	Develop student relationships	2.9
	Not watching videos	2.9

Expectations of professional development. Once teachers defined their concept of professional development, they provided insight into what they expected of professional learning (see Table 5). Participants expect for professional development to teach them. Participant 10 stated that professional development “needs to teach me”. Concurrently, Participant 2 addressed that professional development “guides me toward the learning process and more learning”. Participant 7 addressed the need for professional development “encourage me to want to learn more about the strategy or topic to tailor the learning to my needs”. Participant 4 summarized the needs to learn by stating

I expect for professional development to allow me to explore various options of learning. I expect for teachers to demonstrate the wonderful things they are doing in the classroom. I also expect for professional development to provide various insights and perspectives from teachers and researchers across the country.

Participants also addressed the need of professional development to provide resources, including time and on-going support. Participant 2 expects “professional development to guide me with resources that can better improve my student learning”. Participant 5 stated the need for professional development to “commit to continued learning with resources available after the professional development session”. Participant 9 had a similar expectation “for professional development to provide me with the resources, strategies, support, and time to implement new ideas effectively.”

Another major category that emerged was the need for professional development to assist in the achievement of competitive skills for both teachers and students. Participant 1 addressed the need for professional development to “make them, teachers and students, competitive in various job markets”. Similarly, Participant 6 noted that “professional development needs to make me better holistically”. Participant 3 summarized that “my expectations of professional development include the ability to learn skills outside of the realm of one particular school or one particular job”.

Table 5

Expectations of Professional Development

Theme	Categories	Frequency %
Expectations of Professional Development	Teach	31.5
	Provides resources (time, on-going support)	21
	Develop competitive skills in their content area	13.1
	Teacher leaders and demonstrators	10.5
	Research-based strategies	10.5
	Student learning (focus on tested students, student needs)	7.8
	Purposeful (on-task, enjoyable)	5.2

Qualities of effective and meaningful professional development. Participants connected applicable and transferable professional development as an effective and meaningful quality of professional development (see Table 6). Participant 2 stated the need for “realistic application”. For Participant 6 “the qualities of effective and meaningful professional development are applicable to what I am teaching”. Similarly, Participant 7 stated that effective professional development is applicable “to my needs and my students’ needs”. Participants 3, 8, and 9 also cited applicable as a quality for effective and meaning professional development.

Another quality of effective and meaningful professional development was the need of teacher leadership and input. Both Participant 4 and Participant 8 stated professional development needs to be “teacher-led”. Likewise, Participant 1 expects that quality professional development has “respectful input” from teachers. Participant 2 summarized this quality of professional development as “being teacher-led, teacher and student-centered, realistic application, and model teachers who use the strategy”.

Teachers also expect for effective professional development to have resources. According to Participant 9, professional development is “full of resources”. Participant 10 stated that meaningful professional development “includes resources, time, and collaboration”. In addition to applicability, Participant 6 addressed that “resources to implement are available and that there is support along the way of implementation”.

Table 6

Qualities of Effective and Meaningful Professional Development

Theme	Categories	Frequency %
Qualities of Effective and Meaningful Professional Development	Applicable and transferable	34.1
	Teacher leadership and input	29.2
	Resources	17.1
	Data driven	7.3
	Student-focused	7.3
	Optional	2.4
	Research-based	2.4

Alignment of professional development to content area. There were two concepts focusing on the alignment of professional development. There were participants who perceived professional development to be aligned to their content area (see Table 7). However, majority of the participants perceived that professional development needed better alignment to their content area.

Those who perceived professional development aligned to their content area felt that professional development improved their practice. Participant 10 summarizes that perception with a focus on strategies learned from professional development

Using strategies like Socratic Seminar and Philosophical Chairs allows students think deeper. I don't think I have been able to see the link in the strategies and my strengths and weaknesses because those align too.

Simple strategies such as Cornell Notes when students are able to develop their own questions have caused me to see that I am meeting those needs while they are digging deeper and becoming more organized.

Participant 1 summarized the alignment that participants felt came from professional development

I do feel however that my teaching is better prepared. The relationship with my data and my students is better aligned and I am continuously trying to improve do the betterment of my students' academic growth.

This in turn improves my craft and my ability of being a highly qualified educator.

Participants addressed the need for specific and clear professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and teacher leadership. Participant 5 summarized the need for specific and clear professional development by stating

For the most part the PD trainings that I attended did align with my content area, but there were many trainings that seemed to contradict each other in what was supposed to be implemented within the classroom.

Whenever there was any confusion on to how to use the multitude of practices in conjunction with each other, there was a repeated sentiment of 'you'll just have to get creative'.

Participant 4 addressed both the need for interdisciplinary collaboration and teacher voice and leadership.

Professional development could align better to my content area simply asking teachers what we need in the area of professional learning.

Professional development should allow other teachers to lead those

professional development opportunities across content areas while working collaboratively for a common goal.

Table 7

Alignment of Professional Development

Foci	Categories	Frequency %
Professional Development is Aligned	Improve profession	17.4
	Student focused	8.7
	Data driven	4.3
Professional Development Needs Better Alignment	Specific and clarity	26.1
	Interdisciplinary collaboration	17.4
	Teacher voice and leadership	13.1
	Data development and analysis	8.7
	Time	4.3

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Do middle and high school teachers feel that there is an impact on their professional practices during the post professional development period? Three sub-questions were used to address the above research question. One question focused on significant changes that occurred due to professional development. The second sub-question focused on the impact of student learning after professional development. The last sub-question addressed teachers' strengths and weaknesses and the alignment of professional development to those strengths and weaknesses.

Changes in lesson planning. There were three foci addressed within the significant changes in lesson planning. Those foci including a change in lesson planning, no change with enhancement of professional development needed, and no change due to mastery with leadership opportunities (see Table 8).

Participants saw that their lesson planning changed and became more data focused. Participant 1 addressed a common idea “I took the data from the previous year to create my lesson plans”. Addressing personalized professional development, Participant 4 stated that “with the personalized professional development I’ve received, I have added more AVID strategies in my lesson planning. I have been able to align the AVID strategies to particular expectation in my lesson plan”. Similarly, according to Participant 10

I had changes occur. It influenced my lesson planning in trying to get more student driven activities in place. And it also helped me figure out more writing strategies although some of those overlap into WICOR (writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, reading) strategies as I learned more about what those were.

Participants also addressed what needed to be added or enhanced for professional development to meet their needs pertaining to lesson planning such as the need of better preparation and delivery of professional development in order to increase clarity. Additionally, teachers discussed the time needed to write lesson plans that were considered exemplary by school or district level leadership. Participant 2 stated that “professional development days cut into time that could be spent collaboratively planning”. Participant 5 addressed both the delivery and time consumption of lesson plans by stating

I do have to say that the PD presentations were awful. They were poorly prepared and presented, and the style of lesson planning that was being

promoted was considered highly tedious and unnecessary by most of the teachers that I spoke to about them.

Participant 8 shared a similar perspective on the time spent on professional development targeting lesson planning.

There was professional development targeted to lesson planning; however, it did not change my lesson planning. Lesson planning should simply be a guide to instruction and it is becoming much, much more time consuming to write the lesson plan than it is to implement the lesson plan.

There were participants who had no change after professional development due to their mastery of lesson planning. The question asked participants to reflect on how they can increase the knowledge of others due to their mastery of lesson planning. Participant 3 stated that it was “my responsibility to step up and demonstrate” lesson planning strategies. Strategies Participant 7 suggested including conducting professional development that will take the lesson plan and “transfer into student friendly material”.

Table 8

Changes in Lesson Planning

Foci	Categories	Frequency %
Lesson Planning Changed	Data focused	19.2
	Individualized and strategic	9.5
	Time consuming	9.5
	Student groupings	4.8
	Required	4.8
	Standards-focused	4.8
No Change, Enhancement Needed	Preparation and delivery of professional development	9.5
	Time	9.5
	Teacher leadership	9.5
No Change due to Mastery; Leadership Opportunities	Conduct professional development	23.8

Changes in instructional practices. There were two foci addressed within changes in instructional practices. Those foci included a change that occurred to instructional practices after professional development and the enhancements needed to professional development (see Table 9). More than half of participants saw a change in instructional practices, the others saw no change to their instructional practices after professional development and provided strategies for improving professional development.

Participants, who noticed change in their instructional practices, saw improvement in student learning after professional development focused on instructional practices. Participant 4 stated that professional development assisted in “increasing student engagement by students articulating their ideas clearly”. Participants also saw an increase in progress monitoring with Participant 1 stating that once they became

“comfortable [with] progress monitoring practice the students also became confident and able to assist me in tracking their own progress”. Teachers also saw a change in the strategies used during instruction. Participant 10 summarizes the changes in instructional practices, including strategies and student learning.

It made me realize that reading and writing strategies have to be a part of every lesson and it helped me figure out exactly how to incorporate some of the reading strategies in class for student achievement because I used writing fairly consistently before.

Participants, who saw no change in instructional practices after professional development, addressed the need for increased value to enhance the impact of professional development. Participants addressed a concern that professional development incorporate too many strategies at they become lost in determine what was valuable for them in the classroom. According to Participant 5, “it seems like professional development days attempt to stuff as much information as they can in seven hours”. Similarly, Participant 3 stated

I would like new ideas about instructional strategies without feeling overwhelmed. I know that it is up to me to decide how to use them. However, I would like assistance and focus in determining which professional practices would be valuable in my instructional practices.

Participants also would like professional development to be based on observations. Participant 2 addressed the necessity of professional development to be “based on individual observations” to meet the needs of each adult learner. Additionally,

participants discussed that too much responsibility was placed on teachers' post-professional development and assistance would be beneficial to allow the continuation of learning. Participant 9 suggested the application of a "series dedicated to the implementation" of one concept of learning rather than attempting to discuss as many things one can in a 30-45-minute time-frame.

Table 9

Changes in Instructional Practices

Foci	Categories	Frequency %
Instructional Practices Changed	Student learning	19.3
	Progress monitoring	9.7
	Strategies	9.7
	Student confidence	9.7
	Time consuming	6.5
	Difficult	3.2
No Change, Enhancement Needed	Value	16.1
	Based on observations	9.7
	Teacher responsibility	9.7
	Enhance strengths	3.2
	Reduce weaknesses	3.2

Changes in assessment practices. There were two foci addressed for significant changes in assessment practices (see Table 10). One foci included a change in assessment practices due to professional development. The other focus was there being no change in teacher assessment practices and that enhancements were needed in professional development in order for those changes to occur.

Participants noted a change in their assessment practices due to professional development with increased data analysis and writing implementation. Participant 2 stated that "professional development changed my assessment practices by focusing more

and more on writing.” Participant 6 summarized the perspective of the focus of the 10% who perceived professional development as improving their data analysis.

Looking at data has driven my teaching more than it has as a beginning teacher in which I was flying out the seat of my pants. I use data for the instruction, and professional development has taught me how to do that.

Other participants saw no change in their assessment practices after professional development. Those participants cited various enhancements that would be needed to improve assessment learning during professional development such as an increased focus in data analysis. Participant 8 suggested “I would also like professional development targeted to data analysis. We have all these assessments without forms to assess data”. Participant 9 addressed a similar concern of data analysis, “I would like more professional development dedicated to data analysis. We had students take a lot of assessment, but we never really discussed how to analyze the data.” Participant 10 summarized both the need for data analysis and its connection to student learning with “there was little time dedicated to data analysis. I think if we incorporate data analysis, we would be able to identify targeted strategies for student improvement”.

In conjunction with data analysis, participants discussed the need of Florida Standard Assessments (FSA) mirrored assessments. Participant 10 stated that “based on the data, I think professional development should be more focused to developing FSA-like assessments”. Participant 7 affirmed that “I would like more professional development to focus on aspects of the FSA in order to model my class accordingly”.

Addressing a perspective outside of the professional development itself, Participant 3 acknowledged that

Professional development can be enhanced by focusing more on FSA information. I understand that the state doesn't put information out until late in the year; however, there should be some type of professional development throughout the year that focuses on FSA types of learning and testing.

Table 10

Changes in Assessment Practices

Foci	Categories	Frequency %
Assessment Practices Changed	Data analysis	10
	Writing	5
No Change, Enhancement Needed	Data analysis	30
	FSA mirrored assessments	20
	Loss of student interest	15
	Amount of testing	15
	Clarity	5

Impact of professional development on student performance. Two foci were addressed within the theme of the impact of professional development on student performance (see Table 11). Those foci included a majority of participants perceiving positive impact on student achievement. Participants also addressed negative impacts of professional development on student performance.

Participants noticed an increase in students being able to see the value in the tasks and assignments they were to complete. Participant 1 explained the transformation in students when they learned to value the strategies teachers learned in professional

development. “I try to choose specific strategies from professional development. Upon taking these experiences and making students see the value I can... show them their progress”. According to Participant 4, “once students see that teachers are continuously learning for their achievement, they become receptive to new strategies for learning”. Participants also addressed how once students saw the value of the strategies students began to perceive and engage in learning positively. Participant 6 stated “You have some students who are like sponges and grasp everything”.

Contrarily, Participant 6 also addressed the sensory overload teachers and students may feel when asked if there was change noticed in student performance after using the strategies from professional development. Participant 6 stated “We do so much that it is hard to answer that question directly. There are so many professional development topics that I do not know what worked”. Similarly, Participant 3 revealed “If I use a combination of strategies, then student performance decreases. I think its sensory overload”.

Participants addressed how valuable professional development is and what is needed to improve student success post professional development. According to Participant 5, “we implement many of the strategies learned; however, I don’t think we have the infrastructure or resources to implement them all to the best of our ability”. Participant 10 addressed both the student performance based on professional development strategies and how those strategies can further improve student learning. Participant 10 stated

The strategies I've mentioned have definitely led to students being more organized and my teaching being more focused and comprehensive. And I think that even though my test scores haven't been where they needed to be, I can see it coming because it has taken me a while to get used to the new curriculum and testing format. But with the pieces already in place related to organization and me and my students remaining focuses, I can see big improvements coming.

Table 11

Professional Development Impact on Student Performance

Foci	Categories	Frequency %
Positive Impact on Student Performance	Students see value	24.1
	Perceive learning positively	15.5
	Student advocates	13.8
Negative Impact on Student Performance	Sensory overload	24.1
	Perceive learning negatively	13.8
	Lack of resources	8.6

Professional development and how it addresses strengths and weaknesses.

Two foci were cited in the discussion of whether or not professional development addressed strengths and weaknesses (see Table 12). Participants discussed how professional development addressed their strengths and weaknesses. However, at a frequency rate of 85.5%, participants felt that professional development can be enhanced to better align to their strengths and weaknesses.

Participants discussed that professional development assisted in their empowerment of themselves and each other. Participant 2 addressed the professional development opportunities that were “implemented by other teachers”. Drawing

parallelism to Participant 2, Participant 4 stated that “the reason instruction, lesson planning, and engagement are strengths is because of the one-on-one professional development I had with fellow colleagues”. Participant 6 addressed specific strategies from professional development that provided the necessary skills and strategies needed to “look at the data, evaluate it, and plan” accordingly. Participant 10 stated that professional development addressed strengths and weaknesses because of its continual alliance. The participant also focused on a strategy that will increase the way professional development addresses and aligns to strengths and weaknesses of teachers. Participant 10 specified

I think it was aligned just fine because all of the AVID strategies can align to all content areas. Pretty much all our professional development related around our professional practices with extra focus on reading and writing which aligns to all content areas. The only thing that would need to be in place to be better would be content-specific professional development that would assist with assessments and designing assessments that would be close to state tests.

With teacher empowerment and specific strategies being seen positively in professional development, teachers cited the need of collegiate collaboration. Participant 7 summarizes the perspectives of the need of collegiate collaboration

Professional development needs to be offered in a variety of ways. Most professional development is the sit-practice-leave type in which we practice the strategy they are teaching us; however, it does not relay the

same way in the classroom. I would like to see professional development conducted by teachers with in-class demonstrations that show me how students will react and how I should respond. I need those examples in order to feel better prepared to implement the strategy in the classroom.

Additionally, participants focused on the alignment of professional development. According to Participant 9, professional development would be more aligned if their “voices and opinions were heard and valued”. With an increase focus on collegiate collaboration and alignment, professional development may be able to better address the strengths and weaknesses of the participants.

Table 12

Strengths and Weaknesses Addressed by Professional Development

Foci	Categories	Frequency %
Addresses Strengths and Weaknesses	Empowers teachers	9.1
	Specific strategies	3.6
	Time friendly	1.8
Enhancements Needed to Address Strengths and Weaknesses	Collegiate collaboration	32.7
	Increase alignment	16.4
	Data focused	9.1
	New strategies	9.1
	Directed focus	9.1
	Teacher responsibility	9.1

Summary

This chapter provided detailed explanations of the data collection process, data analysis process, and results from the study focusing on middle and high school teachers’ perceptions of professional development and its impact. The data collection and analysis process began with simultaneous interviews and participant journals with transcription

and pattern coding of individual interviews and participant journals. Patten coding was used to focus data collection on the initial themes of effective and meaningful professional development, teacher contributions to professional development, teacher perceptions of professional development, and student achievement due to professional development. Themes were supported with focused interview questions and participant journal responses to provide and in-depth discussion of the results.

Summarizing research question one, middle and high school teachers view professional development as needs improvement. Those improvements and enhancements will come based on the value leadership and facilitators place on teacher voice, needs, and leadership. In addition, teachers seek professional development that supports them throughout the entire process with resources, additional time, and support in the implementation of strategies.

Summarizing research question two, middle and high school teachers do feel there was an impact on their professional practices after professional development. The impact; however, was not all positive. Teachers expressed an increase in time spent, stress, and the need for more collegiate collaboration. Additionally, teachers believe that support of their professional leadership and interests will increase the value teachers associated with professional development.

Chapter 5 discusses an interpretation of the findings with confirmations and disconfirmations. Limitations of the study in relation to trustworthiness are described. In addition, recommendations for further research will be addressed that explain the strengths and limitations of the current study in connection with the literature review.

Lastly, Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of this study with emphasis on positive social change and recommendations for practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of professional development. I explored the perspectives and feelings of participants regarding professional development, provided narrative accounts, and gained insight into the strengths and weaknesses of both teachers' professional practices and professional development. The information gathered from this study may provide school leaders with strategies to implement and encourage leadership for professional development practices.

The study was based on the following research questions:

Research Question 1: In what ways do middle and high school teachers view professional development?

Research Question 2: Do middle and high school teachers feel that there is an impact on their professional practices during the post professional development period?

To answer these research questions, I used a case study approach including in-depth face-to-face interviews and participant journals of 10 middle and high school teachers who participated in professional development during the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, I analyzed agendas to determine the type and amount of professional development provided. Case studies allow for a description of events within a real-life context that has been bounded by location and time (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. I used NVivo software to manage and analyze the data on a password-protected computer. Data analysis occurred with line-by-line coding, open coding, and theoretical coding, which leads to inductive

coding. The use of inductive coding allowed me to process the information into meaningful categories to analyze the data effectively (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Key findings from this study included how teachers perceive professional development. One finding was professional development as a learning opportunity that prompted teachers to become better educators. Teachers also addressed their needs of professional development including being able to learn new strategies to promote student achievement and aligning assessments with state-mandated exams. Additionally, participants described several qualities of effective and meaningful professional development that included being teacher-led and data driven. Alignment of professional development with teachers' professional identity, lesson planning, instructional and assessment practices, and strengths and weaknesses needed improvement. Teachers reported the need to actively participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development to ensure that their needs were being met so they could meet the needs of their students. In this chapter, I interpret the findings based on the themes presented in Chapter 4 in connection to the research questions, literature review, and conceptual framework. I also provide recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, and personal reflections on the study.

Interpretation of Findings

This section includes samples of participants' responses. Connections are drawn to the literature and conceptual framework reviewed in Chapter 2.

Views of Teachers on Professional Development

Participants defined professional development as professional learning to make them better practitioners. Participants reported that they expect professional development to teach them strategies for improving student achievement, and to provide resources and support for their professional growth. In addition, participants expressed a desire for professional development to be teacher led and “applicable to [their] needs” (Participant 7) by providing strategies that “build students’ knowledge” (Participant 9). A minority of participants viewed professional development opportunities as aligned with their content area, strengths, and weaknesses to improve their learning. Most participants viewed a lack of alignment with professional development and felt that interdisciplinary collaboration needed to be fostered and teacher leadership needed to be encouraged.

Definition of professional development. Based on the analysis of data, teachers expressed the definition of professional development as learning that was “building on [their] strengths and addressing [their] weaknesses” to become better educators (Participant 2). All participants discussed defining attributes of professional development. Participants’ responses ranged from professional development assisting them in becoming “a better practitioner” to gaining knowledge of how to develop student relationships.

The definitions provided by the participants in this study were very much in keeping with the definition of DuFour and others as professional development being the engagement of stakeholders in needs-based and strength-based learning to plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to improve student achievement and preparation for

college and careers (DuFour, 2015; Florida Department of Education, 2015; Hargreaves & Fullan 2013; Learning Forward, 2015; Mizell, 2010; Senge, 2006; Sumter County School District, 2015). In this study, the respondents agreed that professional development provided them opportunities to become better practitioners. In addition, respondents indicated that professional development provided them with a valuable and purposeful learning experience including concepts and strategies that aid in student growth and developing student relationships. When comparing the definitions of professional development provided in Chapter 2 along with the definitions given by the participants, it is apparent that both support stakeholder engagement and student achievement. However, the definitions provided by the participants seem to much deeper as they indicated that professional development is a valuable learning experience with participants seeking professional development to enhance them on an individual level with differentiation and future goals. This purposeful knowledge assists in determining what teachers need and expect from professional development.

Expectations of professional development. Within the data collection process, teachers described their expectations of professional development. All participants addressed what they expect professional development to provide, including teaching them various strategies, encouraging their leadership, and increasing their focus on analyzing data to determine student needs. These expectations aligned with Cook's (2014) suggestion that teachers become school leaders to drive adult learning toward the school vision and student achievement.

Participants in this study, middle and high school teachers, reported that they expect professional development to provide them with new skills and to develop their current skills. Cordingley (2015) stated that teachers' expectations of professional development aid in developing a shared vision that promotes the discussion and implementation of student-centered research-based pedagogical practices. According to my participants, time and ongoing support are not available to implement professional learning effectively. Additionally, teachers want to see each other in leadership positions planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development. Hökkä and Eteläpelto (2014) agreed that lack of resources and lack of teacher leaders are obstacles for effective and meaningful professional development.

Qualities of effective and meaningful professional development. Once the participants defined and described what was expected of professional development, they discussed the qualities of effective and meaningful professional development. They also described how their expectations of professional development could be met. Teachers reported that they seek applicable, teacher-led, and resource-filled professional development. In addition, teachers believe that data-driven, student-focused, and research-based professional development is effective and meaningful.

For professional development to provide teachers with new skills and enhance their current skills, it needs to be applicable to their needs with teacher leadership and input. Several researchers such as Chomsky and Robichaud (2014), Fullan (2007), and Hökkä and Eteläpelto (2014) suggested that teacher leadership and motivation have declined and have reduced the quality and meaningfulness of professional development.

Respondents in my study revealed that by incorporating teacher leadership and input, teachers are able to engage in personalized dialogue to improve their professional practices and student achievement. Understanding how adult learners engage in professional development will assist in ensuring that the professional development is targeted to their specific needs like facilitating their learning, transferring knowledge to applicable areas, and building on the strengths and weaknesses of themselves and others. These findings substantiate those of Feighan and Heeren (2009), Owen (2015), and Nichols, Rickelman, and Young (2008) that address how personalized and collaborative professional development prompts more interaction with the professional development experience and student achievement.

Participants also identified resources, data driven, student focused, and research based as qualities of effective professional development. These findings confirmed those from previous studies that indicated that resources such as materials, money, time, ongoing support, and technology allow for relevant and applicable learning to occur (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012; Pehmer et al., 2015). Participants shared that ongoing support included consistent chats to discuss student data to direct the focus of professional development toward student achievement. This aligned with findings from Bambrick-Santoyo (2013), who addressed the need for data to develop professional learning opportunities. According to my participants, support is needed to ensure successful implementation or professional development initiatives.

Professional development and professional identity. Participants described how professional development is aligned with their professional identity and content area.

Participants who did not perceive alignment discussed what needed to be changed or enhanced for professional development to be better aligned with their professional identity and content area. Participants expressed specific and clear implementation and goals of professional development and increased time to accomplish those goals.

Alignment is very important to ensure that professional development is effective in accomplishing both personal objectives and school-based objectives. According to Stewart (2014), focused and aligned professional development increases learning. Some participants explained that due to the alignment of professional development with their content area, their instructional practices had improved with student-focused and data-driven instruction. However, most participants reported a lack of alignment.

Most participants (69.6%) explained that professional development lacked clarity, interdisciplinary alignment, and teacher leadership. Participants' expectations for increasing alignment of professional development confirmed findings from Cordingly (2015) and Tam (2015) who suggested that teacher leadership and interdisciplinary learning are needed to ensure all teachers are working toward the same school goals. Participants stated that through incorporation of these factors in professional development, they will be able to improve their professional practices and meet the needs of students.

Impact of Professional Development

Participants discussed the various changes they saw in their lesson planning, instructional practices, and assessment practices based on professional development. The biggest impact was felt in teachers' instructional practices while assessment-based

professional development needed the most improvement. Participants also addressed how student learning was impacted due to professional development. Only a slight majority of participants (53.4%) reported that professional development had a positive impact on student learning. Other responses indicated how teachers perceive professional development negatively impacting student learning. Lastly, participants identified their strengths and weaknesses and explained how they were able to align professional development to their individual teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students.

Changes in professional practices. Changes in professional practices include lesson planning, instruction, and assessment practices during the post professional development period. Participants reported changes in instructional practices based on professional development. Some participants (23.8%) felt as if they were masters in lesson planning and could contribute to professional development targeting lesson planning. With regard to assessment, participants needed more professional development to improve their professional practices.

Participant teachers mostly changed their lesson planning by focusing on differentiated instruction. To reach the goal of improving lesson plans, teachers discussed how much time had to be invested compared to how much time they had to implement the strategies effectively. This finding confirmed over 10 years of research dating back to Zimmerman and May (2003), who suggested teachers do not believe they are provided enough time to reach goals and expectations. Participants suggested that professional development needs to target how to reduce the amount of time spent lesson planning. The suggestion to reduce time lesson planning was addressed by teachers who felt they had

mastered the skill. Respondents suggested conducting professional development opportunities of their own, which confirmed Hökkä and Eteläpelto's (2014) recommendation for teachers to lead professional learning opportunities.

Findings also supported the idea that instructional practices changed as a result of professional development. Lattuca et al. (2014) and Sobel et al. (2011) indicated that meaningful and effective professional development prompts changes in teachers' pedagogical practices. For my participants, meaningful and effective professional development caused them to notice changes that included a larger focus on student learning, an increased ability to monitor progress, and use of various strategies that were either AVID or Core Connections based. Additionally, participants reported seeking professional development that is led by teacher leaders on campus so they can discuss the needs of their students while developing and practicing strategies that will increase student achievement. This finding confirmed van Genderen's (2013) finding that teacher-led decisions assist in building professional development opportunities that are applicable to teachers' needs.

Few participants, at a 15% frequency rate, observed a change in assessment practices. Teachers identified data analysis and developing assessments that mirror the FSA high stakes examination that would involve invested time. Similarly, Jennings and Bearak (2014) suggest that time should be devoted to evaluating students' item-level performance just as time was devoted to developing each test item. For this to occur, professional development is required that addresses test item specification, development, and evaluation. With a majority of responses addressing the need for increased

professional development for data analysis (30% frequency rate), few participants stated that professional development did increase their understanding and practice of data analysis (10% frequency rate). Teachers felt that professional development provided various strategies and incorporated various assessments to analyze student achievement. This sentiment echoes various researchers' [e.g. Early and Porritt (2014); Klein and Riordan (2011); and Nishimura (2014)] characteristic of effective professional development that involves examining diverse data to identify relevant and collaborative strategies for learning and development of tools to assess student learning.

Professional development and student performance. Teachers described how they perceived professional development impacted student performance. Participants addressed both perceived positive and negative impacts of professional development. Descriptions ranged from teachers believing students viewed teacher learning as valuable to teachers believing students viewed teacher learning as overload.

One of the purposes of professional development is to increase student learning and achievement by preparing them for skills necessary for college, careers, and life-long learning (Bartolini et al., 2014; Pehmer et al., 2015; Tam, 2015). Findings supported this research by teachers discussing that those aspects of professional development encouraged teaching post-middle and high school skills. The skills included bringing enjoyment to learning through higher levels of engagement and the rewarding feeling associated with gaining knowledge. Teachers also addressed how their feelings toward professional development promoted success in the classroom. For example, participants who felt engaged during professional development understood what was learned. They

also expressed joy when introducing learned skills in the classroom and found that students were receptive and engaged in learning.

Similarly, teachers who felt uncomfortable with their learning from professional development or lacked the proper resources felt that students quickly disengaged from learning. This feeling of being uncomfortable, according to participants, stemmed from the amount of varied professional development with limited time to effectively implement strategies learned. Due to the need to have a certain number of hours of professional development, teachers attempt to do all of them creating sensory overload amongst students that in turn negatively impacts student achievement. Earlier researchers such as Early and Porritt (2014) and Gleason and Gleason (2014) have suggested that increased accountability requirements are causing schools to meet professional development expectations with decrease in quality.

Strengths and weaknesses-professional development. Teachers identified both their strengths and weaknesses in the views and ideas expressed in the participant journal due to the ability to be able to assess needs when understanding personal professional practice. After those strengths and weaknesses were identified, participants addressed how professional development addressed those needs to assist them in increasing student learning. Participants discussed the positive aspects or how professional development needs improvement addressing their strengths and weaknesses.

Very few participant teachers, at a frequency rate of 14.5%, perceived professional development as helpful in addressing their strengths and weaknesses. Those teachers addressed how professional development empowers them with specific and

targeted strategies. Frunzeanu (2014) and Owen (2015) have too stated that it is valuable that professional development addresses and strengths teachers' professional practices based on their strengths and weaknesses. With professional development opportunities focused on teachers' strengths and weaknesses, teachers are able to increase positive performance, reflect on goals, and promote student achievement.

Participant teachers felt that professional development did not address or align with their needs. These findings contradict research in chapter 2 that suggests that professional development is valued due to its alignment to school-wide learning and positive school culture. In order to develop a more effective professional development environment, teachers stated the county needs to foster collegiate collaboration, focus on data, and align professional development sessions to content area. Additionally, participants expressed an increased desire to evaluate learned professional development. The evaluation is needed, according to teacher participants, to determine the success of the strategy in relation to student demographics and assessment data. Participants' need to evaluate professional development and its strategies supports Nohl's (2015) findings of teachers needing to develop a portfolio of best teaching practices in order to grow as an educator.

Conceptual Framework

Andragogy and the whole teacher framework provided the framework that guided the development of the research questions, data analysis, and discussion. Due to schools and districts bringing in experts outside of the local community for professional development in the form of institutionalized professional development, teachers feel as if

their knowledge is not valued to meet the needs of their students (Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). Based on the findings from this study, teacher perceptions of professional development included the need for data analysis, collegiate collaboration, resources, and increased applicability.

Within the data, the need of andragogy principals was relevant. According to Knowles (1975; 1984), adult learners expect to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning, must be allowed trial and error experience, must see immediate and relevant impact, and have the ability to solve problems. Similarly, according to data, teachers expect leadership and input, increased resources including time, applicability and transferability, and data-driven student focused strategies. Teachers' perceptions of professional development drew strong similarities to research conducted by Knowles of adult learners. It is imperative that professional development uses andragogy as a foundation to ensure teachers are be treated as adults and gaining the most from the learning experience.

Additionally, the whole teacher framework addresses effective qualities of professional development. Whole teacher framework addresses learning that is multidimensional, domain specific, integrated, and developmental (Chen & Chang, 2006). Participant teachers seek professional development that enhances their goals with objectives that are focused on data, provide varied learning approaches, and support collaboration and growth. Incorporating various forms and purposes to learning may increase the impact of professional development for both teachers and students.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study including, but not limited to, location, sample size, and employment being a potential for bias. The first limitation was location. The study was conducted in a rural district which may have more or less allocation of funds for professional development opportunities. Secondly, the study was bounded by time, location, and the availability of participants during the summer to participate in this study. Due to advertising and word-of-mouth, most employees knew of the study and had an opportunity to participate. Lastly, being an employee of the school district and the location of study presents potential bias. To limit bias, triangulation occurred with participant journals, interviews, and agendas. In addition, references to the literature review and conceptual framework guide the interpretation of data.

Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe middle and high school teachers' perceptions of professional development. The following recommendations may be used for guidance in future research about development effective and meaningful professional development.

Data for this study involved a sample of 10 middle and high school teachers in one school in a rural school district in the southeastern part of the United States. The study results are able to generalize teacher perceptions of professional development but may be limited to similar organizations. It is important that this data is compared to data from different settings. A recommendation involves replicating the study with a focus on elementary or post-middle and high school grades, focusing on specific-content areas to

deeply examine those teachers' perceptions, or choosing a different geographical location to compare teachers' perceptions in larger cities to those in rural areas.

According to Nappi (2014), teachers have a variety of attributes, abilities, and experiences. Therefore, another recommendation for future studies would be comparing the perceptions of professional development amongst teachers with varying levels of teaching experience. Additionally, future studies may address teacher leaders and the professional development they have experienced that causes them to implement their professional learning opportunities in a particular format.

Future studies may also focus on specific themes identified in this study. For example, the post professional development implementation may be studied to determine specific needs of teachers after engaging in professional development. Future studies may focus on student achievement only after particular strategies are learning and then implemented within the classroom. Lastly, studies may seek to examine change over time with a comparison of the implementation and evaluation of professional development with that of student engagement and learning.

Implications

The purpose of research is to enlighten others, change particular practices, or add new information or expectations. This study contributes to both positive social change and changes in practices related to professional development. In this section, I have identified the potential impact for positive social change at various levels to impact stakeholders. Additionally, I have identified recommendations for practice to encourage the development of effective and meaningful professional development.

Positive Social Change

Findings of this study have the potential to create positive social change for an underrepresented voice in education. The findings contribute to existing information of effective professional development and teacher perceptions of professional development. The findings also enhance awareness of teachers' needs in professional development practices ranging from planning, implementation, and evaluation. Additionally, the findings have the capability to enhance awareness and understanding of the value of teacher voice in educational practices.

The knowledge obtained from this study can be used to influence local, state, and federal education practices to develop more comprehensive and collaborative professional development opportunities. Current regulations allow districts to develop professional development programs based on specific budgets therefore, those opportunities may be generic and not relate to teachers' individual needs. By disseminating the finding meeting in s of this study, I hope to bring awareness to the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of professional development. Additionally, I expect that professional development will include targeted teacher-led professional development.

I intend to disseminate the results of this study through multiple venues that include local district meetings, professional conferences, and peer-reviewed journals. Information will first be shared with the principal of the site and the superintendent of the school district in which the study was conducted. The information will also be shared at the principals' meeting, board meetings, and faculty meetings in Sumter County Public Schools. I have presented the literature review of this study at the Hawaii International

Conference on Education in January of 2016. My abstract has been submitted to the ASCD Empower 17 Conference in March 2017. Lastly, the results will be distributed through peer-reviewed journals. The dissemination of findings to a broad audience will assist in bringing greater awareness by allowing various stakeholders to engage in the discussion of effective and meaningful professional development.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of professional development. Themes were revealed based on interviews, participant journals, and agendas. Based on the findings of this study, there are several recommendations for practice that include:

- Engage in school-wide collaboration to discuss realistic expectations of student achievement. All stakeholders should be a part of the process to discuss expectations and develop a shared vision based on those expectations. Once those expectations are addressed, professional development can be developed that will meet the needs of teachers while focusing on increasing student achievement.
- Determine teacher needs based on survey or open-ended questions. By determining the needs of teachers, professional development can be more targeted to increasing the professional practice of the educator.
- Begin and sustain open dialogue amongst stakeholders about effective and meaningful professional development. With an increased conversation, professional development will have the factors that learners find effective that

will increase engagement and implementation of the practices learned in professional development.

- Ensure that resources will be provided after professional development. In this study, there was discussion of the lack of resources available in the post professional development period. Teachers need time and support to implement the practices learned in professional development. If proper resources are not available, then professional development may not be fully implemented well.
- Provide professional development that focuses on data-analysis and developing FSA-like classroom assessments. With the above professional development, teachers and administrators will be able to pinpoint student needs while determining student achievement on high-stakes exams.
- Encourage and maintain teacher-led Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs should be concurrent with varied learning opportunities throughout the year across departments for teachers to engage in personalized and small-group learning.

Conclusion

Based on data analysis, I was able to determine that andragogy and the whole teacher framework are comparable to teachers' perceptions of what is necessary for effective and meaningful professional development. Additionally, teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses and in order for professional development to meet their needs, administration would have to engage in discussions that focus on teacher needs.

Research Question 1 explored middle and high school teachers' view of professional development. It was found that teachers view professional development as a method to learn applicable and transferable information that will make them a better practitioner. Additionally, teachers expect professional development should incorporate teacher input, individualized learning, and resources. Data from this study suggests that professional development still needs better alignment due to lack of clarity of expectations, lack of interdisciplinary collaboration, and the lack of teacher leadership.

Research Question 2 explored the impact professional development had on their professional practice in the post learning period. Even though there were changes in lesson planning, instruction, and assessment, teachers consistently stated that time was a concern. Teachers expressed the lack of time for them to learn a new strategy, the lack of time to implement a strategy, and the lack of time to evaluate the strategy. Participants also discussed how professional development assisted in student learning. While some participants felt students performed well due to their professional development, many did not feel they were able to evaluate the success of professional development. Lastly, participants addressed how professional development aligned to their needs. Teachers felt that professional development needed to be more targeted to their needs with increased collaboration and data analysis.

The conceptual framework used to guide this research was andragogy and the whole teacher framework. Both andragogy and the whole teacher framework assert that, as adults, teachers should have the freedom to determine what and how they want to learn. Additionally, both concepts suggest that in order to effectively teach an adult

learner, the format must be varied, related to their needs, and targeted toward a solution to particular problems.

Lastly, Chapter 5 discussed recommendation for future research, implications for social change, and recommendations for practice. The findings of this study contribute to the knowledge of professional development practices in middle and high school education, adult learning, and the whole teacher framework. Findings from this study can enhance the quality of professional development while developing teacher-leaders and support groups. Additionally, the results of this study can be used to influence local, state, and national professional development reform to provide effective and meaningful professional development for teachers.

It is imperative that communication and collaboration drive effective and meaningful professional development practices. Open communication and collaboration must begin at the pre-planning strategies to ensure that voices are heard and input is given. Teachers, those who are responsible for student achievement, must play an integral role in ensuring professional development is meeting their needs. Professional development must be aligned to teachers' strengths and weaknesses to encourage leadership, reinforce strengths, and decrease weak aspects of pedagogical practices for the ultimate goal of student achievement.

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Appendix A

Superintendent's Permission to Conduct Study

Date

Mr. Richard Shirley
Superintendent of Sumter County Schools
2680 West County Road 476
Bushnell, FL 33513

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Mr. Shirley

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at Wildwood Middle High School, a school within your district. I am currently enrolled in the PhD in Education with a specialization in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment program at Walden University, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled Middle and high school Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development. I have attached my research proposal for your review.

I hope that the superintendent and school administration will allow me to recruit teachers from the school to confidentially participate in the study. If approval is granted, participants will engage in interviews in quiet and private locations on or off campus outside of contract hours. The reflective journals may be completed at home. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either you, the district, the school, or individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address at carissa.mccray@yahoo.com or my cell phone at 904-343-6211.

If you agree, kindly sign and return the enclosed letter with the self-addressed envelope giving me permission to conduct the study.

Sincerely,

Carissa McCray
Walden University

Principal's Permission to Conduct Study

Date

Mr. Richard Hampton

Principal: Wildwood Middle High School

700 Huey Street

Wildwood, FL 34785

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Mr. Hampton

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at Wildwood Middle High School. I am currently enrolled in the PhD in Education with a specialization in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment program at Walden University, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled Middle and high school Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development. I have attached my research proposal for your review.

I hope that the superintendent and school administration will allow me to recruit teachers from the school to confidentially participate in the study. If approval is granted, participants will engage in interviews in quiet and private locations on or off campus outside of contract hours. The reflective journals may be completed at home. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either you, the district, the school, or individual participants.

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If you agree, kindly sign and return the enclosed letter with the self-addressed envelope giving me permission to conduct the study.

Sincerely,

Carissa McCray
Walden University

Appendix B

Letter of Cooperation from Superintendent

Letter of Cooperation

Sumter County School District
Mr. Richard Shirley
Superintendent of Sumter County Schools
2680 West County Road 476
Bushnell, FL 33513

Date: 1/29/2016

Dear Carissa R. McCray,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development within Sumter County School District at Wildwood Middle High School. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit any number of teachers from Wildwood Middle High School, collect data on campus outside of contract hours, member check, and disseminate the results with confidentiality of teachers ensured. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include allowing the recruitment of teachers for participation and providing professional development agendas. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,



Richard Shirley
Superintendent of Sumter County Schools
2680 West County Road 476
Bushnell, FL 33513

Letter of Cooperation from Principal**Letter of Cooperation**

Wildwood Middle High School
Mr. Richard Hampton
Principal: Wildwood Middle High School
700 Huey Street
Wildwood, FL 34785

Date: JANUARY 13, 2016

Dear Carissa R. McCray,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Secondary Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development at the location of Wildwood Middle High School. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit any number of teachers from Wildwood Middle High School, collect data on campus outside of contract hours, member check, and disseminate the results with confidentiality of teachers ensured. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include allowing the recruitment of teachers for participation and providing professional development agendas. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,



Richard Hampton
Principal: Wildwood Middle High School
700 Huey Street
Wildwood, FL 34785

Appendix C

Interview Questions and Form

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Consent form signed at time of interview?: _____

Introduction to Interview:

1. Thank you for participating in today's interview to explore your perceptions of professional development. Your input is valuable to ensure effective professional development practices.
2. Your responses are confidential.
3. The approximate length of this interview will be 30-45 minutes.
4. The purpose of this research is to allow teachers to explore effective and personalized qualities of professional development.

Interview Question 1:

Tell me what your concept of professional development is.

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Interview Question 2:

What are your expectations of professional development (SQ1.1)?

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Interview Question 3:

Tell me what the qualities of effective and meaningful professional development (SQ1.2).

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Interview Question 4:

How do students react to strategies that you've learned from professional development (SQ2.2)?

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Interview Question 5:

Have you noticed any changes in student performance after using the strategies you've learned in professional development (SQ.2.2)?

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Interview Question 6:

Have you received professional development that you have experienced as effective and meaningful? Please explain (SQ2.3).

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Interview Question 7:

Explain how the qualities you described of effective and meaningful professional development address gaps or strengthen your professional practice (SQ2.3).

Response from the Interviewee

Reflection by the Interviewer

Closure:

1. Is there anything you would like to add that I haven't asked?
2. Is there anything else that you feel is important about your professional development experiences?
3. Thank you for your participation.
4. Once again, your responses are confidential.
5. Do I have your permission to follow-up with you regarding your responses to the research questions? _____

Appendix D

Participant Journal

Expectations: While completing your journal, the expectation is that you respond thoroughly with examples of benefits, enhancements, and/or of your contributions to lesson planning, instructional practices, and assessment practices. In addition, explain thoroughly how professional development is meeting your needs or can be enhanced. A thorough response will include notes about the topics, questionings you may have, possible solutions to confusions or problems, new insights, and a critical view of your learning.

1. Choose, circle, and respond to at least one of the following (SQ2.1):
 - a. Professional development changed my lesson planning. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year influenced your lesson planning.
 - b. Professional development during the 2015/2016 school year did not change my lesson planning. Explain how professional development can be enhanced to improve your lesson planning.
 - c. Professional development during the 2015/2016 school year did not change my lesson planning due to my mastery. Explain how you can contribute to the professional development of others.
2. Choose, circle, and respond to at least one of the following (SQ2.1):
 - a. Professional development changed my instructional practices. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year influenced your instructional practices.
 - b. Professional development during the 2015/2016 school year did not change instructional practices. Explain how professional development can be enhanced to improve your instructional practices.
 - c. Professional development during the 2015/2016 school year did not change my instructional practices due to my mastery. Explain how you can contribute to the professional development of others.
3. Choose, circle, and respond to at least one of the following (SQ2.1):
 - a. Professional development changed my assessment practices. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year influenced your assessment practices.
 - b. Professional development during the 2015/2016 school year did not change my assessment practices. Explain how professional development can be enhanced to improve your assessment practices.
 - c. Professional development during the 2015/2016 school year did not change my assessment practices due to my mastery. Explain how you can contribute to the professional development of others.
4. List both strengths and weaknesses in your professional practice.

- a. Choose, circle, and respond to at least one of the following (SQ2.3):
 - i. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year addressed both your strengths and weaknesses.
 - ii. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year could have been enhanced to address both your strengths and weaknesses.
5. Choose, circle, and respond to at least one of the following (SQ1.1; SQ1.2; SQ2.2; SQ2.3):
 - a. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year aligns to your content area.
 - b. Explain how professional development during the 2015/2016 school year could align better to your content area.