THE IMPACT OF AGENCY, RISK TAKING, COLLABORATION, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The following Dissertation in Practice (DiP) consists of three parts: (a) a single qualitative case study which examined professional development opportunities in a small, rural school district in the Western United States, (b) a secondary qualitative analysis (SQA) which examined adult learners' expectations of agency (Bandura, 2001), and learning as part of a community when experiencing Professional Development (PD) courses, and (c) a white paper intended for stakeholders to consider plausible policy or procedural changes informed by the findings of these inquiries.

The case study, a personal study, was conducted within the context of the author's professional workplace. It examined the lived experiences and expectations of teachers regarding agency and its role in PD, how taking informed risks can lead to profitable learning experiences, and how collaboration and relationships between teachers and administrators fit into the design of PD opportunities.

The SQA, a collaborative study, examined data from the case study in conjunction with data collected by a fellow researcher investigating the experiences of undergraduates regarding agentic course design. Both studies shared the themes of agency, risk taking, and collaboration and the roles they play in adult learning.

Implications for practice from the personal study included teacher descriptions of successful implementation of agentic learning environments within their classrooms, and an expressed desire for district PD to create a similarly agentic experience. Implications for practice from the collaborative study included participant (both undergraduates and teachers) descriptions of strong preferences for active learning over more commonplace lecturing

experiences. These findings are reflected in the suggestions for change found in the white paper.

Keywords: professional development, agency, risk taking, collaboration

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my beautiful wife. Your support, understanding, and thoughtful prodding helped make this a reality. Also my children, whose father can now be returned. I also dedicate this work to my parents. Their belief in me inspired continual learning. Mom and Dad—I did it!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Preview

Learning in situ underpinned the nature of this Dissertation in Practice (DiP). A DiP is a non-traditional dissertation proposed by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) to be "a scholarly endeavor that impacts a complex problem of practice" (personal communication, Maughan, 2014). The format of this dissertation was developed under the aegis of the CPED, an organization tasked with the initiative to "strengthen and reclaim the educational research doctorate and develop a distinct form of doctoral education for professional practice" (Amrein-Beardsley *et al*., 2012, p. 99). This DiP is the culminating product of a Professional Practices Doctorate (PPD) in Education.

As envisioned by CPED, the PPD is an advanced educational research degree designed for the development of school practitioners, education professionals, and academic leaders at all levels. Willis, Inman and Valenti (2010) explained, "...the modern Ph.D. [Philosophy Doctorate] programs and the research dissertations are not well suited to preparing professional practitioners even though increasing percentages of Ph.D. students go into professional practice rather than becoming academics" (p. 22). They described the Education Doctorate (Ed.D.) as a degree that "...serves the needs of students who plan careers as professionals rather than academic researchers" (p. 59). This is why Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, and Garabedian (2006) observed that education degrees are often sought by practitioners who are well into their careers, whereas, students of other disciplines usually complete graduate degrees before entering the work force, or return to their educational pursuits after only a short time in their careers.

The PPD provides a way for full-time professionals to pursue their doctorate and perform meaningful job-embedded scholarly research intended to improve or enhance practice. These education professionals-turned-researchers, or "scholarly practitioners" (Wetzel & Ewbank, 2013) purposefully perform research for the "advanced preparation of school practitioners and clinical faculty, academic leaders, and professional staff" (Perry, 2012, p. 42). Scholarly practitioners generate knowledge through the praxis of educational research by "address[ing] a problem of professional practice in a particular context" rather than the development of "'universal' laws, solutions, or perspectives" (Prewitt, 2009, p. 70).

While embedded within the organization's culture and language, a scholarly-practitioner is uniquely positioned to address problems in practice that involve sensitive issues. In this DiP, the scholarly-practitioner evaluates agentic learning among a group of university undergraduates and professional K-12 educators.

There are a "family of characteristics" of professional doctorates (Willis et al., 2010). These characteristics include courses sequenced to prepare students—full-time working professionals—for research within their professional practice; relevant field experiences (mentorships or internships); cross-disciplinary research; and portfolios or meaningful dissertations. Along with being collaborative, both the research projects in this dissertation were done in an interdisciplinary fashion in partial fulfillment of Prewitt's (2009) vision, "Building doctoral training around practices that are interdisciplinary and collaborative is our future" (p. 33).

TAD—The Three-Article Format Dissertation

According to Willis, et al. (2010) "the five-chapter format that is a good fit for many professional practice dissertations is the TAD, or 'Three Article Dissertation'" (p. 359). This

format allows the scholarly-practitioner to write a dissertation in three distinct parts that may be prepared for submission into journals or other industry-professional outlets upon graduation. This DiP contains three potential manuscripts: (a) a single qualitative case study which examined professional development opportunities in a small, rural school district in the southeastern Idaho, (b) a secondary qualitative analysis (SQA) which examined adult learners' expectations of agency (Bandura, 2001), and learning as part of a community when experiencing Professional Development (PD) courses, and (c) a white paper intended for stakeholders to consider plausible policy or procedural changes informed by the findings of these inquiries. The first inquiry was performed by me. The second inquiry was a collaborative, cross-disciplinary study conducted by myself, and another doctoral student colleague. The white paper produced was a summary of both the personal study, and the collaborative study. The white paper has immediate implications for change in the school district where I work.

Overview of Articles 1 and 2

Overview of Article 1

Teachers and Agency: A Study of Positive Teaching Practices and Professional Development was generated as part of an examination into the professional development of teachers in a rural school district located in the Western United States. With the advent of the Common Core State Curriculum (CCSC) and its emphasis on raising math, English, and language arts standards (Carmichael, Martino, Porter-Magee, & Wilson, 2010), teachers may find it necessary to pursue professional development (PD) that reflects a shift toward higher-order thinking as was envisioned by Carmichael *et al.* (2010).

A quality PD program promotes growth for the participants and encourages change in the classroom (Borko, 2004, p. 5). Both veteran and novice instructors can experience these changes and can develop ways to "enhance learning in their classroom" (Lester, 2003, p. 57). In order to have a positive impact and enhance student learning, Lester (2003) found effective PD incorporated collaboration between teachers and administrators, and when teachers were involved in the planning of their PD courses, they became more engaged in the PD process. When teachers felt their voices were heard by administrators regarding PD, communication increased, misconceptions decreased, and ultimately teachers assumed responsibility for improving practice and ensuring a positive impact on student learning (Lester, 2003). Similarly, Wilson and Berne (1999) note, "teachers need to own and control their professional development" (p. 176). Involving teachers in the development and implementation of PD can produce the changes necessary to improve classroom practice (Guskey, 2002). Unfortunately, in many cases, the teachers don't have any input into the training they receive, and, as a result, change is minimal (Fullan, 1993).

This can become a problem for school districts. If PD programs are presented to teachers in a top-down rather than collaborative model, teachers may lose interest as they "lack ownership" (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 2) of their learning. This coercive approach isn't conducive to personal growth. As Webster-Wright (2009) expressed, "No one can make another person learn" (p. 727). When teachers are not given the agency to choose what they learn, they might have little interest or investment in PD courses. As a result, the desired changes envisioned by Guskey (2002) and Borko (2004) may not occur, and all the large quantities of money, resources, time, and effort expended to provide PD (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 702) might be wasted.

This problem was the focus of my research. I wanted to find out how agency played a part in teacher change. What role did agency have in teacher learning? Did agency play a part in their own classroom practices, and if so, how was it used? The data collected from these questions led me to infer that if districts want teachers to experience these changes (Guskey, 2002), districts should focus on incorporating agency in PD course design.

Overview of Article 2

The study that generated this article, *Expectations for Agency by Professional Development Learners*, was a Secondary Qualitative Analysis (SQA) that combined data from Article 1 with data collected as part of an independent professional practice research study conducted by Lee S. Barney. Secondary Qualitative Analysis is a research procedure that reuses datasets to "pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work" (Heaton, 1998). It can also "be employed by researchers to re-use their own data" (Heaton, 1998) regardless if the original data is quantitative or qualitative. An SQA appeared to the research team, Barney and I, to be a valid approach for this work. Using SQA yielded new information when we re-examined our existing data from new and differing perspectives.

Participants for Barney's study were adult undergraduate learners. In his qualitative study, Barney examined the readiness of undergraduate students to become professionals in preparation for a successful career in computer technology. Barney examined learning outcomes from an agentic course where opportunities to make purposeful choices, take academic learning risks, and experience temporary failure were foundational teaching and learning strategies. This study took place in a Computer Information Technology (CIT) software development course at a private, nonprofit, large university in the Western United

States, and examined the readiness of his participants to become professionals in preparation for a successful career in computer technology.

As both my study and the Barney study examined agency and risk taking by their respective participants, we concluded that the combination of both data sets using the SQA methodology would provide new information and data worthy of examination. Implications for practice described how adults desire relationships, community, meaningful changes in themselves, and agency in learning environments they experience. These expectations can arise at any time during a learner's educational experience. Expectations for future learning, which would include PD, change when adults experience agentic learning. If adults are given the learning environment they desire, they thrive.

Overview of the White Paper

The white paper *Redesigning Professional Development To Meet Teacher Expectations* used the data collected from articles 1 and 2 to produce timely information for the school district under study. The white paper reiterated the common themes of agency, collaboration, informed risk taking, and relationship-building. Casale (2011) stated, "If today's educators are to make an impact on the outdated educational system and teach students the skills necessary for success, they must change what they do" (p. 3). This statement by Casale posed an interesting question to the school district where the case study was conducted. Does the faculty of the school district possess the training necessary to change what they do in the classroom, and meet the obligation of helping students develop higher-order thinking skills, as suggested by Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009)?

The white paper was written for an administrative audience, the leaders of the school district, and is intended to provide implications for enhancing current PD practices and designing successful future PD opportunities. The suggestions presented include; (a) administrators establishing genuine relationships with teachers and utilize teachers' prior experience and knowledge, (b) permitting teachers more time to collaborate with their peers, (c) transitioning from pedagogical lecture-style lessons to peer-to-peer learning and hands-on experimentation during PD courses, and (d) encouraging teacher expressions of agency by including them in designing PD courses they will experience.

Chapter 2: Teachers and Agency: A Study of Positive Teaching Practices and Professional Development

Abstract

The higher order teaching skills required by new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) demand educators who have developed the ability to learn, problem solve, and teach in a more expansive way. To succeed within a system using CCSS, it becomes necessary for teachers to change what they do (Casale, 2011). As districts seek ways to aid and encourage staff in making necessary changes and developing higher-order thinking skills, Professional Development (PD) becomes an integral factor. However, the commonly utilized practice of providing lecture-style PD courses may no longer be adequate in light of these new demands of CCSS. Rather, higher-order thinking skills are more likely to be acquired by students when teachers use them to learn in a collaborative, agentic environments where they are free to experiment and take risks.

This qualitative case study examined the experiences of highly respected K-12 schoolteachers in the Western United States, and their perceptions of PD. Participants were purposefully selected, and interviews were conducted to determine what role agency played in their classrooms, and in PD provided by their district.

It was discovered participant teachers built an agentic learning environment that encouraged risk taking, allowing children to make choices and experiment with subject matter. Students often worked together to solve problems and achieve common goals.

The study evaluated the teachers' perceptions of the use of agency and collaboration in their classrooms, and the implications of agentic and collaborative approaches for PD course design. Other emergent themes included relationship-building and peer collaboration.

Teachers who employed these methods in their own classrooms had a strong desire for PD courses that emphasized agency, collaboration, risk taking, and relationship building.

Keywords: professional development, agency, agentic learning, risk taking, communities of practice, collaboration, hermeneutics

Definitions

Professional development: Educational programs established by school districts to provide tools, methods, and strategies for faculty and staff use. Professional development incorporates (a) mandated in-service, (b) voluntary courses by educational experts, and (c) structured collaboration among faculty and administrators. Guskey defines PD as "systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students" (Guskey, 2002, p. 381).

Agency: One's "ability to exert control over and give direction to one's life" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135). Agency enables people to play a part in their own development in a world of constant change. Individuals express agency by making choices and taking action.

Agentic learning: When learners are "pro-active and engaged in making meaning and developing capacities in ways that are intentional, effortful and are actively criticality in constructing their knowledge" (Billett, 2009, p. v), agentic learning is taking place.

Risk taking: Taking voluntary, informed risks can "lead to a greater sense of control, resulting in a feeling of accomplishment and agency" (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 123). Although risk taking is sometimes associated with negative outcomes, informed risks can result in a positive learning experience.

Communities of practice: When multiple people within an organization attempt to complete a common goal, they can form a community of practice. "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2011, p. 1).

Collaboration: As colleagues share knowledge, techniques, and skills with one another, they collaborate. Collaboration is the "co-construction of meaning and mutual relationships through a shared enterprise" (Musanti & Pence, 2010, p. 74). Collaboration can be of great benefit to teachers as it provides them opportunities to share ideas and resources.

Social Cognitive Theory: People are not simply machines limited to inputs and outputs, but are capable of exercising some control over their thoughts, feelings, motivations, and actions through self-reflective and self-reactive capabilities (Bandura, 1991, p. 249). Social Cognitive Theory subscribes to a "model of emergent interactive agency" (Bandura, 2001, p. 4), where people can adopt certain behaviors that help guide their actions through self-reactive influences. These self-reactive influences, combined with external influences, regulate human functioning.

Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation. It is a grammatical and psychological interpretive theory "situated in the text within its literary context" (Crotty, 2009, p. 93). The comprehension of any written text requires interpretation; and therefore hermeneutics.

Teachers and Agency: Positive Teaching Practices and Professional Development

D. Joshua Wilson

According to Wagner (2008), employers in today's job markets are looking for employees who can do more than the "basic skills of reading, writing, and math" (p. xxii). Rather, they are seeking to recruit individuals who can use the basic skills to "think—to reason, analyze, weigh evidence, problem solve—and to communicate effectively" (p. xxiii). Students who develop these more advanced skills are better prepared to compete within a demanding job market. The Idaho State Board of Education adopted new standards with an emphasis on such higher-order thinking skills in 2010, followed by the Idaho State Legislature in 2011 (http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/ICS/).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). According to Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang (2011), these standards outline expectations for student leaning in grades K-12 (p. 103). Porter et al. also found that moving away from current state standards to the Common Core standards in mathematics would "represent a modest shift toward higher levels of cognitive demand than are currently represented in state standards" (p. 106). They also confirmed that a shift from current state standards in English, language arts, and reading to the Common Core required even "higher levels of cognitive demand" (p. 106) than for mathematics. Teachers should be prepared to adapt to the continually evolving landscape of education.

Casale (2011) stated, "If today's educators are to make an impact on the outdated educational system and teach students the skills necessary for success, they must change what they do" (p. 3). As Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009)

explained, in order to help students gain higher-order thinking skills, “we need educators who possess higher-order teaching skills and deep content knowledge” (p. 2). It is no longer sufficient for teachers to only possess book smarts; successful educators must develop higher-order skills and a deeper understanding of how to apply their knowledge.

Quality Professional Development (PD) programs can help educators acquire such higher-order thinking skills. These programs are designed to change and improve teacher practices, resulting in successful learning outcomes for students (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). Thomas (2010) explains how PD is designed to promote a change in instructional practices; it is expected that teachers implement these new methods in the classroom, as “a curriculum’s effectiveness depends on how the curriculum is enacted” (p. 172).

It has been found that a demonstration of the necessary skills and techniques is often not, by itself, sufficient to motivate change. Lutrick, & Szabo (2012) noted that in addition to modeling, practices such as reflection, active engagement, metacognition, application, and formative assessment can motivate change (p. 7). Also, positive change is more likely to occur when an individual is given the responsibility to “create, enact, and embody their own knowledge as they encounter it” (Dall’Alba, 2005, p. 364). It is not enough for someone to be supplied with information; he or she also needs the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a self-directed manner.

Knowing how to perform a task does not ensure the skillful practice of said task. As Dall’Alba (2005) asserts, “This is not to deny the importance of knowledge and skills but, rather, to argue that their acquisition is insufficient for enacting skillful practice and for transformation of the self” (p. 363). If we focus solely on the transfer of knowledge, we fail to facilitate and support change.

Telling someone how to perform a task might be less effective than allowing them to experience achieving the task. By providing teachers the opportunity to take risks, to discover solutions, and to apply the knowledge they've gained in their own classroom, teachers may experience positive change. In such a situation, professional development needs to be more than an exchange of knowledge, or transaction, between PD instructors and participants. Wilson and Berne (1999) note, "teachers need to own and control their professional development" (p. 176). Unfortunately, in many cases, the teachers don't have any input into the training they received, and, as a result, change is less effective (Fullan, 1993, p. 3). As Diaz-Maggioli (2004) explained, current PD practices tend to be restrictive because they rely on a "top-down" infrastructure rather than "collaborative decision-making" (p. 2). This results in a "lack of ownership" (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 2) from the teachers, since they were not involved in the process. This coercive approach isn't conducive to personal growth. As Webster-Wright (2009) expressed, "No one can make another person learn" (p. 727). When teachers do not use their agency to choose what they learn, they have little interest or investment in the PD courses they experience. As a result, changes needed to meet current educational needs and expectations may not occur.

In order to combat this top-down, mandated approach, Fullan (1993) suggests teachers become agents of change, who take risks and implement new practices. Fullan (1993) explains how teachers can take control over their PD by setting and accomplishing goals, forming personal purpose through inquiry, and gaining mastery of skills through collaboration. As teachers implement these strategies, they become less reliant on administrators to provide meaningful learning opportunities.

Lester (2003) also advocates for teachers to have a voice in the decisions made regarding the development of PD. Lester claims that when teachers are included in the planning process, benefits such as meaningful dialogue with administration, teacher buy-in, initiation of improved practice, and teacher accountability are realized. This type of ongoing collaboration regarding PD "ensures continued support at all levels," and results in teachers "who have a positive impact on student learning" (p. 57).

When teachers express agency and develop PD that reflects their learning goals, an attitude of ownership develops. Agency is defined by Bruner (1996) as "taking more control of your own mental activity" (p. 87), and that agency includes "the sense that one can initiate and carry out activities on one's own" (p. 35). Teachers may be more likely to have successful outcomes when they have the opportunity to take risks, express their agency, and maintain control over the learning process.

Background of the Study

I have attended twenty-five professional development (PD) courses offered by my school district in the past seven years. Most were mandated in-service trainings; several were voluntary courses by educational experts, and some were me participating in structured collaboration among my colleagues. The district conducts in-service training four times a year. District administrators usually choose the topic of the training, and then delegate the instruction to a teacher or building level administrator, such as a principal. The instructor prepares a one- to three-hour presentation. In this top-down approach, teacher participants have little opportunity to contribute to in-service training.

Because in-service is scheduled on contract days, teachers are obligated to attend. They are not given the option to utilize this time in other ways. Those who do not attend the

in-service must use a valued personal or sick day. Attendance is required because of the state's mandate to ensure those seeking credit hours are present; however, attendance is taken of all teachers, even those not claiming credit hours.

In the district under study, in-service typically consists of a range of learners who have varying amounts of professional experience, and who may teach different subjects and ages of children. This standardized type of PD assumes all teachers perform at the same capacity, have the same needs, and does not account for varied backgrounds and philosophies. Common PD content matter of these courses include topics such as: (a) how to use technological resources in the classroom, (b) assessment strategies, (c) teaching strategies, and (d) classroom management. One of the challenges in each of the PD options is the delivery style of information. The material is almost always presented in a traditional pedagogical lecture-style format.

Because the traditional pedagogical lecture-style classroom persists among education, with a strong emphasis on didactic learning, this method of delivery persists. Unfortunately, information is not always absorbed using a one-size-fits-all method of delivery. Boles, Jolly, Hadgraft, Howard, & Beck (2010) emphasized that teachers [or students] do not "get a lot out of" (p. 7) lecture-style instruction. Furthermore, as Felder and Brent (2005) explored traditional teaching methods, they found that a "lecture-style used as a 'one-size-fit-all' method of teaching, fits almost nobody" (p. 57). It seems that the lecture-style approach in the K-12 classroom, or with adults in PD, is not the best method to illicit learning and change in students or teachers.

These classes are different than, and separate from, in-service training. Unlike the mandated in-service training, these PD classes can be taken at any time they are available,

and any teacher within the district can take the class. A fee is typically required, and some classes offer college credits that can be applied toward recertification. The setting for these classes looks similar to the in-service training described earlier. The expert lectures on a skill or technique to a range of participating teachers and administrators. In order to earn the offered credit(s), participants are expected to complete projects or assignments based on the lecture.

The district also attempts to further PD by providing opportunities for teacher collaboration. Teachers are urged to attend faculty meetings about once a month. In most schools throughout the district, time is scheduled one afternoon a week for teachers to plan and collaborate. Collaborations are often done at the school level, with teachers meeting with colleagues assigned to their team. There are occasional meetings for teachers who teach the same subject, or who teach at the same grade level. Teachers are to use collaboration time to discuss student needs and general classroom activities.

Although the school district offers PD in these various forms, my teaching peers expressed a general dissatisfaction with the district's PD practices. After having read articles and studies showing the benefits of agency (Fullan, 1993; Biesta & Tedder, 2007) and collaboration (Guskey, 2002; Borko, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001), I wanted to find out more about teachers' experiences with and expectations for agentic and collaborative learning within their own classrooms, and how these themes might translate into PD made available at the district level.

Statement of the Problem

Because the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have increased the demand for teachers who possess "higher-order teaching skills and deep content knowledge"

(Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009, p. 2), educators should be equipped with programs that encourage the development of such skills. The shift to place increased emphasis on students' abilities to analyze and demonstrate understanding require higher-order thinking skills—and a higher order of teaching (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). Redwood, Winning, and Townsend (2010), found that if PD is not instituted correctly, it might yield only small returns in desired behaviors. This could be problematic for the district, as "large quantities of money, resources, time, and effort are expended to research, deliver, and improve PD practice" (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 702). In order to encourage a shift towards higher-order teaching, PD practices must change to reflect the more stringent demands of CCSS.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to improve the immediate practice of K-12 teachers' professional development by gaining a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences with and expectations for PD. Furthermore, this study examined how teachers utilized agency and collaboration within their own classrooms to discern whether the district might benefit from implementing similar strategies for PD.

Significance of the Study

Teacher professional development is widely viewed as the most promising intervention for improving teacher quality in U.S. public schools (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010). With the advent of CCSS and its expectations for higher-level student learning and teacher instruction, school districts will need to modernize PD. Professional development will require a greater focus on higher-level thinking, as expressed by Wagner (2008).

As school districts are investing time, effort, and money into providing PD opportunities for teachers (Corcoran, 1995; Odden, Archibald, Fermanich, & Gallagher,

2002), an understanding concerning the overall effectiveness and implementation of PD, as assessed by its consumers, could prove beneficial. Gaining a deep, rich understanding regarding teachers' opinions of and experiences with district level PD will allow districts to compare its current practices with teachers' expectations. It will also provide timely data for district administrators who are planning future PD opportunities to meet the demands of CCSS.

Limitations

Marshall and Rossman (2011) note that "all proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed" (p. 76). Limitations help to explain the boundaries of the study. One limitation was the confinement of the study to selected participants in only one rural school district in southeastern Idaho. Accordingly, their opinions, views, perceptions, and beliefs might not reflect teachers elsewhere.

The presence of the researcher during interviews may have had an impact on participants, as I am a colleague and responses were not given under total anonymity. This study employed Rapid Assessment Processes (RAP) as a method for data gathering, which may have impacted the results of the data, as multiple researchers were involved in the data collection process in a reduced time frame (Beebe, 2001).

The selection of participants was purposeful, which allowed only six participants. I began by asking an administrator to identify teachers who he respected and considered successful. After interviewing the first participant, I asked for names of future potential interviewees. This snowball sampling limited the pool of participants to only those produced by colleague and administrative recommendation.

This study involved a group of teachers within one small, rural school district, and may or may not reflect the behaviors and beliefs of other school districts. Although the information uncovered by this study may be suggestive of what could be found in similar organizations, additional research would be needed to verify if this study's findings are generalizable elsewhere.

Role of the Researcher

This study, as a qualitative inquiry, situates me in the midst of my data, which is my professional career. To conduct a qualitative research study, it is imperative that a researcher understands the fundamental tenets and philosophy of this inquiry paradigm (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Silverman, 2001). The qualitative inquiry method guides the researcher in understanding certain behavioral and other natural phenomenon and provides thick, rich descriptions of individuals experiencing life in any number of particular circumstances (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to engage more openly in reflective practices that aid in providing strategies for translating theory into action for practitioners (Stringer, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2009). A choice in research inquiry guides the process of data collection and analysis, and also informs the various structures inherent in the implications that result from the findings.

In the qualitative research paradigm, the goal and role of the researcher is to delineate in the best possible way the experiences of the participants and view it as they see it. Through this process, the researcher acts as a sort of medium or facilitator (Gluck & Patai, 1991). The researcher then relays the voices of the participants with an understanding that biases play a role in both interpretation and analysis. For this reason, it is important to disclose the

background of the researcher and any worldviews that may potentially impact the analysis, interpretations, and implications of the data.

In my experience I have seen the benefits of agency in the role of human development. As a learner, teacher, and parent I have observed the impact agency has on both teaching and learning. An agentic environment instills responsibility, promotes emotional maturity, and enhances intellectual growth (Côté, 2005). I make every effort to foster an agentic environment within my own classroom.

As an advocate for agentic learning, I make the assumption that agency positively influences professional development. As a seven-year veteran teacher in a Pre-K-12 public school district, I have attended many PD classes. With a range of appreciation, I found them to be repetitive, irrelevant, and tedious. There were few opportunities for expressing agency through choice. I have been permitted little input regarding the PD courses. I was given minimal time to collaborate and share ideas with my peers. I've found that I am not alone in my perceptions of PD; over the years, I have listened to co-workers express similar concerns about district PD. In light of these experiences, I began this study with the assumption that PD could be improved, and my objective was to discern how this might be accomplished.

As I began this study with a favorable opinion of agency and collaboration, and a negative view of district PD, it is probable that my attitude would bias my interpretation and analysis of the data. For that reason, I made every effort to counteract potential prejudices with member-checking (presenting my findings to the participants) and triangulating with my graduate research colleagues.

Delimitation

A delimitation of this study was the selection of the problem of practice. Although there were many potential areas of study, I chose to focus exclusively on the implementation of PD within the district, and implications for its improvement.

Another delimitation of this study was the method of conducting interviews. In order to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, questions were loosely structured to help the participants feel comfortable. There was no rigid outline for interviewing; rather, follow-up questions were formed based on participants' responses. I then sought to express the experiences of the participants to a wider audience.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) refers to a psychological model of behavior developed by Albert Bandura (1977; 1986). Social Cognitive Theory has been applied to various forms of human functioning, such as mental and physical health, sports, academics, and organizational behavior (Denler, Woltors, & Benzon, 2014). The theory claims that individuals learn mainly through observation of social situations and interactions within a social context. For instance, a teacher might learn how to develop a behavior plan by observing how other teachers do it. The teacher might then try to create, execute, and receive ongoing encouragement and feedback about a behavior plan from colleagues as she asks questions, discusses concerns, and shares ideas. Through observation and social interaction, a successful behavior plan can thereby be designed and implemented.

As part of this social learning process, individuals may be seeking not only knowledge and information but friendship, support, collegiality, and a sense of belonging (Chiu, Hsu, and Wang, 2006). Social Cognitive Theory is a good fit for this study because

much of what a teacher learns through PD could be learned in a social context and through observation.

Social Cognitive Theory has several basic assumptions regarding learning and behavior. These are (a) “triadic reciprocal-ity” (Denler, Woltors, & Benzon, 2014), (b) agency, and (c) that learning can occur without immediate change.

Triadic reciprocal-ity is the view that personal, behavior, and environmental factors influence a person’s life in a reciprocal and bi-directional way (Bandura, 1986; Denler, Woltors, & Benzon, 2014). This means that a person’s actions are a product of ongoing interactions between the cognitive, behavioral, and contextual factors in the environment (Denler, Woltors, & Benzon, 2014). For example, a teacher learns through interaction with factors in his environment, while at the same time, the teacher’s own thoughts and beliefs affect his learning. In essence, the teacher influences the learning while the learning influences the teacher.

Through forethought, self-reflection, and self-regulatory processes, individuals can exert influence over their own outcomes and the environment in which they belong (Denler, Woltors, & Benzon, 2014). A teacher may observe how to implement a behavior plan, and then adapt the plan to meet his own needs through cognitive functions. This leads into the second assumption of SCT: agency, or the ability to influence the environment in a purposeful, goal-directed fashion (Bandura, 2001). The teacher has agency to adjust the processes he’s observed to fit individual or group needs.

However, observation and learning may not always lead to an abrupt change in practice. The third assumption regarding SCT is that learning can occur without an immediate outward change in behavior. Social Cognitive Theory assumes that learning

includes the acquisition of new behaviors and comprises the acquisition of rules, skills, concepts, and values (Denler, Woltors, & Benzon, 2014). This means that although a teacher may learn or acquire a new skill, he may not implement it until motivated to do so. The teacher uses agency to decide if, when, and how he will apply his knowledge.

As described by Biesta and Tedder (2007), agency is the “ability to exert control over and give direction to one’s life” (p. 135). This is achieved “through the active engagement of individuals with aspects of their contexts-for-action” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 132). Active engagement implies that agency is not a power *given* to all actors, but rather is “a quality of the engagement of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 146). Bandura (1989) described agency as the “capacity to exercise control over one's own thought processes, motivation, and action” (p. 1175). Taking action is central to this definition of agency.

Individuals must take action to meet the demands of an ever-changing world that forces one to continually reconstruct their view of the past, in an attempt to understand the present. This understanding then enables the individual to aptly shape their responses to the needs of the emergent future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 969). Emirbayer and Mische draw upon the theories of Mead (1932) and what he called the “deliberative attitude”, or the capacity to “get hold of the conditions of future conduct as these are found in the organized responses we have formed, and so construct our pasts in anticipation of that future” (p. 76). Biesta and Tedder (2007) reiterate Emirbayer and Mische’s expansion of agency, confirming that it should be understood as a “configuration of influences from the *past*, orientations towards the *future* and engagement with the *present*” (emphasis in the original) (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135). Past experiences condition present action through habit and repetition.

These become stabilizing influences that enable us to shape and sustain our identities (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 975).

Although individuals may be influenced by past experiences, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that human actors are not simply slaves to past routines and schemas, but are also capable of creating new thought and action. As human actors respond to challenges, they have the capacity to emancipate themselves from habits, adapting traditions to serve their own purposes and desires (p. 984). This allows human actors creative agency to act on what they consider a desirable result, or to reach future plans and goals.

While agency involves both past and future actions and choices, it is in the present that they are acted upon. Emirbayer & Mische (1998) describe how human agents have the capacity to make judgments and form a plan of action, taking into account emerging problems (p. 971). When PD limits the actions of participants, their agency is inaccessible, and they may feel distanced from the practice of PD.

This distance is described by Diaz-Maggioli (2004) as a lack of ownership (p. 2). She clarifies that teachers must participate in the creation of PD if they are to develop ownership of it (p. 11). Teachers have little investment in programs created without their input, so desired change does not occur (Guskey, 2002). Therefore, it stands to reason that PD programs would experience a greater level of success if teachers were given more control and agency over the learning process.

It is interesting to note that as individuals exercise their agency by making decisions and acting with purpose, a degree of risk is involved, as outcomes cannot always be accurately predicted. As Lupton and Tulloch (2002) point out, risk taking is often presented as “the product of ignorance or irrationality” (p. 113). This negative way of thinking about

risk has turned the word into something conveying "fear…anxiety, vulnerability and uncertainty" (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 113). However, these descriptions do not tell the whole story.

Voluntary risk taking can lead to positive outcomes. Lupton and Tulloch (2002) argue that voluntary risk taking can become beneficial when it gives someone the opportunity to demonstrate courage, conquer fear, experience self-actualization, or utilize personal agency (p. 115). They conclude that voluntary risk taking can lead to a feeling of accomplishment, as well as a greater sense of control and agency (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 123).

The probability that risk taking will have positive consequences may be increased when an individual makes the effort to establish an educative foundation first. When an individual researches the decision beforehand, he or she is able to take an *informed* risk. Informed risk-takers may be better able to avoid potential pitfalls, and have a greater likelihood of attaining a rewarding pay-off (Blase & Blase, 2000).

Informed risk taking is an expression of agency, and can allow individuals to conquer perceived limitations while building self-confidence. Regarding teachers' professional development of new or unfamiliar technology, Vannatta and Fordham (2004) found teachers who were willing to "take risks" and learn how to use new technology, "may be more likely to use technology in the classroom" (p. 261). Because these skills were new, a willingness to view mistakes as learning experiences was essential to gaining the confidence needed to implement technological advances in the classroom (Vannatta & Fordham, 2004, p. 261).

Risk taking has a greater chance of success when a supportive scaffolding is in place. Heath and McDonald (2012) found that collaborative professional development, designed as a community of practice, energized group members while motivating them to try new ideas

and take risks (p. 24). These collaborative PD efforts provide support for teachers adopting new ideas gleaned from the community of practice. Functioning communities of practice are comprised of three elements (Wenger, 2000). The first element is that participants "understand the enterprise well enough to be able to contribute to it" (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). Participants must have an understanding of the vision, purpose, and goals of the organization so they can be contributing members.

The second element is mutual engagement. As community members interact, they establish norms and relationships of mutuality. As an individual engages with the community, they become "a trusted partner" (Wenger, 2000, p. 229).

The third element is a shared repertoire of communal resources for members to use. Participants should not only have access to these resources, but be informed on how to use them correctly (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). In terms of PD, this might include the summative knowledge base of its members, and resources such as lessons, presentations, and literature.

As members have a shared vision of the enterprise, are mutually engaged in its purpose, and have access to, and appropriately use, the shared repertoire of resources, communities of practice are formed. According to Wenger (2000) communities of practice emerge from the interplay of "competence and experience that involve mutual engagement" (p. 229). To establish a successful community of practice, teachers need opportunities to engage with their colleagues through collaboration. DuFour (2004) claimed that "powerful collaboration" could be instituted in a "professional learning community" as it develops a "systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice (p. 3). In this way PD serves the function of social modeling.

Social Cognitive Theory describes how individuals are able to adapt to diverse social environments through agentic action. When individuals take risks, they are often able to overcome personal limitations and environmental constraints. As they develop "styles of behavior that enable them to realize desired outcomes," (Bandura, 2001, p. 22) they are able to demonstrate successful methods to their peers through social modeling.

Research Questions

The interview questions addressed the concept of agency's role in PD, and its influence in teachers' own classrooms. The three main questions were: (a) How has agency played a part in how you have changed? (b) How you learn? And, (c) how you teach?"

Some sub-questions included:

1. What do you do differently in your classroom that would be considered nontraditional? How did you learn about these methods? What was your experience in implementing them?
2. When you first attempted these methods, was there a degree of risk involved? Were you successful? How do you know?
3. How did your experience with the implementation of these methods influence your own professional development? Has this affected how you view others, such as your peers, as fellow learners?
4. How might you change professional development practices in K-12 education?

Design and Methods

This study recognizes that teachers' perceptions of and experiences with PD are instrumental to becoming a professional teacher. Therefore the study was designed to gain a deep, rich understanding of teachers' experiences with and perceived needs regarding PD. A

qualitative methodology was selected as a valuable approach to use in "the study of social phenomena" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 3). As Creswell (2013) describes, the data for qualitative research is obtained "in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study," in this case, participants' own classrooms (p.44). Analysis of the information gleaned using qualitative methodology "is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes." The final result is a paper that uses the ideas and opinions of the participants, as interpreted by the researcher, to analyze the problem of practice (Creswell, 2013, p. 44).

Qualitative methodology allowed me to discern issues with district PD, as described by the participants. This study explored a "real-life, contemporary bounded system" (Creswell, 2013). The experiences of teachers regarding PD were bounded by time (two months of data collection), and place (situated in a single school district).

I chose to perform a qualitative case study, as a case study relies on "historical and document analysis, interviewing, and, typically, some forms of observation for data collection" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 267). Case study methodology is used when the researcher wants to fully understand a particular bounded unit (Stake, 2000) that must be explained, described, illustrated, or explored (Yin, 2003).

This study was conducted under the interpretive paradigm, where the goal of the research was to "seek to interpret the world, particularly the social world," by looking for patterns and relationships within values and beliefs (Higgs, 2001, p.49). Due to the human aspect of the study, the interpretive paradigm was chosen to address the problem of practice "richly and in context" (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 342). Basing this study in the interpretive paradigm allowed me to focus on "uncovering contextualized, professional craft knowledge,

personal experiential knowledge, and understandings" (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 342) regarding PD, as explained by those most familiar with it: the teachers.

In order to understand PD in context, I used hermeneutics as a device to drive my interpretations and gain deeper, richer understandings of the participant interviews. Hermeneutics is a grammatical and psychological interpretive theory "situated in the text within its literary context" (Crotty, 2009, p. 93). Hermeneutics adds the interpretive element to explicate "meanings and assumptions in the participants' texts that participants themselves may have difficulty in articulating" (Ajjawi, 2007, p. 616). Language and communication are intertwined. Hermeneutics offers a method for understanding human experiences captured through language (van Manen, 1997), and as explained by Paterson and Higgs (2005) allow the examination and interpretation of human phenomena from various perspectives to produce "rich theoretical and experiential interpretations" (p. 354) of PD experiences and needs.

Participant Selection

The teacher-participants were all United States citizens of Caucasian decent. Four of the participants were female and two were male. These six participants consisted of four elementary education teachers who taught grade-level courses: one third-grade, two fourth-grade, and one fifth-grade. Two participants were secondary education teachers: one junior high math teacher, and one high school government teacher. The range of teaching experience was between five and twenty-five years.

Participants for this study were selected from a homogenous group of teachers in the school district to be studied. Two teachers acknowledged by the district as exceptional teachers, who use nontraditional teaching techniques, were purposefully selected as initial

participants. Using the snowballing technique, they then suggested other teachers who they considered to be excellent instructors. Criteria for selection were any participants who agreed to be interviewed for this project.

Data Collection and Analysis

To explore the roles of agency, risk taking, and collaboration in teachers' classrooms and in district PD, I scheduled semi-structured interviews and encouraged teacher-participants to tell their stories. This allowed me to adjust my questions based on the participants' dialogue. Follow-up conversations were conducted and emails sent that focused on themes that emerged during the evaluation process.

The teacher interviews were recorded, transcribed, and first cycle coding was conducted to reveal data chunks; the emergent codes were then sent through a second cycle coding process to reveal patterns in the codes from the first cycle (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Analysis of the data was then sent to the teacher-participants to gain insight into their thoughts of the revealed patterns and themes. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) recognized this as a way of "providing member checks on the accuracy of descriptions, explanations, and interpretations" (p. 58) of the data. Unanimously, teacher-participants agreed with the data analysis and confirmed I was on the right track.

Triangulation of data was conducted using a multi-disciplinary team of researchers. This team "works together to collect data through semi-structured interviews, through observations, and from information collected in advance" (Beebe, 2001, p. 22). The team consisted of the teacher-participants, a co-researcher, Lee S. Barney, and myself. As the teacher-participants and I were able to give an "insider's" perspective (Beebe, 2001, p. 22), Barney's "outsider" perspective (Beebe, 2001, p. 23) proved an invaluable tool for

triangulation of data. Effective triangulation was reached in a “reduced time in the field” (Beebe, 2001, p. 23) because multiple people were involved.

Participant Stories

I began the interviews with the assumption that most of the participants taught in a style similar to that demonstrated in district PD classes. After all, that was where they received formal instruction. I expected teacher-participants’ lessons to be lecture-style, pedagogical presentations that followed narrow lesson plans. I was surprised to discover that all of these successful teachers employed non-traditional teaching methods within their classrooms. Five out of six teachers had moved away from the pedagogical style in favor of a more agentic learning environment. Even the sixth teacher was willing to step out of the pedagogical zone when he saw the need, replacing standard math drills with songs and raps. I was impressed by the fact that every teacher was willing to try new techniques and take risks when they perceived it could benefit their students.

I realized that the non-traditional methods these teachers embraced had the potential to inform and improve the practices of district PD. As I questioned the teachers about their classroom practices, several shared beliefs emerged:

1. Students thrive in an agentic learning environment.
2. Students need opportunities for risk taking to encourage growth.
3. Peer collaboration increases confidence while creating a sense of community.
4. Establishing teacher-student relationships leads to an understanding of learner needs, thereby allowing the teacher to develop applicable instruction.

As I explored these themes further, I learned more about how the teachers employ these methods within their classrooms, and how these techniques contrast with the current practices of district PD.

Agency in the Classroom

Agency, as mentioned above, is the ability to act and direct one's own learning (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135). As I asked the participants about their professional journeys, I learned that their teaching styles have evolved over the years. Initially, they relied heavily on techniques and skills found in manuals, textbooks, and worksheets. Over time, while comparing the requirements from the state and school district to the outcomes of the students, they realized the students could do more when given the opportunities to choose than what the teacher could require of them. Because of the awareness of the growth of the students when presented opportunities to choose, they became motivated to turn their classrooms into environments that supported choice and agency. Because resources to establish this kind of learning environment were not available in the school district, they actively sought new information from books, by attending conferences, and collaborating with their colleagues. They did this at their own expense. Through risk taking and trial and error, teachers then developed successful methods for engaging and educating their students.

Although the implementation of the agentic strategies for teaching varied between participants, the core principles of agency were surprisingly consistent. Students were encouraged to ask questions, take risks, and direct much of their own learning. They thrived in this agentic environment, demonstrating increased interest and responsibility. As Pedersen and Liu (2003) pointed out, "student-centered approaches are more likely to promote student ownership over their process and learning" (p. 58).

When I visited with Heather, a 4th grade teacher, I found that she adopted just such a student-centered approach. She encouraged her students to ask questions and explore new concepts. She recognized her students "became more engaged" when they directed their own learning process and pursued points of interest in the topic being discussed. She would make a personal connection to what mattered most to the students at the moment. She said that her students appreciated that she, "actually [gave] …an answer instead of just going through information [they] really don't care to know." By allowing her students the agency to direct the learning process and pursue points that interested them, Heather saw increased engagement in her students.

Agency also affected Jack's approach to the classroom. Jack, a 5th grade teacher, stated, "Agency is huge in the motivational realm." Like Heather, Jack asked for his students' input, and allowed them to drive the learning. He explained, "Much of how we go about learning is going to be determined by them." He realized that when his students were given choices regarding how they learned, they were eager to participate. He used student agency and choice as a tool to "take advantage of everything from managing the classroom to planning."

In one instance his students designed their own history museum. Jack said, "Through *their* [emphasis added] ideas we develop it." When the students had the idea to make the classroom look like a real museum, it became a team effort as supplies were donated and students and parents pitched in to build huge museum backdrops. What began as a simple assignment to read two history books evolved into an extensive and engaging learning experience that immersed the students in history. Jack said, "Even my basic requirement of reading two books, it was the students who, once they tasted that much, came back for more.

Some of them are reading 20, 25 books." The books were selected by the students to study the various eras in which they were interested.

Prior to embracing student agency, Jack would assign a book or two, the student would check it off the list and they would move on to another assignment. But, as Jack grew and changed his expectations and learned how to give students control over their learning, the students became excited about the content and chose to pursue other books on their own. By sharing control over the classroom, Jack created an environment where students had ownership of their learning. Jack summarized, "They know it's their classroom and I am a facilitator." Jack, like Heather, found that students became excited about learning when they were given the opportunity to direct the process.

Like Jack and Heather, Sally, a 4th grade teacher, expressed the belief that "students need to choose." Sally discovered, "the more control students have the better the results they will achieve, and the more in control they are, the more they will learn." Within her classroom she organized a book club. She offered a choice of six different books, rather than assigning a single book to the entire class. The students responded enthusiastically. Sally remembered, "They come back saying, 'Oh, my goodness, you guys should have chosen my book, it's the best!' 'No, mine is!' Then they're grabbing each others' books." Sally found that the students didn't stop at reading the assigned book, "but they're reading other students' books as well." Sally's students became excited about learning when allowed to make a choice about which book to read. Both Sally and Jack's students took control of their own learning, going beyond the requirements of the assignments.

Sally mentioned that she follows the tenant of "Love and Logic" to "keep the control you must have, and you give all the rest of it away." She attributed much of her classroom

success to her willingness to relinquish control as the teacher. Like Jack and Heather, she used student-directed learning to encourage personal responsibility for the learning process.

Sally also utilizes a “self-monitoring” approach, allowing her students to choose their own homework assignments. She said, “I try to develop an environment that gives them a desire to do work that will be a challenge.” As Sally’s students expressed their agency, they often chose to push themselves harder than she would push them.

Sophia, a high-school history teacher, found the benefits of an agentic environment. She felt it was a key factor in her success as a teacher. She encouraged students to find ways of making the material relevant to them. “I tell them, ‘find a passion.’” Sophia related a recent conversation with one of her students: “I had a student say, ‘I don’t like anything but hunting.’ And I replied, ‘Okay, let’s talk about wolves in Yellowstone. Let’s write a federal bill.’ And he says, ‘Oh yeah! I can!’” As Sophia allowed her students to explore topics that were relevant to them, they became passionate about the learning process.

Tina, a 3rd grade teacher, also saw how her students become invested in learning when they expressed their agency regarding their assignments. While giving her students spelling homework, she gave them options. Of the 10 options, they choose four. “If I’m not the one dictating how they do it, then they take more ownership of it. It’s them choosing and taking accountability for their own education.” Tina made the connection between agency and accountability; as students expressed agency, they took more responsibility for their choices.

The classroom environment changes with opportunities for choice (Moore, 2008). Each of these participants recognized the positive impact agentic learning had on their students within their classrooms. Benefits included greater accountability, heightened interest

in the topic of study, and increased classroom participation (Côté, 2005). With so many participants embracing an agentic environment in their classrooms, I was curious whether similar opportunities for agentic learning currently existed within the district's PD programs.

Agency in District PD

As each of the participants extolled the importance of agency in their classrooms, I wanted to learn more about their impressions of agency in regards to PD. Like their students, teachers valued opportunities to express their agency and study relevant topics, and many desired greater control over their PD.

Jack mentioned that he would like more input regarding his PD training. He wanted to express his agency by choosing subject matter relevant to his learning goals. Jack noted that, "they [district administrators] do ask, once in a while, what kinds of things teachers would like to have as training. There's some effort there, but again, it's bigger than that." He went on to say, "If all I did in my class was to give a survey on a piece of paper… I don't know that I would get student buy-in." Agency is key to engagement for learners; as Jack stated regarding his own classroom, participants then "feel valued, and begin to volunteer ideas and take ownership of their education."

Don is a junior high math teacher who has lost interest in PD classes. This is, as he expressed, because he was not given choices about the PD content. He lamented about how the classes were often repetitive. No matter the content, he criticized, "It seems like we have the same classes over and over and over again." He said the content rarely applied to what he was doing in his classroom. Instead of being a learning experience, PD was a mandated chore he had to endure.

Similar to Don, Sophia was required to attend classes that she would not have chosen for herself. These courses failed to provide her with relevant instruction, and she viewed this as a “waste of time.” She was assigned to attend a class on the topic of cartoons. The class was about the use of technology and, in particular, how to create a cartoon to engage the students in writing exercises. Although the utility of the topic was profound, it lost its substance and value, and potential benefit because (a) the topic was chosen without the input from the teachers, and (b) attendance was a mandate. A culture that did not promote expressions of agency prevailed. Many faculty attend PD classes with the intention to correct homework, read a favorite book, follow-up on email and texting, or any number of things disassociated with the course. Sophia’s language and manner of expression indicated her protest. She asked sarcastically, “They *put* [emphasis added] us in ‘Making Cartoons?’ I don’t know, what is that?!” Although mandated, Sophia made a clear choice to withdraw mentally from the class and, as a result, learned nothing. She said she longed to express agency to the same degree her own students did. “I love the agency of getting to choose what I’m going to take and learn and do, and students feel the same exact way.”

Agency surfaced as a central theme throughout this study. It was found that participants desired an agentic environment, where they were given more control over what they learned. The district’s current offering of lecture-style classes disappointed participants, and caused them to disengage from the learning process. I found that the teacher-participants would enjoy having more input regarding the design of district PD courses. Teachers value opportunities to express their agency and study relevant topics. Since administrators play a significant role in influencing teacher’s perceptions of PD (Bayar, 2013), they could use this

influence to promote a more agentic learning environment by encouraging teachers to pursue personal learning goals.

Risk Taking in the Classroom

As individuals pursue personal learning goals, there is some degree of risk involved. These self-directed learning tasks—and the manner in which they are accomplished—are unique to the individual, so outcomes are not pre-determined. Many people associate risk taking with danger, but taking risks can simply mean doing something outside their 'comfort zone' (Lupton and Tulloch, 2002, p. 117).

Risk taking can also have a myriad of positive benefits. Risk taking requires an individual to try new challenges that may initially be uncomfortable. It compels one to discover "how far they feel they can push themselves, how well they can conquer their emotions of fear and feelings of vulnerability" (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 122). Although lecture-style PD classes may feel comfortable and safe, it has been found that PD is most successful when teachers are exposed to actual practice, rather than only given descriptions of practice (Elmore & Burney, 1999; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007; Garet et al, 2001). When teachers are encouraged to try a new skill, they learn more than when they simply watch someone else demonstrate the technique.

The participant teachers were willing to take risks and try new techniques within their classrooms, despite the initial fear of failure. Don pointed out that risk taking could be daunting, because teachers worry about how their methods will be perceived by administrators. He related his initial hesitation regarding risk taking in the classroom, "You're afraid a little bit that if [administrators] come in and see you're singing a song, or telling a story, or having a good time with the kids, they would mark you down." Don feared

that administrators might disapprove because "they think, 'No, that's not part of the little checkmark boxes that I have to check.'"

Heather admitted, "It was scary to go out on a limb and say, 'Yeah, I'm going to try this.'" Taking risks, though intimidating, proved worthwhile for Heather, as it led to professional growth and teaching success. Heather found the courage to take risks by researching and studying current educational methodologies. She explained, "I started to really look into the research. I did my Master's degree in reading and math. I started to develop my confidence." As Heather studied to gain a deeper understanding of the content, she obtained the knowledge necessary to take *informed* risks, leading to greater confidence and success in the classroom. She realized, "Hey, this is working."

Sally also researched new techniques she could implement in her classroom. After studying other successful programs, she was able to create one to fit her own teaching needs. She described the process,

> When I started book clubs, I read several books on how other people have done it. Then I thought about my time frame, the time I have in my class, the resources I had, then started creating it to fit what I could do.

Sally noted that it took a lot of experimentation, conceding that "some [techniques worked] and some didn't. I didn't get too hung up on the ones that didn't." Sally accepted the occasional failure as part of the learning and growing process.

As Sally reflected on how she's grown as a professional teacher, she mused, "Maybe what's changed is me being more of a risk-taker." As Sally matured as an educator, she became more willing to take informed risks that could potentially benefit her students.

Tina also believed in taking risks and developing her own way of teaching. She met the district's requirements, but approached tasks in a more non-traditional way. She emphatically stated, "I'm not afraid to say, 'I'm not going to do it that way, I don't think it's best for the students.'" Tina was willing to take risks and think outside the box to offer the best possible experience to her students. She rationalized her choices by saying, "I want to stay fresh. If I ever feel like all I have to do is pull out the folder, and do the same thing I did the year before, I don't think I'd be a good teacher."

The teachers who engaged in informed risk taking behaviors were able to discover unique solutions to classroom problems and experience professional growth. As Lupton and Tulloch (2002) stated, risk taking is "an opportunity for individuals to display courage, to master fear, and to prove something to themselves which allows them to live life with a sense of personal agency" (p. 122). Other benefits the teachers experienced included increased confidence and greater classroom success.

Risk Taking in District PD

The participants noted how risk taking led to their professional growth and translated to success in the classroom. I was curious whether this type of risk taking was being encouraged in district PD. Instead, participants described lecture-style PD classes that required little risk or involvement from the participants. Heather speculated that PD instructors chose to lecture because it felt safe and comfortable. She explained,

> I think it's easy to get up and just say what you know, and not really care what participants have to offer and what they can bring. It's safe, I guess, because if you allow them to drive the discussion and ask questions that you might not know the answer to, that's risky.

Heather acknowledged that there would be risk involved for instructors to leave their comfort zones. To do so would require instructors to "conquer their emotions of fear and feelings of vulnerability" (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 122). Heather conceded, "I think it's everybody's comfort level to get up there and not take risks… to not let anybody contradict you or ask any questions, that's the most comfortable."

PD instructors chose to lecture because they were uncomfortable taking risks. Jack noted that the district seemed hesitant to branch out, stating, "Historically, [PD classes] are always taught by the same few people, and in this school district the people who seem to get these kind of opportunities aren't necessarily the most effective teachers." The resulting classes "weren't always well-planned out." Jack resorted to seeking out other forms of professional development.

Jack was concerned by the predictable manner in which the material was presented. Administrators were accustomed to employing familiar instructors, who in turn relied on comfortable routines. Because instructors weren't willing to take risks and try a fresh approach to PD, Jack found the classes tedious.

Conversely, when administrators expressed support for risk taking, teachers felt empowered. Heather expressed her appreciation for administrators who promote risk taking. "I was very grateful for the principal my first year who said, 'Yeah, do it, try it.'" Heather remembered, "That was something that was really helpful for me, to have someone really trust me my first year."

It became clear that participants not only wanted the agency to make choices, they also believed in the importance of taking risks that could lead to positive learning outcomes. The teachers realized that while risk taking is initially uncomfortable, informed risk taking

led to professional growth and encouraged creative problem solving. As administrators encourage teachers and instructors to take risks and move beyond the safety of their comfort zones, PD participants could experience enhanced learning, increased teaching confidence, and greater professional success (Bayar, 2013).

Peer Collaboration in the Classroom

In addition to their enthusiasm for risk taking, the participants all expressed an appreciation for the advantages of peer collaboration. Teachers strongly preferred providing collaborative learning experiences over presenting lecture-style lessons. Knight and Wood (2005) state, "…students had higher learning gains in an interactive environment than in a traditional environment…" (p. 304). Participants found that interactive classroom collaboration increased student confidence while establishing a positive sense of community.

Heather explained why a more traditional lecture-style classroom didn't work well for her students. She explained, "It's impersonal. They're just sitting there feeling like I'm talking at them. I'm having them answer [questions], but they're not connected." Heather saw students disengage when lecturing replaced agency within the classroom. When students were permitted to share and explore their ideas, to truly become influential participants, the lessons became relevant and meaningful.

Heather believed her students also found meaning and developed confidence by collaborating with each other. When students expressed their agency by learning from and teaching their peers, their understanding of the material increased, and they become a true community of learners as defined by Wenger (2000). Heather provided an account of what collaboration looks like in her classroom: "They're talking, and they're helping each other, and they're reviewing things, saying, 'No, that's not right, fix that, do this, do that.'" One

benefit Heather noted was the development of positive peer relationships. She elaborated, "They're confident to walk up to their partner and say, 'I didn't get that, help me out,' instead of trying to hide that they didn't understand." As Heather's students were given the opportunity to collaborate and teach each other, they formed a support network that increased morale and aided learning. The embarrassment of not "getting it" was replaced by acceptance that promoted self-confidence.

Jack also made peer collaboration a priority in his classroom, stating that his students "collaborate all day, every day." Jack claimed that teamwork and a student-led teaching approach fostered a healthy learning environment. As he put it, "The best ideas are ones that come through collaboration, that are bounced off of others and receive healthy critique." Jack discovered what Armbruster, Patel, Johnson, and Weiss, (2009) found, "Student-centered pedagogy and interactive-learning activities increase student performance" (p. 211).

Jack built his classroom community around collaboration, creating "an environment where [students] feel safe." He specified that, "We're about togetherness, and us, and collaboration, and sharing ideas, and talking."

Discussion and peer collaboration also played an integral role in Sally's classroom. She related how one of her students described the importance of teamwork in their class, defining teamwork as "seeing whether others' views have purpose or any value, and then to either accept it or find another way so that everyone in your group will agree, as part of the team." Sally strived to create an environment where that type of collaborative teamwork was practiced. Sally echoed Jack's sentiment that the best work often emerges when students express agency and solve problems together.

Sophia was also an advocate of peer learning and collaboration. She developed lessons that encouraged students to collaborate to find solutions to problems. One such lesson was called “We the People:”

> Rather than taking a paper test, the students create a group and form a government. They tell me what they’re going to do with Freedonia, a pretend country. I ask, “Why did you choose unitary over federal? Why do you like the unitary government?” And that’s their assessment.

During this process, Sophia’s students encountered problems while forming their governments. They learned to share ideas and collaborate to achieve a common goal. They were not told how to solve the problems they faced, but explored and discovered solutions that reflected their own beliefs and ideas.

Sally also tried to avoid the traditional lecture-style of presenting information. Instead, she facilitated classroom discussion, allowing students to achieve a deeper comprehension of the material. Students had the agency to choose a research topic within their group, and then present their findings as a team. She found that “the discussion that was facilitated went beyond the students’ instruction.” As Sally’s students employed the concepts of teamwork and collaboration, they discovered ideas and initiated discussions that went beyond the basic instruction Sally had planned.

Like Sally, Tina discovered that her students had a more meaningful learning experience when they were permitted to teach each other. She said, “I do more of letting them be the teachers, letting them explore, then share with the community what they’ve learned.” She noted, “The class listens much better to each other than they do to me!”

The participants achieved positive results when they opted for collaborative classrooms in lieu of lecture-style lessons. Bonwell and Sutherland (1996) found, "Students are simply more likely to internalize, understand, and remember material learned through active engagement in the learning process. Thus, the evidence clearly suggests the need for a change from the lecture that is so common" (pp. 3-4).

Peer Collaboration in District PD

Since teachers experienced success with collaboration in their own classrooms, they also recognized it was an important facet of quality PD. Learning from colleagues in the field of education is a valuable experience, and teachers would benefit from collaborative opportunities with peers and experts (Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet, 2000).

Don extolled the advantages of peer-to-peer learning. He acknowledged that teachers often learn best from each other. He described a defunct PD program called "Teachers Visiting Teachers:"

> A few years ago we had an opportunity to do a program called "Teachers Visiting Teachers" and I really liked that. I'd go into another teacher's classroom. I'd take the opportunity to observe them and see what they did. I'd go, "I like that, I like the way they presented that situation or that concept," or, "That is how they did it." Then I'd try to build on what I saw and refer to it and mimic or copy what they did. I really liked that.

Don realized that peer collaboration was an effective way for educators to share ideas and improve their teaching skills. Unfortunately, the "Teachers Visiting Teachers" program is no longer operational.

The participants also found that collaboration established a positive sense of community within the classroom. Borko (2004) emphasized that "strong professional communities can foster teacher learning and instructional improvement" (p. 12). Collaborative classrooms allow participants to both learn and teach, while exploring concepts and forming opinions and ideas.

Jack wished that the district's current PD offerings focused more on teacher involvement and collaboration. He envisioned classes where fellow educators could swap ideas and share solutions, rather than "going to some random class where they just talk about stuff." He suggested that "teachers sharing with each other would be the best part."

Like Heather, Jack, and Don, Sophia claimed that collaborative opportunities would provide a more relevant PD experience, stating that, "we can learn the most from each other within our subjects." Sophia desired more time to collaborate with other educators who teach the same subject. She alleged, "[We can] cooperate and share information and make each other better teachers. Give each other ideas. I can say the best ideas I've got are from other teachers in my subject."

Tina, like the others, identified collaboration as a possible solution for achieving effective PD learning. She wanted more time with her teaching peers. She explained, "They are the professionals I deal with, and I'd love to be on the same page with them regarding teaching." Tina also expressed an interest in furthering collaboration opportunities between teachers and administrators. She said, "It would have been nice to have those discussions and give feedback. Whether we helped with the decision or not, it would have been nice to feel like our voices were heard."

The participants saw peer collaboration as an asset. They were enthusiastic about the benefits of collaboration in their own classrooms, and yearned for more collaborative opportunities with their colleagues. It was found that collaboration increased self-confidence and established a positive sense of community. Many studies have shown that opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and experts are important when attempting to design professional development programs (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Elmore & Burney, 1999; Garet et al, 2001; Borko, 2004; Penuel et al., 2007,). As teachers are provided with opportunities for collaboration, they develop supportive, productive relationships with their peers and become part of a community of learners.

Establishing Relationships and Understanding Learner Needs in the Classroom

The participants noted the benefits of creating collaborative relationships with their colleagues. They saw a similar need for establishing positive relationships with their students. Pianta, Hamre, and Allen, (2012) posit that the “nature and quality of interactions between teachers and children are fundamental to understanding student engagement” (p. 381). As participants demonstrated respect for their students’ ideas, interests, and goals, the participants gained a deeper understanding of their students’ needs. As Sally put it, “I’ve always thought the key to teaching—I don’t care what you’re teaching—is relationships.”

Don tried to facilitate discussion and establish a positive rapport with his students. He explained, “Every day I try to have some interaction with the kids before I do any kind of, ‘By the way, now we’re going to do some math,’ or go into a lesson.” Don found that as he took the time to get to know his students, they were more willing to participate. “I try to create an environment where they feel free to ask whatever they want. Let’s interact, let’s ask questions, let’s figure things out, and let’s work together.” Don says his students have

responded positively to that approach, noting that "I usually get quite good feedback, and students usually enjoy coming to my class." As Don took the time to develop relationships with his students, he saw increased interaction and positive feedback from them.

Jack attributed a lot of his teaching success to the positive way he interacted with his students. Jack was able to develop a respectful classroom culture by listening to his students' ideas. He valued their input, and every student was allowed a voice. Jack said, "They don't begin to volunteer ideas, they don't begin to take charge of their education—call it choice, agency, whatever—until those opportunities are given to them and relationships are built." When Jack demonstrated respect for students' opinions and experiences, they began to volunteer ideas and take ownership of their education.

Jack treated his students like important team members. He said, "I try to help them develop a relationship with me, [so] they can make suggestions [and] we can talk about them in a democratic setting and adjust them and use them." Jack went on to explain why it is so important to make the effort to establish respectful relationships:

> Some teachers communicate things to their class that I'm not sure they realize they're communicating. They establish a relationship where they are clearly in charge and the students are lower than, and subservient to, the teacher. You can't establish that kind of relationship, even unconsciously, and then expect them to rise up and take hold.

Jack argued that the teacher's role should not be a dominant one. He maintained that "you have to see your role as a facilitator, and you have to see [the students] as equals."

Heather also saw the value of getting to know students as individuals. She found it helped her to assess student needs. “I’m able to actually see them for twenty minutes: do they really get it, or are they faking it?” She found that as she established personal relationships with her students, they became “more confident raising their hand, because they know I’m going to help them out.” Heather realized that spending one-on-one time with each student paid off, as students learned to trust their teacher.

As Heather met with her students, she discovered that each had unique needs. She realized there was no such thing as “one-size-fits-all” instruction. She accommodated individual learners by assessing their abilities and forming collaborative groups designed to give each student the particular support they needed. She affirmed, “It’s something that you have to constantly be on top of, and be assessing and watching. Students’ needs are always changing.” Because Heather had established relationships with her students, she was better able to assess individual learners’ abilities, then make adaptations to provide each student with the support they needed.

Tina also acknowledged that the needs of her students differed. She said, “Every year I have a different group of learners. Just like I’m changing, I should bring to them what they need, just like what I would want.” Tina was willing to adapt to address the particular needs of her students.

As teachers made an effort to establish positive relationships with their students, they developed an increased awareness of student needs, allowing them to create and modify lesson plans accordingly. The creation of positive relationships between teacher and student has also been linked to effective classroom management and student learning gains (Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green, & Hanna, 2010).

Establishing Relationships and Understanding Learner Needs in PD

The participants sought to develop positive relationships with their students by discovering their interests and allowing them to voice opinions. As teachers demonstrated concern for their students and valued them as individuals, teachers were better able to meet their students' needs. In light of these findings, I wanted to discover how teachers felt about the concept of establishing relationships in regards to district PD.

Participants expressed the belief that district personnel could gain a deeper understanding of teacher needs by establishing relationships with them, thereby allowing for the creation of more relevant PD content. Both Garet et al. (2001) and Penuel et al. (2007) described the importance of professional development classes coinciding with teachers' own professional development goals and their goals for student learning. This can only be accomplished if district administrators are aware of teacher goals.

When asked why the district didn't provide him with relevant PD classes, Don postulated that, "Maybe some of the people at the district level have been out of the classroom for so long that they don't know? I don't know if they get teachers' input on what they want, what they think would be important." Don thought it would be beneficial for PD course designers to spend time in the classroom, as this would allow them to assess teachers' needs and identify their goals. He speculated, "I don't know if it's because the district office is a little out of touch, maybe they don't get enough teacher input on, 'Here's what we want to learn. Here's what we think is really valuable.'"

Don thought administrators were out of touch because they had been out of the classroom for too long. Jack, too, expressed his desire for administration to show ongoing support by visiting teachers' classrooms to better discern their needs. "Get out of the office.

In ten years, I've never seen a curriculum director on the battleground, in the classroom." Jack indicated that administrators would be a welcome presence in his class. "[I'd like to have] my curriculum director in here observing and giving positive feedback where things were going really well, [and] sharing ideas of things that he or she saw in other visits." He summarized his feelings by saying, "It's hard to develop respect and trust in them when you don't have that relationship."

The involvement of follow up support has been proven beneficial and is a key aspect of quality professional development (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Elmore & Burney, 1999; Garet et al, 2001; Penuel et al. 2007). District PD could be improved if administrators established a relationship with teachers that provided ongoing support and feedback.

Another participant concern was that classes did not seem to be developed with the needs of individual teachers in mind. Don was disappointed when he was required to attend a class of no relevance to him. "I've seen the overhead projector class offered several times and I don't have one! I don't have experience prior to this, and you're teaching me something I'm not going to be able to go back and use."

Directors and instructors made no effort to address or utilize the experience or prior knowledge of the participants as suggested by Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012). Webster-Wright (2009) suggested that PD research switch from "how best to deliver programs to 'develop' professionals, to seeking insights from the authentic experience of professionals" (p. 723). By failing to recognize Don's previous knowledge, past experiences, and current needs, PD instructors alienated Don.

Similarly, Sophia hoped to be given the same type of differentiated instruction she offered her own students. She was frustrated that PD content was not applicable to her needs.

Sophia referred to an upcoming PD class, noting that the content was designed to help math teachers. She complained, “They’ll fill in everything else for the rest of us, so we can do something that isn’t as important, or doesn’t even apply to our subjects.”

Sophia longed for PD that she could apply to her own subject, but the PD content was irrelevant. Successful PD requires that learners be given examples of concrete classroom application (van den Akker, 1988; Elmore & Burney, 1999; Davis & Krajcik, 2005). Unfortunately, Sophia did not see how she could apply the material within her own classroom. She pointed out, “I have to be there, but it’s not going to supplement my teaching hardly at all.”

Tina was also concerned with whether the district understood her needs as a teacher. She asserted, “We really need to better assess the needs in our district. What do the teachers feel like they need?”

Understanding the professional development needs and goals of teachers is an important aspect of creating a successful professional development program (Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al, 2007). Teachers found that when they took the time to get to know their students as individuals, they were better able to assess learner needs. Participants pointed out that district administrators were in a similar position: when administrators were “out of touch” with teachers, they were unable to accurately assess PD needs. Administrators could rectify this problem by spending more time in teachers’ classrooms and working to establish sincere relationships with staff.

Discussion

Initially, I assumed that the six successful teacher-participants would all demonstrate the classic approach to teaching: they would impart information to their students via lecture,

then conclude the lesson with paperwork. After all, that's how they were being taught in district PD classes. Most of the participants did follow this format in the early days of their teaching careers. However, as they began to encounter obstacles in the classroom, they sought solutions not modeled by PD courses from external resources.

The knowledge gained through these resources gave participants the courage to try new techniques and take informed risks in the classroom. Over the years, the participants developed their own classroom structures and techniques. Although their specific methods vary, their teaching structures and techniques seem to share four core principles: agency, risk taking, collaboration, and relationship-building. A deeper investigation of those themes illuminated flaws in the district's current PD practices, and provided insight for the improvement of PD course design.

I discovered that the teachers had moved away from tightly controlled classrooms to a more agentic learning environment. The teachers admitted that it was scary at first, and they were uncomfortable stepping outside of their comfort zone. Sometimes they even failed, but they learned to see those failures as learning experiences, and were willing to try again with a different approach. Ultimately, risk taking paid off, as teachers were able to identify techniques that translated into student success.

Teachers found that students had the most growth when they were given the agency to choose what they learned, how they learned it, and how much time was needed to learn it. Worksheets, drills, and textbook questions were swapped for assignments created with the input of students. Lectures were replaced with discussion and peer-to-peer teaching. Teachers were able to determine the effectiveness of these methods by gauging student involvement, and listening as groups presented and discussed what they had learned. A further measure of

success was manifested by the students' eagerness to pursue additional knowledge of the topic, choosing to go beyond the scope of the original assignment.

As the teachers began to experience successes in the classroom, they were motivated to share what they had discovered and to learn more from other teachers' experiences. Each of the participants expressed a desire to share and collaborate with their colleagues. Furthermore, the participants wanted these collaborative opportunities to extend to engaging in open dialogue with administrators. The teachers voiced the belief that if administrators spent more time in the classroom and made the effort to establish sincere relationships with staff, they would have the necessary insight to accurately assess PD needs.

As I've gained a deeper, richer understanding of the lived PD experiences of teachers, I've come to believe the transition from novice teacher to master educator requires an agentic learning environment where teachers can make choices, take risks, and learn from each other. The district would have a greater likelihood of facilitating the change proposed by Guskey (2002, p. 381) if PD design focused on incorporating agency, informed risk taking, collaboration, and relationship building: the very methods the teacher-participants successfully employed in their own classrooms.

Implications for Practice

Teachers are eager to learn, and would embrace quality PD that presents useful information in a learner-directed manner. As Heather expressed, "I feel like the majority of teachers would love—truly would really love—to be taught something meaningful."

District PD could be improved by focusing on incorporating agency, informed risk taking, collaboration, and relationship building. Teachers described the successful implementation of agentic learning environments in their own classrooms, and expressed a

desire for district PD to include agency in its design. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) described the importance of agency in PD, stating, "For teachers to develop ownership of professional development, they need to be active participants in its construction, tailoring programs to their needs and motivations" (p. 11). By including the participants in the design of district PD, teachers will be more likely to experience change.

Transitioning classes from lecture-style lessons to hands-on experimentation could motivate teachers to take informed risks. Participants should be encouraged to step outside of their comfort zones and employ creative problem solving. The district would benefit from broadening the base of PD instructors, allowing more teachers the opportunity to share their knowledge by acting as facilitators.

Teachers would also like more time to collaborate with their colleagues. This could be achieved by creating smaller classes where instruction and collaboration happen simultaneously. Musanti and Pence (2010) advised, "Professional development needs to be conceived as a collaborative enterprise, where a space for learning through mutual exchange, dialogue, and constant challenge is created" (p. 87). As teachers are provided with opportunities to collaborate, PD becomes a positive force that challenges its participants to improve as professionals.

Finally, classes should be followed up with regular interaction between administration and teachers. This will aid in the development of positive relationships, and allow administrators to better assess teachers' needs and goals.

Professional development programs that provide relevant material and actively involve the learners could have double value with both content and modeling. Learners would be educated not only by what they *hear* while in a PD class, but by what they *do*. If

the district embraces the desired changes of its teacher-participants, they will likely see an increase in teacher satisfaction and learning. As Jack summarized,

> On a school level, on a team level, on a district level, we don't run education the way that it's run in an effective classroom. We know how to take a group of people and motivate them to come together, and instead of being horses pulling in every direction, to yoke up and pull together. Then they can accomplish amazing things. I think it's possible, because I've seen it year after year with children. If they can do it, so can adults in teams; and so can schools and districts.

As the district strives to adapt PD practices to fit the needs of its teachers, they will likely see increased engagement and enhanced learning from its participants.

Implications for Research

In addition to the information provided by this study, there are possibilities for additional research. Further studies could be conducted in other school districts to explore the recurrence of this study's themes. It would be enlightening to determine whether other teachers express common frustrations with their district's PD. Do teachers in other districts feel their needs are being addressed? Do they find PD content to be superficial? Is the desire for collaboration a common request? An analysis consisting of a wider pool of participants could provide a more comprehensive representation of teachers' desires, thus informing the development of productive PD programs.

Furthermore, there was an apparent contradiction between the methods teachers employed in their own classrooms, and how teachers presented material while instructing their peers during PD. It would be interesting to discover if this dual behavior is common, or

what factors motivated this shift. Gaining a deeper, richer understanding of this conduct could provide illumination on why professional development instruction is often sub-par, even though career teachers typically provide the instruction.

This study addressed adverse issues regarding one district's professional development program. It could be enlightening to study a school district where the majority of the teachers were pleased with their PD program. This could provide a model for creating a more successful framework for professional development curriculum.

Chapter 3: Expectations for Agency by Professional Development Learners

D. Joshua Wilson and Lee S. Barney

Abstract

This examined of the lived experiences of two distinct groups of adult learners. One group consisted of pre-professional undergraduate students, while the other was made up of practicing K-12 public school teachers. The study was conducted using a Secondary Qualitative Analysis approach. It combined two heterogeneous datasets from separate studies to determine if common themes expressed by participants would provide insight regarding their expectations for well-designed professional development courses.

The data consisted of self-reflective works generated by the undergraduates and interviews with teacher and undergraduate participants. Data analysis indicated that they desired agency, relationships, and a sense of belonging to a community. The analysis also indicated that participants thrive in agentic learning environments while seeking to experience meaningful, personal change and growth. It was also found that participants' experiences with agentic learning environments impacted their expectations for principles they might deem to be part of well-designed professional development courses. In particular, this study was intended to impact the practice of professional development course design at the university and public school district where the data were collected.

Keywords: community, agency, professional development

Expectations for Agency by Professional Development Learners

When my co-researcher and I sat down and examined the research each of us was doing, we found a distinct overlap in topics and the data we were collecting. Because of this overlap, we realized our data could be combined to create a heterogeneous dataset and reused as part of a Secondary Qualitative Analysis (SQA). The combined dataset created for this study included the data from Barney's study regarding students' experiences in an agentic course and Wilson's regarding K-12 public school teachers' professionalism changes due to professional development (PD).

SQA is a research procedure that reuses datasets to "pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work" (Heaton, 1998). It can also "be employed by researchers to re-use their own data" (Heaton, 1998). Applying SQA produced new information by examining our existing combined data from a new perspective. Care was taken to align with Hines, Vogel, and Clarke-Steffen's (1997, p.411) warning that the problem and questions for an SQA-based study must not duplicate the questions and problems of the underlying study or studies.

Through primary and secondary qualitative coding of the combined dataset, a strong theme of agency arose. Using this and other emergent themes as our basis, we decided to examine whether individuals' agentic learning experiences outside of PD generate expectations for additional agentic experiences in PD courses.

Statement of the Problem

PD courses for public school teachers consume large amounts of time, effort, and money (Milanowski & Odden, 2007, p. 6) and yet PD courses, according to some, generate small returns in regard to changed behaviors (Redwood, Winning, & Townsend, 2010). In

addition, productivity gain claims of current PD experiences are difficult to reliably measure (Guskey, 2000, p. 67). The lack of measurable growth and change in learners taking PD courses indicate a mismatch between learners' expectations for their PD course experiences and their experiences in PD courses they are taking. This expectations gap may be due to their life experiences creating an expectation of "transformation and positive change at an individual level" (Balmer, & Richards, 2012, p. 7).

Research Question

As we examined data available to us from our previous research, a question arose. How do adults' agentic learning experiences outside of PD courses impact what they expect from PD courses? Through further evaluation and exploration of this question it became apparent to us that we were asking two sub-questions. These were:

1. In what ways do agentic learning experiences outside of PD impact learner expectations for PD courses?
2. In what ways do PD learners' expectations impact what they might consider to be well-designed PD courses?

Purpose of the Study

We evaluated recorded lived experiences of groups of professional practitioners and pre-professional Computer Information Technology (CIT) students for the impact that agentic learning has on expectations for PD course experiences. The evaluation was used to determine if common themes expressed by the participants would identify principles they expect for well-designed PD courses. In particular, this study was to inform the practice of PD course design at the university and public school district where the data were collected.

Significance of the Study

By examining the lived-experiences of a heterogeneous set of practicing professionals and pre-professional adult learners, we discovered their expectations for PD experiences. Their expectations included principles of agency, collaboration, community, and others. In contrast to common PD experiences, PD course designs informed by the full suite of principles found as part of this study aid PD learners in "becoming professional" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 38). PD courses based on these principles could also generate, through increased productivity, measurable growth and job-specific changes in learners.

Limitations

SQA was described by Irwin and Winterton (2011) as the "(re)using of data produced on a previous occasion to glean new social scientific and/or methodological understandings" (p. 2). In qualitative research, data reuse "enables greater use to be made of qualitative data beyond the project which originally produced them" (p. 3). Since qualitative research is "labor intensive" (p. 3) and produces data not used in the original research's analysis (p. 3), SQA can yield new understanding from previous research projects' data. This understanding is "gained from acknowledging the legitimacy of multiple interpretations derived sensitively from the same data" (p. 16).

Using a predefined dataset meant that participants were not asked additional questions and additional participants would not be recruited. The adults who chose to participate in the underlying studies consisted of six K-12 teachers in a public school district and 21 students from a private, not for profit, large university. Both of these institutions were situated in the western United States.

Participants in each Study

The student participants were Computer Information Technology (CIT) majors, most of whom were United States citizens of Caucasian descent. Two students were sub-Saharan Africans, one was Malagasy, and one was Asian American. The median age of the participants was 25, 71% were married, and most were seniors.

The teacher participants were all United States citizens of Caucasian descent. Two were male and four were female. These six participants consisted of four elementary education teachers who taught grade level courses. One taught third-grade, two fourth-grade, and one fifth-grade. Also two secondary education teachers participated, one junior high math teacher and one high school political science teacher. The participants' teaching experience ranged between 5 and 25 years.

Delimitations

With the rich data already collected as part of the two underlying studies, we decided not to generate a new dataset and new data collection tools and processes. Since the studies were examining similar, though distinct, experiences, we decided that additional data collection was unnecessary and redundant.

By choosing to do an SQA, we acknowledged that there would be problems, questions, and understandings that would not become apparent to us had we chosen to do a new ethnography that included the two types of participants from our independent studies. This choice implies that further study and focus in this research area could yield additional and deeper understandings.

Theoretical Framework

Professional Development

PD programs are designed and delivered to help educators achieve their teaching potential and become masters at their craft. These programs are “systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). PD programs, such as those described by Guskey, can provide education professionals with opportunities to experience “transformation and positive change at an individual level” (Balmer, & Richards, 2012, p. 7).

Professional development is seen as “essential” (Borko, 2004, p. 3) to education reform. Unfortunately, PD opportunities may be unequal to the needs of teachers as suggested by Ball and Cohen (1999), who concluded that most PD was “often intellectually superficial, disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning, fragmented, and noncumulative” (p. 3-4).

Diaz-Maggioli (2004) described how administrators tend to take a “one-size-fits-all” (p. 2) approach and place all participants into the same learning groups, regardless of experience, subject, or grade-level. This standardized type of PD assumes all teachers perform at the same level, and doesn’t account for varied backgrounds and philosophies. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) explained that current professional development practices are generally constricted because they tend to be “top-down” rather than part of a “collaborative decision-making” (p. 2) process that includes the teacher-learners. This limits the teachers’ ability to choose what they learn, which leads to a “lack of ownership” (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 2) of the learning experience. Teachers have little investment in PD courses created without their input, so changes to teachers’ knowledge and capabilities may not occur.

Wilson and Berne (1999) noted, “Teachers need to own and control their professional development” (p. 176). Unfortunately, the educational hierarchy, administrators, and other educational decision-makers tend to make choices that reinforce the system’s continuation of “the status quo” (Fullan, 1993, p. 3) rather than cede control of PD to teachers. This may be because administrators don’t trust teachers’ decision-making skills or because of requirements placed on administrators by regulatory and other agencies. Therefore administrators may mandate what is to be learned in PD courses. In order to combat this “top-down” (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 2) mandated approach to PD, Fullan suggests teachers become “agents of change” (1993, p. 12) by exercising their agency to implement new practices.

Agency

Bruner (1996) defined agency as “taking more control of your own mental activity.” (p. 87). He also described selfhood as being derived “from the sense that one can initiate and carry out activities on one’s own” (p. 35). This second statement by Bruner reflects Bandura’s exploration of self-efficacy and agency (Bandura, 1989). Within this analysis, Bandura explained that nothing is more important to agency than a person’s belief that they can “exercise control over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175).

Human societies are linked with agency according to Ballet, Dubois, and Mahieu (2007). They claimed, “When, through commitment and social interactions, personal responsibility is introduced, it leads to a strong version of agency” (p. 198). They also expanded on strong agency by asserting it occurs when personal responsibility is expressed in such a way as to self-limit the exercise of agency via self-restraint. Ballet, et al. further maintained that this self-restrained expression of agency leads to a “collective capability” (p.

199) in an organization or society. Building capability among a society of learners and educators is one of the fundamental purposes of PD.

Community and Belonging

Agency does not operate in a vacuum. Barnett (2013) described the social dimension within which agency is functional by insisting that community and connectedness are required for adult learning. She incorporated agency with learning and explained, “It was only after I was part of a social community that my life as an adult learner felt complete” (p. 77). She aligned the belongingness component of Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs to her becoming part of something larger than herself—a community. According to Moores-Abdool & Voigt (2007), as Barnett became “grounded in community” she then experienced self-worth since “self-worth can arise only” (p. 70) from such social situations.

Social interactions and the feeling of belonging are important to adults. Duvendra and Kumar (2013) claimed, “Social contacts at the workplace are very important for employees” (p. 22). These contacts are so important that Linder (1998) found “being in on things,” a feeling that can be associated with social contacts, interactions, and a reflection of belongingness, was ranked as the seventh most important factor for employee motivation. The social aspects of the professional environment are important to self-driven changes instigated by professionals. This is in opposition to the top-down, disconnected experiences previously described as problematic in the professional development section.

Becoming Professional

A combination of the self-driven changes instigated by professionals is described as “becoming professional” by Dall’Alba (2009, p. 38). These changes follow Heidegger’s (2010) ideas regarding the ontological “being” and Kierkegaard’s (Carlisle, 2005) ideas

about repetition. Dall'Alba (2009) stated that there are "professional ways of being" (p. 43). These ways of being are described as ongoing and unending; a Kierkegaardian repetition. To become professional in this sense includes changing oneself to be professional with an appropriate set of attitudes and outlooks on life and work. This emphasis on changing oneself is beyond the knowledge and skills traditionally provided by PD programs as can be seen in Diaz-Maggioli's (2004) and Ball and Cohen's (1999) critiques of common PD practice.

Dall'Alba (2009) concluded that individuals should be allowed and encouraged, through PD programs, "to integrate their ways of knowing, acting and being professionals" (p. 44). She also stated that such should and can be done without sacrificing the traditional epistemological focus. Dall'Alba's "becoming professional" appears to encourage the development of both hard and soft skills. Because of this, becoming professional appears to be outside the scope of pedagogically designed PD courses as explained in the next section.

Pedagogy

Understanding the links among and differences between pedagogy and andragogy places PD programs in context of a larger picture. Knowles (1970) described how the monastic schools of Europe between the seventh and twelfth centuries employed a type of learning that was based on the "art and science of teaching children" (p. 40). He referred to this as pedagogy and claimed it was based on the assumption of the learner in a submissive role (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2013, p. 60)—the attitude of tabula rasa, or blank slate. Within a pedagogical classroom, the teacher is ultimately responsible for the education of the learner (p. 60).

Wiles (1952) described this type of teaching.

> Teaching consists of organizing knowledge into some pattern, of presenting the facts and generalizations in a clear, easily understood fashion, of testing to determine the amount of information acquired, and of marking the pupil's attainment. (p. 11)

In the pedagogical teaching described by Wiles, knowledge the student brings to the classroom is of little or no use since the teacher is responsible for "presenting the facts and generalizations" (p.11) that are intended, by the teacher, to be learned. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2013) state "the pedagogical model assigns to the teacher full responsibility for making all decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, when it will be learned, and if it has been learned" (p. 60). In this teaching model, the student is dependent on the teacher. Those who espouse pedagogy assume that the best way for the learner to acquire knowledge is to gain it through the prescribed medium the instructor has prepared. Pedagogical learning therefore is a process of acquiring subject matter knowledge.

When adult education became a focus of researchers in the 1920s, instructors were concerned about the consequences of using pedagogy to teach adult learners (Knowles, 1970, p. 40). Adults were resistant to the teaching styles of the child-centered methodologies. Teachers found adult students were not engaged in the assigned lectures, quizzes, drills, and examinations (p. 40). Pedagogy, as described here, has been the authors' general experience with PD in our varying professional situations. Because PD programs are designed to provide material and motivation for adult professionals, it seems a more adult friendly approach would produce better results.

Researchers and instructors experimented with different assumptions about how adults learn. The term Andragogy was coined as a label for their discoveries. Knowles (1970) found that rather than being dependent on a teacher to acquire knowledge of the world, adult learners have "a deep psychological need to be generally self-directing" (p. 43).

Andragogy

One of the main differences Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2013) identified between pedagogy and adult expectations of learning is, "Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experiences from that of youths" (p. 64). Through their lived experiences, adults gain a reservoir of knowledge that can be used to continue learning.

Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2013, pp. 63-67) provide six assumptions about how, and why, adults learn.

- Adults are aware of their need for knowledge. As adults become aware that they are lacking vital information or useful skills, they become motivated to seek after knowledge.
- Adults wish to be self-directing, and to be seen as responsible and capable individuals. Adults resist learning situations where they are expected to be entirely dependent on the teacher. When adult learners are placed in this child-like position, it creates inner conflict.
- Adults have obtained a great deal of life experience, and these experiences vary among individuals. Adults want their experiences to be recognized and valued. Teaching methods that permit peer-to-peer learning and individualized learning strategies are desirable, as they reinforce the learner's self-identity.

- Adults are inclined to learn when the need for learning arises. As they gradually master basic skills, they become developmentally ready to accept more difficult learning challenges.
- Adults are motivated to learn when the perception is that the knowledge will be applicable to and useful in their daily lives. Learning is optimized when connections are made to real-life situations.
- Adults are driven to learn because of both external and internal motivations. External motivators include employment or salary raises, while internal motivators include quality of life and personal satisfaction.

These assumptions lend themselves to a teaching approach that honors the agency of learners who are a part of a community of practice. The assumptions also provided a springboard for yet another way to approach adult teaching and learning. While holding to many of the assumptions of andragogy, social scientists Stewart Hase and Chris Kenyon (2001) expanded the theory of andragogy and assumed that adults move beyond self-directed learners to becoming self-determined learners. The term coined for this theory is heutagogy.

Heutagogy

As pedagogy is the art and science of teaching children, and andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults, heutagogy is the "study of self-determined learning" (Hase and Kenyan, 2001, p. 2). Hase and Kenyan identified the learner as someone willing to change, based on a clear need to change. A teacher may think that he or she can "control the learning experience," but they are limited to "the transfer of knowledge and skills" (Hase & Kenyan, 2007, pp. 112-113). A heutagogical approach recognizes that while a teacher can provide resources, the learner is responsible for his or her own intellectual growth. The instructor

gives support while "fully relinquishing ownership of the learning path and process to the learner" (Blaschke, 2012, p. 59). It is the learner who determines what is to be learned, and how it is to be learned.

Kenyon and Hase (2001) supported this method when they claimed teachers "should concern [themselves] with developing the learner's capability not … embedding discipline based skills and knowledge" (p. 4). Heutagogical learning is a practical and effective method of preparation for real-life situations, which makes sense for working professionals who return from PD courses to real-time, real-life work experiences. Blaschke (2012) explained why heutagogy is a more beneficial approach than pedagogy or andragogy:

> "Pedagogical, even andragogical, educational methods are no longer fully sufficient in preparing learners for thriving in the workplace, and a more self-directed and self-determined approach is needed, one in which the learner reflects upon what is learned and how it is learned and in which educators teach learners how to teach themselves." (p. 57)

Learning, for a heutagogist, is defined as "an integrative experience where a change in behavior, knowledge, or understanding is incorporated into the person's existing repertoire of behavior and schema (values, attitudes and beliefs)" (Hase & Kenyan, 2007, p. 112). Self-determined learning is more than an accumulation of facts; it is a process of deep change. Knowledge is not shelved for later reference, but is acted upon.

In self-determined learning, learners must not only acquire knowledge, but also know how and when to apply it. They must be both competent and capable. Blaschke (2012) defines competency as the "proven ability in acquiring knowledge and skills," and capability as "learner confidence in his or her competency" (p. 59). Competent individuals demonstrate

the ability to acquire skills and knowledge; they are capable when they are able to apply the skill or knowledge in unfamiliar situations.

The Study Design

The research for this study consisted of a secondary qualitative analysis (SQA) of data from two independent qualitative studies. In the first study, adult learners reflected on their experiences with PD courses. The second study used data derived from undergraduates' lived-experiences with learning in an agentic, community environment.

SQA is a qualitative research procedure that reuses datasets to "pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work" (Heaton, 1998). It can also "be employed by researchers to re-use their own data" (Heaton, 1998). SQA is different from systematic reviews or meta-analysis of existing qualitative studies. Instead of being an effort to "compile and assess the evidence relating to a common concern or area of practice" (Popay, Rogers, & Williams, 1998), SQA seeks new understandings from existing data from constituent studies.

Hinds, Vogel, and Clarke-Steffen (1997) described four types of SQA studies they found as they examined published qualitative studies and claimed "all four approaches result in useful findings" (p. 411). The first study type they discussed was to view an existing dataset from a new frame of reference or perspective. Here researchers ask a new question, related or unrelated to the original study's question, and new understanding is developed (p. 409).

The second type of SQA is to use a subset of the initial data and more deeply focus on the purpose of the original study (Hinds, et. al., 1997, pp. 409-410). The selection of the data subset is based on characteristics of the data or participants that enable a common

description. An example of such a characteristic may be the examination of the lived-experiences of female participants when the initial study included all genders.

The third type of SQA described by Hinds, et al. (1997) is “to reanalyze all or part of a data set by focusing on a concept that seemed to be present but was not specifically addressed in the primary analysis” (p. 410). These emergent concepts are explorable in a new study since they were not part of the original study.

An emergent study is the fourth type described by Hinds, et al. (1997, p. 410). They describe this approach as using a preexisting data source to aid in defining “the study purpose, questions, and data collection processes” of a new study. In this case, observations of interest in one study inform the production of another.

Our study is a merger of SQA study types one and three. Being aware of each other’s research and the data being collected, it appeared to us that there were concepts or themes existed in both studies that were not being explored. Therefore, we decided to create a set of data that included the datasets from both studies to enable exploration.

Data Collection and Analysis

The merged dataset consisted of self-reflective artifacts produced by 21 undergraduate students, transcriptions of interviews with six of these students, and transcriptions of interviews with six public school teachers who had been deemed successful by their peers.

The student-produced artifacts, written reports, paintings, drawings, audio recordings, and oral descriptions were the result of a class assignment where the students were to reflect on “How I Have Changed” over the semester as they experienced a software development course. This course was designed to give space for student expression of agency and allow

community to develop in small groups and as a class. As source material for the student self-reflections each student was asked to keep a learning journal throughout the semester. Their reflective journal reports, the student-produced artifacts mentioned above, were collected as the concluding assignment for the course.

For the student interviews, participants were purposefully selected to span gender, ethnicity, and, based on the grade they received, those who did and did not do well in the course. The interviews focused on student experiences of agency and learning during the class. The interviews with the public school teachers focused on the design and implementation of the courses they teach, how much space their course designs create for the expression of agency by their students, risks that they have taken in their careers, their experiences of being a consumer of PD courses, and their desires for how PD courses should be run. Both the student and teacher interviews were arranged to be at a time and place that was convenient for each participant. Recordings and transcriptions were made of these interviews.

By combining the two data sets, a richer and more diverse set of adult experiences was available for study. Primary and secondary coding was done on the combined dataset to identify themes related to expressions of agency, community, relationships, and expectations for learning experiences. The researcher for each study did the primary recoding of the research data from their study. Once this recoding had been completed, we came together, discussed the codes, and began a new secondary coding process by combining the primary codes from each study into one dataset. Once the new dataset was complete, we created groupings of the primary codes by thematic association and descriptive codes for each grouping. This coding process aided us in gaining a deep, rich, thematic understanding of the

participant's lived-experiences. Student lived-experiences are presented here using pseudonyms to identify their gender.

To ensure accuracy and triangulation, we performed a member check. The understanding of the data found in the next section was presented to the participants and they were told which pseudonym represented them. The quoted participants were asked to comment on the quotations and understandings generated by us from their lived-experiences. All of the quoted participants stated that our understandings correctly represented their experiences and desires.

An examination of student agentic learning experiences in the classroom and how they impacted the students' expectations for future professional learning is informative. When this understanding is combined with teachers' stories that include both the way they use agency in their courses and their experiences of PD, adult expectations for PD courses emerge. Student lived-experiences will be examined first followed by an examination of the lived-experiences of the teachers.

Agentic Learning Experiences and Changed Expectations

The students were part of a class designed around student expressions of agency, working as communities of learners, and encouraging "becoming professional" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 38). The students expressed their agency by forming self-assembled teams and each team then proceeded to explore their own ideas of how they could use a series of technologies and ideas to create software applications. After finding an idea for an application they wanted to create rather than one the teacher wanted them to create, each team decided how and when to learn about the technologies. The course was designed to promote development of relationships between team members and between teams as

participants expressed their agency by helping each other learn the technologies they needed to use to create the software they had decided upon.

The students experiencing this course changed their expectations of themselves, of the utility of teams when working and learning, and their expectations for future PD learning experiences. These changes are a reflection of how these students were becoming professional. Through agentic community interactions they learned "professional ways of being…through integration of knowing, acting and being the professionals in question" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 43).

Sean knew, acted, and was professional. He said, "When I discussed ideas with my team and tried to apply them to our project, we created new ideas." By choosing to be the professional he wanted to become, he and his teams' creativity bloomed and they learned from that creativity. Sean explained that he had not had this view of agency and professional learning before this experience. He experienced a change.

Stan experienced a change in his level of professionalism by using his agency to build and maintain community relationships. He contrasted this with how he had done group work in courses he had previously taken.

> This group was different [from] any other groups that I have been in…. I couldn't just sit back and quietly complete my portion of the project. I needed to get involved and voice my ideas and my concerns…. I really enjoyed the group that I had.

Stan described how he expressed his agency by sharing his ideas. He found that he could no longer "sit back" but needed to "get involved" with his peers and ended up enjoying the learning experience.

James told how, at the beginning of the class, he feared work after graduation. He expressed his agency during the class by changing his expectations of himself. He said:

> I have a job lined up for after graduation. I know that I am going to have to work with people. This was something that I feared. I was even hoping to receive a different job offer, but … that didn't happen. However, after taking this class I feel I am ready to work with a team and to be successful with that team.

James' movement from fear of working as part of a community to feeling that he was ready to do so was the result of recognizing his weakness and expressing his agency. He did this by choosing to accept and make deep changes in his view of what he needed to be in order to become, as he pointed out, valuable and successful.

William, in an interview, explained how students used agency to develop relationships with the teacher. "When you ask a question; [the teacher] teaches you what you don't know … about [the student proposed] solution … and [then] teaches you a better solution. That was good."

Using their agency, students would ask non-trivial questions when they had a need for knowledge (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2013, p. 39). These questions then produced a learning experience beyond that expected by the learner. By asking questions about solutions to problems his team was facing and proposing a potential solution based on the team's previous experience, Dan and his team could have a learning experience that expanded their perspective and allowed them to arrive at a solution they had not considered or known about.

Graham also found a need to express his agency. He communicated how important acting rather than waiting to be acted upon became to him. He described what he discovered

about expressing his agency by acting in the face of the unknown. Graham did this by telling a story about himself in the third person. He expressed how he initially felt unprepared and anxious.

> It wasn't the first time that Graham had felt ill prepared for a new adventure…. The obstacles were clear enough, but there were no signs or footprints to point the way others had gone. It was not even apparent there had been others…. He began to wonder, “Where do I start?”
>
> It turned out that starting was the answer…. As he moved forward, the path behind became clear, which made it easier to see the way ahead. Before long, what once was an endless ocean of cataclysmic chaos had become ordered and understandable…. He had found it difficult to walk into darkness, when there was no light in view beyond the entrance. This was his folly. He was so busy looking for the end of the tunnel that he failed to see the lightning bugs along the way.

In a conversation with Barney, Graham also mentioned William as a major factor in the changes he made in himself and his perspective of what was meant by becoming professional (Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 38). When asked why other students mentioned him as having an impact on how they had changed, William explained, “Maybe it was because I was willing to teach … to share my experience with others. Most of the time when I learn something new I get really excited. I just want to go out there and share.” William, through his excitement, expressed his agency and chose to teach others. He helped Diego understand why “it is important to learn everything” they could rather than wait to be told what to learn.

Diego was willing to listen to William; they were on the same team, had developed a relationship of trust, and Diego changed his expectation for his future professional learning.

Julie struggled to find a community in which she felt appreciated and comfortable. "My group didn't listen to my ideas and everything I did was wrong." Halfway through the semester she expressed her agency and switched teams.

This was not easy for Julie. She explained, "Any change in life is scary for me. So finding a new team made me a little nervous." Yet after finding a compatible community she felt more complete. "I was finally happy in class…. The group communicated about what we were doing and wanted to do. We worked on things together. I also discovered that I did have things to contribute to my new team."

Julie expressed her agency. She selected a new team to join and integrated herself in the new community. She found an opportunity to voice her opinions, learn new ideas, and teach other students. She felt these opportunities had been lacking in her previous team. Alex had a learning experience regarding teams. He found that he could express his agency by helping rather than competing.

> As a student at the beginning of the semester I felt [that learning] was a competition. The more I know, the better I can be ahead of the next guy, but that's not the case as a student. The more I know, the more I'm able to help other people understand. The more I know [the more] I can help my team grow and we can create amazing products.

By using his agency to build community in both his team and the class, Alex found an increased self-efficacy and arrived at a professional outlook on learning. He discovered that helping could fulfill him in ways that competition could not.

Carl took the class with two of his friends. The three of them formed a team though all three disliked the topic of this required course.

> [Being on a team with them] was the biggest mistake, and the best thing that I did this semester. It was a mistake because we were too complacent. This led to us sputtering around for a few weeks, which of course led to what I like to call the great chastisement. To come clean, I completely and fully understand why [the teacher] did it. I know he did it with much love, and a desire for us, as students, to succeed. This talk led us three to truly reflect on what was going on and get our act together.

At the beginning of the course, Carl's team failed to engage with the material. After "a few weeks" of observation, the teacher intervened. This intervention allowed Carl and his team to express their agency in a positive way. As a team, they reflected on what they wanted to get out of the class. Carl explained they, as a community, were then able to use their agency more productively and "mold this course into what we wanted it to be."

Blake exercised his agency when he chose to give up his desire to plan and create an application based on his idea. Instead, he chose to agree to create an application proposed by another member of his group. "I'm not a big fan of baseball, but I agreed to Craig's idea for a baseball app." This decision was hard for Blake because he "knew nothing about baseball." He and Dylan, another of his teammates, chose to sacrifice what they thought might be in their best interest to the interest of their team; an attribute important to professional learning and development.

Gary used his agency to gather ideas that were generated by other teams and the classroom community.

> When Joe explained new ideas or wanted to share things he had learned with me, I was glad to learn those things from him. I wanted to learn as much as possible from him and other students in class. However, I did not want to accept their ideas as "best solutions". In other words, I wanted to compare those ideas with those I found from other resources. It was not because I did not trust them, but because I wanted to verify the ideas.

By exercising his agency through exploration, Gary was able to evaluate others ideas and accept them when applicable. When he found or had a better idea he could share it with his team and the class.

Jill, a teammate of Carl, expressed appreciation for an agentic learning experience. She appreciated guidance not direction, a place to turn to for advice, and an opportunity to make the learning her own. "[The class gave us a] chance to experience learning…. We did have guidance … but what we got from it and how we learned it, was completely our own. I think that's what learning is all about."

She was happy not to be "dependent on others to teach me what *they* think I need to know" (emphasis in the original). She changed her expectations for future learning.

Dan's teaching and learning experience expectations changed dramatically due to his agentic learning experience.

> I had always just thought the teacher would stand up there and tell us what he knew about a subject hoping we would retain it…. By allowing us to teach each other and to direct how we navigated the course and what we would take from it, I was able to learn more.

Dan no longer expected to passively absorb information. Instead, he learned that expressing his agency by “navigating the course” in the way he wanted and choosing to teach other learners improved his learning experience. William, like Dan, had a change in his expectations of learning experiences. He expressed frustration with courses he was taking that were not agency based. During class he exclaimed, “Why can’t other classes be taught this way? They are so frustrating! They keep getting in my way!” In an interview he explained this further. He claimed that non-agentic courses with their tight timelines and proscribed artifact production force students to study specifically to pass evaluations and match rubrics. This, he said, encouraged a “cram and dump” approach to learning instead of stimulating students to explore knowledge beyond what is required to pass evaluations and meet rubric requirements.

William, Dan, and the other students’ changed expectations of teaching and learning will affect their experience of PD courses as they continue their process of “becoming professional” (Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 38). Is it possible that professionals working in their field could be frustrated with PD courses as was William with the non-agentic courses he was taking? Could the PD courses be “getting in the way” rather than enhancing becoming professional?

Learner Expectations for Professional Development Experiences

The descriptions of teacher lived-experiences included here portray a set of public school teachers’ desires for community, relationships, and agency in PD courses they experience. Their complete stories expressed their frustration with PD courses. The stories also included how the teachers incorporated agentic learning in their classrooms and an expectation for community and agency in PD courses provided by their school district.

Instead they had PD experiences that were pedagogical, passive, disconnected, information absorption classes.

Each teacher's story is presented here in two parts; (a) a discussion of their students' positive experience with agentic learning and growth, and (b) the teachers' desires for or frustrations with PD course designs they have experienced. Pseudonyms are used in all the participant's stories.

Heather, a 4th grade teacher, told about the success she's had creating an agentic learning environment in her classroom. She took a student-directed approach, where students were allowed to ask questions and explore concepts.

> They really do become more engaged when they recognize that you're willing to answer their questions, and if you don't know, then you open up the computer, turn on the computer, and look it up on the Internet. I think they do engage so much more when they know… "Hey, I wanted to know this, and she's going to actually give me an answer instead of just going through information I really don't care to know."

Heather recognized that her students were more engaged when they were involved in learning they felt they needed. She explained why a more "traditional" lecture-style classroom doesn't have the same impact on her students. "It's impersonal. They're just sitting there feeling like I'm talking "at" them. I'm having them answer [questions], and … do things, but they're not connected." It is interesting to note the application of heutagogical principles in a 4th grade classroom. Heather saw students disengage when lecturing replaced student focused learning within her classroom. When students were permitted to share and

explore their ideas, to truly become influential participants, the lesson became more relevant and meaningful.

Heather believed her students also found meaning and developed confidence by collaborating with each other. When students were given space to express their agency while learning from and teaching their peers, their understanding of the material increased, and they became a community of learners.

> So they're talking, and they're helping each other, and they're reviewing things … saying, "No, that's not right, fix that, do this, do that." I feel like their relationships with each other have really grown because they're confident in asking. They're confident to walk up to their partner and say, 'I didn't get that, help me out.' Instead of trying to hide what they don't understand. They feel confident in speaking up because they know that's what they're there for, and they can ask each other…. The relationships among my students have really developed as they build confidence in each other.

As students were given the opportunity to collaborate in an agentic classroom and teach one another, they formed a support network that increased their morale and aided learning. The embarrassment of not "getting it" was replaced by self-awareness that promoted confidence.

Heather also discovered that each of her students had unique needs. She accommodated individual learners by assessing their abilities and forming collaborative groups designed to give each student the particular support they needed.

> You have to adapt for different children. It's something that I try to watch carefully; noticing, "Is this person struggling?" So I think it's something that you have to constantly be on top of, and be assessing and watching….

> Students' needs are always changing. It's based on where they're at in their learning process.

Heather differentiated learning within her classroom. She did this by having small group sizes, frequent assessments, and adapting lesson plans and groupings based on assessments. She shared these ideas with her fourth-grade teaching colleagues. They appeared to be eager to try them in their classrooms:

> The other fourth grade teachers have started with math and a little bit with reading doing the same things I've been doing. I've been able to … help them on review days. I've been able to show them what I've been doing, and they're starting to want to do it too.

After finding success with agentic learning, differentiated instruction, and addressing student needs in her own classroom, Heather felt teachers and other district personnel would benefit from a similar approach in PD courses. She saw teachers respond to lecture-style classes in a manner similar to her students; disengaging when they did not feel they had control over their learning. Heather expected more from PD; more involvement from the participants, more quality content, and more meaningful experiences. She said,

> In the district, PD is very superficial. It's like; we'll get up in front of you and talk at you. Again, just like what I said doesn't work in the [classroom], isn't going to work when you have teachers. They just get up and talk at someone and… throw information at them. They don't give teachers any reasons why they should care, or any backing to what they are saying. All they do is give some program you can use. I feel like the majority of teachers would love—

> truly would really love—to be taught something meaningful like management or educational philosophy. I feel there are teachers who would like that.

Heather felt that most teachers had a strong desire to learn and improve, but the PD material available was sub-par, and not presented in a relatable manner. The PD lessons were superficial, were not focused on teacher needs, and didn't permit agency or exploration. She felt this caused teachers to disconnect from the intended learning.

Jack, a fifth-grade teacher, had experiences similar to Heather's. He recognized the importance of agency and choice in his classroom.

> Agency is huge in the motivational realm. Choice is a tool that I take advantage of in everything from managing the classroom to planning. My students are involved in planning ways to demonstrate learning. I want them to drive that. They know it's their classroom and I am a facilitator and we have goals to accomplish and things to learn. Much of how we go about learning is going to be determined by them. I can give you a "gazillion" examples where I made choice a part of assessment due to its motivational aspect. I can get them to buy-in when choice is there.

Jack described one successful experience where his students expressed their agency by designing their own "history museum." They did this by reading history books and then using what they learned to design and create displays of their choice.

> It was the students who, once they tasted a little bit, came back for more. They said, "Can we read more than two books?" Some of them are reading 20, 25 books, watching documentaries, and experiencing other kinds of things.

Jack, like Heather, found that students became excited about learning when they were given the opportunity to direct the process. When Jack gave his students control over how they studied and presented the material, they became fully engaged. Students took responsibility for their own learning.

Both Jack and Heather recognized how important peer collaboration was in their classroom settings. Jack felt this teamwork and student-led teaching approach fostered a healthy learning environment.

> The students collaborate all day, every day; because a big part of learning comes through the expression of language; the oral/aural exchange. But also because the best ideas are ones that come through collaboration, that are bounced off of others and receive healthy critique.
>
> Because of this, I can set up a classroom community, a culture, an environment, where they feel safe enough to have those kinds of exchanges. That's because these things are done every day. It's not once in a while that they turn and talk to their neighbors. It's all day, every day. We're about togetherness, and us, and collaboration, and sharing ideas and talking.

Jack attributed a lot of his classroom's success to a classroom culture where students are encouraged to talk freely, without any impediment of their shared ideas. He claimed group ideas were often the best ideas, because they received constructive critique from peers.

Jack helped his students develop this classroom culture by listening to the ideas of his students. He valued their input and allowed students to have a voice.

> I have set up ways that they can give suggestions. They don't begin to volunteer ideas, they don't begin to take charge of their education—call it

> choice, agency, whatever—until those opportunities are given to them and relationships are built. You have to see your role as a facilitator, and you have to see the students as equals.

When Jack demonstrated respect for students' opinions and experiences, they began to volunteer ideas and take ownership of their education. Jack treated his students like important team members. Through these choices, the students exhibited "professional ways of being" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 37) by providing valuable critique of each other's ideas and taking ownership of their learning.

It is interesting to connect a teacher's teaching style to their expectations of PD courses. Because of Jack's unique style of teaching and personable relationship with his students, he expected PD courses to have the same, or similar structure. Jack was disappointed that the district's PD courses did not reflect his same standards. He said,

> On a school level, on a team level, on a district level, we don't run education the way that it's run in an effective classroom. I think we know how to take a group of people and motivate them to come together instead of being horses pulling in every direction, to yoke up and pull together. Then they can accomplish amazing things. I think it's possible, because I've seen it year after year with children. If they can do it, so can adults in teams and so can schools and districts.

Jack felt that PD education experiences he had, the "running of education," did not mirror the practices of an effective classroom. He wanted PD courses to have high standards and transmit professional ways of being. Since the district's PD courses did not implement effective practices nor embrace best teaching methods, Jack found himself in opposition to

the very resource that was designed to support him. He said a positive change to his PD experience was needed.

> Part of what I would change is modeling. It's something everyone laughs about: you go to an in-service where they talk about differentiated instruction or technology, and they're teaching about it by using a flannel board. Literally, we experienced that, a flannel board! If you want to develop a feeling of agency throughout the district in classrooms, then that has to happen at the training level as well.
>
> I recognize that they do ask, once in a while, what kinds of things teachers would like to have as training. There's some effort there, but again, it's bigger than that. If all I did in my class was to give a survey on a piece of paper and say, here are your options, which ones would you like? I don't know that I would get student buy-in.

Jack would like to have more input regarding the training available to him. He would like to choose his PD experiences and have them be similar to the experiences his students have in his classroom. He felt agency was key to buy-in for PD learners. As Jack stated regarding his own classroom, PD learners would then "feel valued, and begin to volunteer ideas and take ownership of their education." Regarding what is learned in PD courses, he emphasized, "You can't force it. That's where they're missing the boat a lot of the time, they're trying to force. You have to convince somebody to choose to change."

Jack's frustrations with district-forced PD have led him to seek training through other sources. "I've learned a lot, content-wise, heutagogically. Through a variety of ways, college courses, inservices, state classes, science and social studies grants, that kind of thing… but a

lot of it has been personal study." While Jack experienced success by utilizing outside sources, he felt that he could benefit from a more positive learning community within the district, where teachers have the freedom required to grow and mature professionally.

> The feeling that I have had, in the ten years I've been here, is I am asked once in a while which of these things I would like to get more training on. First of all I have no relationship with the people who are asking. It's hard to develop respect and trust in them when you don't have that relationship, but also when you have never really watched them work for you and with you.

Ultimately, Jack desired what he gave his own students: a relationship built on mutual respect and an open exchange of ideas. Jack wanted to feel that his experiences were understood, valued, and utilized by administrators in the district.

Sally, a 4th grade teacher, also developed opinions on how to create a positive learning community. She explained how she encouraged agentic learning in her classroom.

> I feel students need to choose. For instance, with book clubs.... I put up six different books. Then they come back saying, "Oh, my goodness, you guys should have chosen my book, it's the best!" "No, mine is!" Then they're grabbing each other's books. I have extra copies of the titles, so now they're not only reading the ones that they were assigned to read, but they're reading other students' books as well.

Sally, like Jack, sees her students become excited about learning when they express their agency and pursue content that interests them. Both Sally and Jack's students took control of their own learning and went beyond requirements of their assignments. As the students

chose, they became more engaged and developed a desire for deeper understanding. Sally explained,

> The author of *Love and Logic* says, "Keep the control you must have, and you give all the rest of it away." The more control students have the better the results they will achieve, and the more in control they are, the more they will learn.

Much of Sally's classroom success came from her willingness to relinquish control as the teacher. Like Jack and Heather, she used student-directed learning to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning process.

> The only thing that I do differently [than most teachers] is student self-monitoring. I try to develop an environment that gives them a desire to do work that will be a challenge.… I have a few students who pick the easy work every week, and I start to notice. Then I have an interview with them and give them a few little challenges. That happens, but for the most part it's been a joy to watch the kids choose [and decide] "This is what's good for me."

As Sally's students expressed their agency, they often chose to challenge themselves. She found that self-determined learning encouraged her students to discover their abilities and push past personal limitations.

Like Heather, Sally recognized that student abilities and limitations vary. They each discussed the need for teachers to assess their students' needs. For Sally, this is an ability she developed over the course of her professional teaching career.

> I think that probably the biggest difference from 25 years ago would be… I've gained a sixth sense; that I finally feel I know what works well with kids, I

> know what my targets are, and I know what the manual says. [I know which] things are effective and which aren't. I'm also willing to divert from that path to get … the students to where they should be in a more effective way.

Through years of experience, Sally developed a flexibility that aided her students learning. She avoided the traditional pedagogy of lecture-style of presentations and switched to an agentic topical approach. Through this she facilitated classroom discussion in order for students to achieve a deeper comprehension of the material.

> I put down different topics, then they can research what topic they want, and then get on that team. Then they all come back and present. When it was done, we said, "What else did anybody learn about Sacagawea's role in the corps of discovery?" The discussion that was facilitated went beyond the students' instruction.

Sally's students benefited from the same types of team collaboration suggested for PD courses by Little (2006) where she described PD in the form of learning communities. In her PD learning communities, teachers were "encouraged to frame research topics tied to school goals, priorities, or problems. In other cases, they are afforded complete independence in deciding what to investigate" (Little, 2006, p. 21). This type of collaborative learning community was similar to Sally's: students were given topics to research and then shared what they learned.

When Sally's students were given the opportunity to share their experiences with their peers, she found that her students were eager to learn more than what was required to complete the assignment. As seen in the quote above, she also left time for discussion, permitting students to drive their learning.

Discussion and peer collaboration played an integral role in Sally's classroom. She related how one of her students described the importance of teamwork in their class:

> I said, "Angelique, what do you think teamwork is?" She said, "It's not only about working together as a group, but if any one person in your group doesn't agree, it's the group's responsibility to see if their view has any purpose or any value, and then to either accept it or find another way so that everyone in your group will agree, as part of the team."

Angelique's description of teamwork appeared to be a point of satisfaction for Sally.

Sally appreciated an agentic learning environment similar to what she had created for her classroom. "I love the agency of getting to choose what I'm going to take and learn and do." Like Jack, Sally expressed her agency by seeking PD experiences outside of her school district. She traveled to a university four hours away to attend their PD courses. She described one of the PD courses she chose.

> The university sponsors this class called "Art Express." They spend two days and you go down there and they say, "Give us your history curriculum, and we'll turn it into a movement experience. You give us your science and we'll turn it into a musical experience. You give us your reading, and we're going to tie it into visual arts in some way." So I've chosen to attend that several times because it taps into my creative end, and I've been able to have freedom to do that.

The class that Sally described appears to be a student-led, agentic environment. Instructors asked participants what they needed help achieving, then designed the class around

individual participants' needs. This approach invited Sally to be involved. It's a method that Sally indicated was valuable to her by repeated travel and attendance.

Tina, a 3rd grade teacher, has grown as a professional over the course of her career. Like the other teacher participants, she shifted to a teaching style that is more adapted to individual student's needs. She discussed the importance of changing and adapting to situations.

> I've always had a pretty good ability to see a child and find a different way to teach, I don't just stick to the same way. I want to stay fresh, if I ever feel like all I have to do is pull out the folder and do the same thing I did the year before, I don't think I'd be a good teacher. Every year I have a different group of learners. Just like I'm changing, I should bring to them what they need, just like what I would want as I'm changing, too.

Tina made an effort to see her students as individuals, and to give them the type of instruction she felt they needed. She provided them with an agentic learning environment, where they were able to make choices during the educational process. She described a recent art activity.

> I put four different projects at four different tables, gave the students the instructions, and just said, "Go." Every 15 minutes when they were done, they'd move. So it was a lot more of just letting them be third graders and be responsible.
>
> So I try to pull myself out of that, "open the head, throw the information in" type of teaching and do more of letting them be the teachers,

> letting them explore, then share with the community what they've learned.
>
> The class listens much better to each other than they do to me.

Tina took advantage of the correlation between agency and responsibility. As she shared control of the classroom and allowed students to make choices, the students took more ownership of their learning process.

> If I'm not the one dictating how [the students] do it, then they take more ownership of it. I do give spelling homework, but I don't tell them what they have to do every night. It's their choice. There are 10 options; they pick four of the 10 for the whole week. It's not me dictating, it's them choosing and taking accountability for their own education.

Tina's experiences reinforce the experiences of the other teachers: agency, collaboration, and student-led discussion created a positive community where meaningful learning took place.

Tina felt that district sponsored PD could be enhanced. She advocated for PD that offers relevant instruction in current methodology.

> One of the things that I'd like to see with professional development is that we need to go outside of our bubble and see what the rest of the world is doing. We need to always be reaching up. We need to send more people to national conferences. We need to bring in speakers.
>
> You can be here teaching and things are changing in education all the time. If you don't continue to learn after you get your college degree you're going to be stagnant. We need to keep growing and see what's out there, what's changing.

Tina desired professional development that models effective teaching practices. Just as Tina was continually changing and evolving to meet the specific needs of her class, she felt that PD ought to provide teachers with the opportunity to "reach up," "keep growing," and "changing;" reflecting Dall'Alba's (2009) "becoming professional" (p. 38).

Tina, like the others, suggested collaboration as a possible solution for achieving effective PD learning. She wanted more time with her teaching peers. She explained, "We're having faculty meeting once a month. That is my professional learning committee. They are the professionals I deal with, and I'd love to be on the same page with them regarding teaching."

Like Jack and Sally, Tina turned elsewhere for PD instruction. She described a conference she attended sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of Education:

> It was great, I got to attend classes on writing, and differentiation. I feel like my battery was charged. It was great…. It was four days of feeling like my battery was charged by getting cutting edge research. I feel like that's what I brought back to my kids, a better, renewed teacher.

As with the other teachers, Tina met her need for learning, improving, and "becoming professional" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 38) by going outside her district's PD environment.

Don, a junior-high math teacher, has moved away from the pedagogy of lecture-style instruction. He elaborated on how he shifted to a heutagogical student-determined learning environment:

> Now, I go in [and have] more of an interaction. I try to get the students to participate with me, I try to get them to ask questions. I try to create an environment where they feel free to ask whatever they want. "Let's interact,

> let's ask questions, let's figure things out, let's work together." I think, for the most part, the students have responded to that. I usually get quite good feedback, and students usually enjoy coming to my class.

Don saw his students respond to an environment that promotes freedom, interaction, and discussion. He recognized that when students express agency by asking questions and work together toward a common goal, they enjoy the learning process. Don was discouraged that the district had not come to the same realization regarding PD.

> I do enjoy taking classes [and the other things the district offers]. Oftentimes the ones that are held inside the district seem like they're not the ones that are best prepared. Often they're the same things over and over again. So you go and try to make it through the day. That's what my experience has been.

Another concern of Don's was that classes were not developed with the needs of individual teachers in mind. Directors and instructors made no effort to address or utilize the experience or prior knowledge of the participants. Knowles et al. (2013) described what Don was experiencing as a "pedagogical methodology" (p. 62). In this methodology the learner's needs and "experience is of little worth as a resource for learning" (P. 62).

> I've seen the overhead projector class offered several times and I don't have one! I'm thinking, "I don't have that in my classroom yet. I don't have experience prior to this, and you're teaching me something I'm not going to be able to go back and use, so that's not going to work."

By failing to recognize Don's previous knowledge, past experiences, and current needs, the PD instructors alienated Don and he did not learn any skills he could use in his own classroom.

Don did have suggestions for improving district provided PD. As Jack stated, Don thought PD course designers should connect with teachers and make an effort to understand their needs.

> Maybe some of the people at the district level have been out of the classroom for so long that they don't know? I don't know if they get teachers' input on what they want, what they think would be an important class?
>
> I don't know if it's because the district office is a little out of touch, maybe they don't get enough teacher input on, "Here's what we want to learn. Here's what we think is really valuable."

As with Jack and Tina, Don also desired more collaboration and peer-to-peer learning. He felt that teachers could best learn from each other. He described a defunct PD program called "Teachers Visiting Teachers."

> A few years ago we had an opportunity to do a program called "Teachers Visiting Teachers." I really liked that. I'd go into another teacher's classroom. I'd take the opportunity to observe them and see what they did. I'd go, "I like that, I like the way they presented that situation or that concept," or, "That is how they did it." Then I'd try to build on what I saw and refer to it and mimic or copy what they did. I really liked that.

In addition to peer learning, Jack wished that the district's current PD offerings focused more on teacher involvement and collaboration. Don envisioned how this could be accomplished through classes where fellow educators swap ideas and share solutions:

> "Here's the way I taught this concept. How do you teach it?" And get ideas on, "I could do that, I could apply this." Instead of going to some random

> class where they just talk about stuff. I think teachers sharing with each other would be the best part. "Here are some things that work."

Don desired a peer-learning environment as described by Wenger (2011) where "members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other" (p. 2). Don felt that he would be better served through PD based on peer-to-peer collaboration.

Sophia, a high-school government teacher, was also an advocate of peer learning and collaboration. She developed lessons that allowed students to collaborate to find solutions to problems.

> We did a program called "We the People." Rather than taking a paper test, the students create a group and form a government. They tell me what they're going to do with Freedonia, a pretend country. I ask, "Why did you choose unitary over federal? Why do you like the unitary government?" And that's their test.

During this process, Sophia's students encountered problems, learned to share ideas, and collaborated to achieve a common goal. They were not told how to solve the problems they faced, but explored and discovered solutions that reflected their own beliefs and ideas.

Sophia felt that agentic expression within the classroom was as key factor in her success as a teacher. She encouraged students to find ways of making the material relevant to them.

> I tell them, "find a passion." I'll have a student say, "I don't like anything but hunting." And I'll reply, "Okay, let's talk about wolves in Yellowstone. Let's write a federal bill." And he says, '"Oh yeah! I can!" It's their passion or

> something they're thinking about; that's what they do with these projects…. They're living it.

As Sophia's students studied what interested them, they became immersed in the learning process.

Sophia, like Jack and Sally, adapted her teaching to students' needs. She viewed planning as an ongoing process. She explained, "Even though I teach the same class first and fourth hour, they're completely different. I don't teach them the same way because my students are different." Sophia hoped for the same type of differentiated instruction for her PD course experiences. She felt frustrated that the content was not applicable to her particular needs.

> I'm looking at the PD we have upcoming. [The district in-service leader] set it out and I looked at it…. What it tells me is math teachers need to get together because they have a large program change coming and it's something that will really help them. But they'll fill in everything else for the rest of us so we can do something that isn't as important or doesn't even apply to our subjects. But we'll fill it in to make sure that you are here. I have to be there, but it's not going to supplement my teaching hardly at all.

Sophia did propose a potential solution. Like Heather, Jack, and Don, Sophia claimed that collaboration would provide a more relevant experience.

> I really think we can learn the most from each other within our subjects. I think if you put teachers [of the same subject] together, you're going to get a lot more learning. [They can] cooperate and share information and make each

> other better teachers. Give each other ideas. I can say the best ideas I've got are from other teachers in my subject.

Webster-Wright (2009) reflected these teachers' hopes for their PD experiences when she suggested that PD research switch from "how best to deliver programs to 'develop' professionals to seeking insights from the authentic experience of professionals" (p. 723). Jack, Sophia, and the others' stories appear to fulfill Webster-Wright's intended PD research data source. Their experiences and frustrations suggest a series of principles they would prefer to have incorporated in district PD courses.

Implications for Practice

Adults, as seen in the teacher and student lived experiences described, desire relationships, community, meaningful changes in themselves, and agency in learning environments they experience. These expectations can arise at any time during a learner's educational experience, even as undergraduates. As seen in the student stories above, expectations for future learning, which would include PD, change when adults experience agentic learning. If adults are given the learning environment they expect, they thrive. The elementary school teachers stories of experiences with agentic learning, both in their classrooms and as they developed themselves professionally, changed their expectations for PD. Their change mirrored the expectations for future learning by the undergraduates. Based on the experiences of both these groups, what principles might adult learners expect to find expressed in a PD course that matched the environment they desire?

Don, the math teacher, and Alex, the student, said that collaboration with their peers was an important part of their learning experience. They both described how they could express their agency through acting for the benefit of others. Jack, the fifth grade teacher,

added to this a need to feel "trust and respect" when sharing ideas. They believed these three components are essential to their learning experiences.

One set of participants expressed the importance of agency in their learning. Heather, a fourth grade teacher, wanted more from PD than being talked at and having information "thrown" at her. Both Sophia, the high school teacher, and Heather expect their students to go beyond memorization and do not lecture their classes. Instead, they have provided space and time for their students to act, choose, and express agency in their classrooms. They also expect this for their learning experiences. William, one of the students, expressed his frustration with traditional courses that adopt a pedagogical style and delineate exactly what and when to learn. These learners would expect PD to support their expression of agency through providing space and time for them to become professional rather than listen to a lecture, participate in question/answer sessions, or sit through a guided "hands-on" training since these types of experiences do not promote "becoming professional" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 38).

As learners, several of the participants (both undergraduates and teachers) noted a strong preference for active learning over more commonplace passive learning experiences. Jack, Alex, and Don expected agentic, trusting, community experiences in order to be successful. Perhaps their belief that each of them, from very different learning environments, learn better when part of a community was a reflection of the "ceiling effect" (Fullan & Hargreaves 1991, p. 38). This effect can be described as a limitation when learning independently due to a lack of variant perspectives and ideas.

Exasperation with courses that were not applicable was also an issue. Don strongly disliked courses about technology that didn't exist in his classroom and told of how he much

preferred visiting other teachers' classrooms to get to know them and see what they were doing. Sophia also stated how she enjoyed collaborating with her peers, sharing and spreading good practices across the members of her teaching community. The student Gary expressed how much he appreciated collaborating with other learners. Don, Sophia, and Gary would expect PD courses to focus on their individual needs and encourage agentic community building and sharing inside and outside of the PD class rather than meeting some hypothetical need of a large, aggregate, heterogeneous group. Their PD course expectation would also include avoiding the tyranny of the majority.

Both teachers and undergraduate participants loved the idea of team collaboration. Don's meaning of collaboration included expressing ideas and applying creativity to shared problems of practice and aiding each other in becoming professional. Julie, a student, found an ability to learn by sharing and being creative when solving problems faced by her community. Heather talked about her peer meeting of the fourth grade teachers getting together and using creativity to resolve a difficult problem of practice. For these learners, sharing previous experiences and knowledge to creatively resolve a problem is an important part of their becoming professional. They would have an expectation that a PD class would go beyond acknowledging the learners' prior knowledge and experience; that to accomplish learning the learners' knowledge, experience would be leveraged and used.

Self-reliance and self-efficacy was another category that emerged from the stories of both groups of participants. Sally declared how much she enjoyed expressing her agency by being able to "choose what I'm going to … learn and do." The student Jill was happy not to be dependent on others to teach her what they think she needed to know. Instead she could exercise her agency be exploring what she found important to her. These declarations are

expressions of appreciation for a heutagogical learning experience; an experience where each of these adults could make decisions about what, where, and when to learn.

It is interesting to note how these two very different populations, undergraduates who have had an agentic learning experience and professional teachers providing agentic learning experiences to their students, and expecting the same, or similar agentic ideas in PD courses, share similar desires regarding their learning expectations. From the stories of Jill, Jack, Don, Sophie, and the others emerged principles that underpin expectations for well-designed PD courses. Well-designed PD courses

- Foster agentic collaboration among the learners;
- Leverage and uses the learners previous knowledge and experiences to accomplish learning;
- Set up space and time for learning and avoids lecture, question/answer sessions, and forced independent explorations;
- Assist in the transmission of positive professional ways of being;
- Focus on individual learner needs; and
- Encourage agentic community building both inside and outside the PD course experience.

The purpose of PD is to assist professional learners of all kinds in continuing their learning yet PD courses often are "episodic updates of information delivered in a didactic manner, separated from engagement with authentic work experiences" (Webster-Wright, 2009). In contrast to this common PD experience, if PD courses were based on the six "good" PD course design principles expected by the participant-learners, people taking PD

courses would be aided not only in becoming professional but measurable productivity gains and modified behaviors would occur.

Chapter 4: Redesigning Professional Development to Meet Teacher Expectations

D. Joshua Wilson

We have entered a new era in education. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and their “shift toward higher levels of cognitive demand” (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011, p. 106) were developed in an attempt to meet the needs of employers in today’s job market. This is accomplished by producing employees who demonstrate more than the “basic skills of reading, writing, and math” (Wagner, 2008, p. xxii). Wagner (2008) argues that employers are seeking individuals who can “think—to reason, analyze, weigh evidence, problem solve—and communicate effectively” (p. xxiii). These progressive demands present unfamiliar challenges for educators. To enable students to develop higher-order thinking skills, educators must adapt their teaching methods accordingly. This calls for an enhanced focus on professional development. Professional Development (PD) classes ought to reflect the level and style of education that school districts desire for their students. Teachers need to not only *understand* the requirements of CCSS, but to see the standards *modeled*.

This white paper was written to identify elements of district PD that could be adapted to better meet the demands of CCSS, thereby informing the design of effective PD courses. The evidence for this paper was provided largely by K-12 teachers from a small, rural school district in southeastern Idaho. Interviews were conducted with these teacher-participants, wherein they shared their methods for teaching success, and offered suggestions for implementing positive change in PD.

To gain a deep, rich understanding of the teachers’ lived experiences; I interviewed them in an open-ended manner, allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings about their own classroom practices and their experiences with PD. I chose to perform a qualitative

study, consisting of semi-formal interviews that permitted me to adjust my questioning to meet the flow of conversation.

As a long-time participant in district PD classes, I recognized the crucial role and great potential of PD education. I realized that the experiences of teachers could provide valuable insight for the creation of future PD courses. I first investigated the teaching techniques of successful teachers, noting how the students responded to those methods. I then compared those methods to the teachers' own experiences with and expectations for district PD.

I discovered several common techniques employed by the majority of the participating teachers. Teachers created agentic learning environments within their classrooms, where risk taking and exploration were encouraged. They also set up frequent opportunities for peer collaboration, allowing the students to learn from each other. Finally, many of the participants noted the importance of building positive relationships between teacher and student. The teachers voiced a desire to see these same techniques practiced more fully in professional development.

Problem

In order to empower students with higher-order thinking skills, as outlined in CCSS, "We need educators who possess higher-order teaching skills and deep content knowledge" (Darling-Hammond, et. al, 2009, p. 2). This assertion was affirmed by Casale (2011) when she found that in order for students to develop such skills, teachers must modernize the outdated educational system by changing how they teach (p. 3). Casale's claim poses an interesting question to school districts in southeastern Idaho. Are K-12 teachers in southeastern Idaho receiving the training necessary to change what they do in the classroom,

and meet the obligation of producing students with higher-order thinking skills? Given the reports of teachers from a K-12 school district in southeastern Idaho, they are not. To better understand the views of these teachers and their experiences receiving training from professional development courses, I performed a qualitative study.

Background

The study was intended to join the conversation about efforts to improve PD training. Some unique teaching strategies that combined the use of agency, risk-taking and collaboration within their classrooms were explored. The experiences of the teachers and what they did in their classrooms informs the potential development and design of PD courses for K-12 teachers.

The participating school district in this study is considered "high performing;" it is recognized nationally as one of the top in the state (Sheehy, 2014). The district employs exemplary teachers and demonstrates a commitment to providing quality education to students. However, the teachers describe their professional development training as "sub-par." As one participant explained, "…on a district level, we don't run education the way that it's run in an effective classroom…." If that statement is true, how have these teachers become successful educators?

It was found that all six participants in the study went outside the school district for professional training at their own expense. One teacher said that district's "professional development is something that is lacking," and signed up for classes elsewhere because, "I want to be better in that area, I want to know what I'm talking about when I talk about it." This led me to wonder in what ways, exactly, was district PD lacking?

One participant described her experiences with PD: “In the district, [PD] is very superficial. Like, ‘We’ll get up in front of you and talk at you.’” The teacher was referring to the standard practice of presenting PD in a lecture-style format. Teachers gather in a large group, where the instructor stands and offers a monologue in the attitude of a “sage on the stage” (Zachary, 2000).

Although it has been found that some individuals prefer the lecture-style format of teaching and learning (Knight & Wood, 2005, p. 305), recent studies have shown that the majority of learners favor a more hands-on approach to their education. Boles, Jolly, Hadgraft, Howard, & Beck (2010) emphasized that teachers [or students] do not “get a lot out of” (p. 7) lecture-style lessons. As Felder and Brent (2005) found, the lecture-style used as a one-size-fits-all method of teaching, “fits almost nobody” (p. 57). Because a PD classroom is made up of learners with diverse needs, goals, and learning styles, it is inevitable that lecture-style presentations will alienate many of the participants. The learners are more likely to engage in the process, learn the desired skills, and apply their newfound knowledge when they are given more control over the learning venture.

In order to encourage the attainment and application of knowledge in the PD setting, classes should be designed with the goal of “bringing about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). If school districts in eastern Idaho wish to see change and improvement as a dividend of their PD investment, then PD design must move away from lecture-style courses, and into a more collaborative-style, allowing teachers more choice in their PD. As the school district ponders how best to meet the training needs of its teachers through PD, an examination of adult learning theory might prove beneficial.

PD and the Value of Learning Theories

Three learning theories were studied as I laid the groundwork for this paper. These theories provided context as I examined the format of district PD classes. The implications of pedagogical, andragogical, and heutagogical learning theories should be understood and considered as PD courses are designed in preparation for CCSS.

Pedagogy

Pedagogical learning is a process of acquiring information that has been defined by the teacher. The pedagogical approach is often referred to as the traditional style of teaching (Ruben, 1999). Because the pedagogical approach has dominated education for centuries, it is a difficult mold to break. In a pedagogical classroom, the teacher presents information, and students are required to listen and absorb the material. For many teachers, lecturing is the preferred method of conveying knowledge because the results were fairly predictable and assessable (Little, 1993). The pedagogical style is what is referred to as the traditional style of teaching (Ruben, 1999). Because the pedagogical approach has dominated in education for centuries, it is a difficult mold to break.

Knowles (1970) studied the evolution of the teaching methodologies. Knowles went on to describe the monastic schools of Europe between the seventh and twelfth centuries, recounting how the child entered the learning environment in a submissive role. He referred to this "art and science of teaching children" (p. 40) as "pedagogy" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2013, p. 60).

Wiles (1952) explained that pedagogical teaching consisted of "presenting the facts and generalizations in a clear, easily understood fashion, of testing to determine the amount of information acquired, and of marking the pupil's attainment" (p. 11). An educated

individual lectured students to convey his knowledge; students listened quietly, studied their notes, and were given a written or oral test. Their success depended on their ability to recall and recite the information.

Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2013) state, "the pedagogical model assigns to the teacher full responsibility for making all decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, when it will be learned, and if it has been learned" (p. 60). The student is entirely dependent on the teacher for instruction, and the teacher is responsible for the education of the student (Wiles, 1952, p. 60).

During the 1920's, educators became concerned with how instruction was being presented and received by adults. It was found that adults resisted pedagogical teaching methodologies (Knowles, 1970, p. 40). Teachers found adult students were not engaged in the assigned lectures, quizzes, drills, and examinations (p. 40). Researchers and instructors began to experiment with different methods for adult learning, resulting in a new set of assumptions for adult-learners that contrasted with those of the child-learner. The term andragogy was coined as a label for their discoveries regarding adult learning.

Andragogy

While pedagogy has its benefits as an assessable method of instruction, the methods behind andragogy may prove more effective for adult learning. Knowles (1970) found that adult learners have "a deep psychological need to be generally self-directing" (p. 43), rather than being entirely dependent on a teacher to acquire knowledge. The principles of andragogy, as described by Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2013), can be condensed to six assumptions about how, and why, adults learn:

- Adults are aware of, and motivated by, their need for knowledge;

- Adults have a desire for independence and to be trusted with responsibility;
- When adult learners are treated as though they are dependent children, it creates inner conflict;
- Adults appreciate having their life experiences and prior knowledge recognized, utilized, and valued;
- Adults are motivated to learn as necessity demands;
- Adults will more readily learn a skill if they deem it useful. When connections are made to real-life scenarios, learning is enhanced;
- Adults are motivated to learn by both internal and external forces. Internal motivators might include enhanced quality of life or personal satisfaction, while external motivators include a promotion or pay raise (pp. 63-67).

These assumptions lend themselves to a teaching approach that honors the agency of learners, building upon their knowledge and motivations to create learning experiences. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2013) pointed out that, "Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experiences from that of youths" (p. 64). One participant explained how teachers learn best when they are able to utilize the knowledge and past experiences of their colleagues: "[We can] cooperate and share information and make each other better teachers; give each other ideas. I can say the best ideas I've got are from other teachers in my subject." This reservoir of knowledge, which is largely ignored by pedagogical teaching methods, is better utilized in a classroom that employs andragogical methods.

Hase and Kenyon (2001) expanded the theory of andragogy by assuming adults can move beyond the self-directed learning of andragogy to the self-determined learning of heutagogy.

Heutagogy

Heutagogy is learning motivated by a personal desire for knowledge and growth (Hase & Kenyan, 2001). As pedagogy is the study of teaching children, and andragogy is the study of teaching adults, heutagogy is the study of “self-determined learning” (Hase and Kenyan, 2001, p. 2). The heutagogical approach places more of the onus on the learner. The learner determines what is to be learned, and how it is to be learned, rather than the teacher. In this manner, heutagogy also honors agency and sets the learner free to choose their own methods of learning without a teacher pressing their ideas against them, but, rather, in support of them. The teacher provides the learner with resources, while the learner takes responsibility for his own intellectual growth. The instructor “fully relinquish[es] ownership of the learning path and process to the learner” (Blaschke, 2012, p. 59). The heutagogical method requires the learner to take risks. It involves adaptation, experimentation, and ongoing progression.

Kenyon and Hase (2001) claimed teachers “should concern [themselves] with developing the learner’s capability not … embedding discipline based skills and knowledge” (p. 4). By developing the learner’s capability, heutagogical methods can prepare learners for real-life situations. These types of learning experiences would benefit teachers who return from PD courses and can immediately use their newly acquired knowledge. Blaschke (2012) explained why heutagogy is a more beneficial approach than pedagogy or andragogy:

> Pedagogical, even andragogical, educational methods are no longer fully sufficient in preparing learners for thriving in the workplace, and a more self-directed and self-determined approach is needed, one in which the learner reflects upon what is learned and how it is learned and in which educators teach learners how to teach themselves. (p. 57)

Heutagogical learning is “an integrative experience where a change in behavior, knowledge, or understanding is incorporated into the person’s existing repertoire of behavior and schema (values, attitudes and beliefs)” (Hase & Kenyan, 2007, p. 112). This echoes what Guskey (2002) described as the desired outcomes of PD: “to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (p. 381). Self-determined learning then, becomes more than an accumulation of facts, but a continual process of learning that leads to deep change.

At the University of Western Sydney in New South Wales, Australia, teacher training programs have switched from a pedagogical to a heutagogical model for knowledge creation (Ashton & Newman, 2006). The university identified various benefits through the use of this heutagogical approach as improved teacher outcomes, teachers who were more capable and better prepared for the complex learning environment, increased learner confidence and efficacy, improved ability to investigate ideas, and development of the ability to question interpretations of reality from their position of competence (Ashton & Newman, 2006, p. 829; Ashton & Elliott, 2007). Ashton and Elliott (2007) argue, “It is heutagogy, therefore, which is more likely to facilitate the skills and dispositions of the twenty-first-century learner and encourage development of the complex array of attributes required for today’s

workplace" (p. 172). With this understanding of adult learning theories, it seems requisite that PD courses reflect a more heutagogical approach to learning.

Strategies for PD Reconsidered

It was interesting to note that the participating teachers had, for the most part, moved away from the traditional pedagogical methods of instruction in their classrooms. Rather, the teachers created agentic learning environments where risk taking and exploration were encouraged. Teachers had an understanding of the importance of informed risk taking, and how it can lead to unexpected and enlightening outcomes.

Teachers also set up frequent opportunities for peer collaboration amongst students, allowing them to share their knowledge and learn from each other's prior experiences. Participants acknowledged the importance of establishing positive relationships between teacher and student, where the teacher recognized the student's needs and valued his abilities. Having experienced the benefits of employing the themes of agency, risk taking, collaboration, and relationship building in their own classrooms, these teachers expressed yearning for PD opportunities with similar learning designs.

One of the purposes of PD is to "bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students" (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). In order to bring about these changes as described by Guskey (2002), it would seem beneficial to ensure PD content was of value and met the needs of teachers; otherwise, change may not occur. Lutrick, & Szabo (2012) noted that active engagement, modeling, application, and ongoing support are necessary to influence change (p. 7). Also, positive change is more likely to occur when an individual is given the responsibility to "create,

enact, and embody their own knowledge as they encounter it" (Dall'Alba, 2005, p. 364). Allowing teachers the freedom to control their own PD empowers them to make changes.

Wilson and Berne (1999) note, "teachers need to own and control their professional development" (p. 176). Unfortunately, in many cases, teachers don't have much input regarding the training they receive, and, as a result, change is less effective (Fullan, 1993). Agency is key in creating a successful PD program.

Agency

Agency is the "ability to exert control over and give direction to one's life" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135). Biesta and Tedder (2006) explain that agency is not a quality or trait someone possesses; rather, it is "something that is achieved in particular (transactional) situations" (p. 27). By limiting the actions teachers can take regarding PD, administrators are also attempting to limit their expressions of agency. They do this by not involving teachers in the decisions regarding PD design, and by limiting teachers' choices in selecting which PD courses they will attend. The participating teachers had a strong desire for greater agency in terms of PD. One participant enthused, "I love the agency of getting to choose what I'm going to take and learn and do, and students feel the same exact way."

A "top-down" rather than "collaborative decision-making" (Diaz-Maggioli, p. 2) design tends to be restrictive because the administrators are the ones making the decisions on what is to be learned, and how teachers are to learn it. This pedagogical approach isn't conducive to personal growth. As Webster-Wright (2009) expressed, "No one can make another person learn" (p. 727). A top-down design results in a lack of ownership by the teachers (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 2).

Administrators may worry that if teachers are given control over their PD, they will choose to do nothing at all. However, there is evidence that the very opposite is true. As one participant pointed out, "Agency is huge in the motivational realm." This was demonstrated by the success teachers experienced as they offered their students more choices. Not only were the students more engaged in the learning process, but they often chose to go beyond basic requirements, delving deeper into the subject matter. One participant noted how his students were eager to research their topics further, reading additional books and watching documentaries. He explained, "It was the students who, once they tasted a little bit, came back for more." As his students were given agency over how they learned the material, they were motivated to create a self-determined, heutagogical learning experience.

The same may hold true for teachers in PD, as well. One teacher affirmed, "I feel like the majority of teachers would love—truly would really love—to be taught something meaningful." Not only were the participating teachers excited by the prospect of quality PD, but they also actively sought out additional PD learning opportunities on their own. Teachers are ready and willing to participate in PD that will benefit them; administrators simply need to allow teachers more meaningful involvement.

As teachers become more involved in the creation of PD courses and their design, they will naturally need to consider not only their own PD goals, but the needs of colleagues within their educational community. Ballet, Dubois, and Mahieu (2007) claimed, "When, through commitment and social interactions, personal responsibility is introduced, it leads to a strong version of agency" (p. 198). As teachers practice agency and responsibility regarding PD, they will become better able to recognize how the needs of the whole may benefit from their own abilities and experiences. In essence, strong agency is the application

of agency for the betterment of the community, rather than a single individual. One participant described how this works in practice: “It’s about using that agency—agency has a strong connection to will—it’s about learning how to sacrifice our will, to give that up for what’s best for the community. That’s where, to me, the real success comes.”

Ballet, et al. further maintained that a self-restrained expression of agency leads to a “collective capability” (p. 199) in an organization or society. One of the primary purposes of PD is building capability among a society of learners. As teachers commit to their school vision and feel personal responsibility for its success, it creates a community of practice where educators are able to learn from each other.

Collaboration and Relationship Building

A community of practice can provide a support network that facilitates collaboration and professional growth. According to Wenger (2000), communities of practice emerge from the interplay of “competence and experience that involve mutual engagement” (p. 229). Wenger further describes what constitutes a competent community of practice. The first element is that participants “understand the enterprise well enough to be able to contribute to it” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). Teachers must have an understanding of the vision, purpose, and goals of the organization so they can be contributing members. One participant felt the district could improve in this area, reasoning:

> I recognize that they do ask, once in a while, what kinds of things teachers would like to have as training. There’s some effort there, but again, it’s bigger than that. If all I did in my class was to give a survey on a piece of paper and say, here are your options, which ones would you like? I don’t know that I would get student buy-in.

When administrators fail to include teachers in the design of PD—in its vision, purpose, and goals—teachers are less likely to buy-in and become contributing members of their educational community.

The second element of a community of practice is mutual engagement. As members of the community interact, they determine norms and relationships of mutuality. As an individual engages with the community, they become “a trusted partner” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). One participant explained, “The best ideas are ones that come through collaboration, that are bounced off of others and receive healthy critique.” As teachers are given the opportunity to share ideas and receive feedback from their peers, they will establish the trust necessary to become a community in practice.

The third element is a shared repertoire of communal resources for members to use. Participants should have “access to this repertoire and be able to use it appropriately” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). These resources might include lesson plans, shared teaching techniques, and educational materials. Knowing about, and having access to, all community resources will ensure that teachers have the necessary tools to become competent educators.

As teachers gain a shared vision of the enterprise, are mutually engaged in its purpose, and use the shared repertoire of resources, a community of practice is formed. A successful community of practice emerges from the opportunities given to engage colleagues through collaboration. DuFour (2004) claimed that powerful collaboration could be instituted in a professional learning community as it develops a “systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice (p. 3). As teachers are provided opportunities to collaborate, PD becomes a positive force that challenges its participants to improve as professionals.

As Musanti and Pence (2010) concluded, “Professional development needs to be conceived as a collaborative enterprise, where a space for learning through mutual exchange, dialogue, and constant challenge is created” (p. 87). Teachers then begin to experience the changes described by Guskey (2002), and move towards becoming true professionals.

As PD moves away from the pedagogical lecture-style into a more collaborative, heutagogical format, the changes envisioned by Guskey (2002) can be realized. Heath and McDonald (2012) found that collaborative professional development, designed as a community of practice, “seemed to revitalize individual members and encourage risk taking and the testing of new ideas amongst participants” (p. 24). As teachers evolve their classroom practices, attitudes, and beliefs, they will need to learn how to adapt, experiment, and take risks.

Risk Taking

As teachers exercise agency, experience change, and experiment with new teaching methods, an element of risk is involved. Lupton and Tulloch (2002) explain, “Most writing in the social sciences on risk taking tends to represent it as the product of ignorance or irrationality” (p. 113). This negative way of thinking about risk has turned the word into something conveying “fear…anxiety, vulnerability and uncertainty” (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 113). However, it is important to understand that voluntary risk taking can lead to positive outcomes as well.

Lupton and Tulloch (2002) argue that taking risks can be beneficial when “facing and conquering fear, displaying courage, seeking excitement and thrills and achieving self-actualization and a sense of personal agency” (p. 115). Lupton and Tulloch (2002) conclude

that voluntary risk taking "can lead to a greater sense of control, resulting in a feeling of accomplishment and agency" (p. 123). Agency and risk seem to go hand-in-hand.

Informed risk taking is an expression of agency, and can allow individuals to conquer perceived limitations while building self-confidence. In a study by Vannatta and Fordham (2004) it was found that teachers who were willing to "take risks" and learn how to use new technology, "may be more likely to use technology in the classroom" (p. 261). Because these skills were new to the teachers, a "willingness to make mistakes and learn from them" (p. 261) was essential to gaining confidence in these abilities. The teachers were then able to translate this new skill into their own classrooms. Administrators who encourage teachers to exercise their agency through risk taking may find that teachers demonstrate greater confidence in the classroom. One participant remembered, "I was very grateful for the principal my first year who said, 'Yeah, do it, try it.' That was something that was really helpful for me, to have someone really trust me my first year." As administrators demonstrate trust, teachers develop the confidence to try new techniques and take informed risks in the classroom.

Conclusion

It was interesting to note that the participating teachers had, for the most part, moved away from the traditional pedagogical methods of instruction in their classrooms with children. Rather, the teachers created agentic learning environments, where risk taking and exploration were encouraged. They appeared to be more andragogical and heutagogical. Teachers seemed to understand the importance of student choice and informed risk taking, and how it can lead to unexpected and enlightening outcomes.

Teachers also set up frequent opportunities for peer collaboration amongst students, allowing them to share their knowledge and learn from each other's prior experiences. Participants also acknowledged the importance of establishing positive relationships between teacher and student, where the teacher recognized the student's needs and valued his abilities. Having experienced the benefits of employing the themes of agency, risk taking, collaboration, and relationship building in their own classrooms, these teachers expressed yearning for PD opportunities with similar learning designs.

One of the purposes of PD is to "bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students" (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). In order to bring about these changes as described by Guskey (2002), it would seem beneficial to ensure PD content was of value and met the needs of teachers; otherwise, change may not occur. Lutrick, & Szabo (2012) noted that active engagement, modeling, application, and ongoing support are necessary to influence change (p. 7). Also, positive change is more likely to occur when an individual is given the responsibility to "create, enact, and embody their own knowledge as they encounter it" (Dall'Alba, 2005, p. 364). Allowing teachers the freedom to control their own PD empowers them to make changes.

Wilson and Berne (1999) note, "Teachers need to own and control their professional development" (p. 176). Unfortunately, in many cases, teachers don't have much input regarding the training they receive, and, as a result, change is less effective (Fullan, 1993). Agency is key in creating a successful PD program.

I found that the teacher-participants had moved away from the traditional pedagogical method of teaching, in favor of a more heutagogical learning environment. Although their

specific methods varied, their teaching styles seemed to incorporate four central principles: agency, risk taking, collaboration, and relationship-building.

I discovered that the teachers were willing to share control of the classroom with their students, allowing the students to demonstrate agency by directing their own learning. This was a process of trial and error, as teachers experimented to see which methods produced the best results. Ultimately, their risk taking paid off, as teachers were able to identify techniques that translated into student success.

As the teachers began to experience accomplishments in the classroom, they were motivated to share what they had learned with their colleagues. Each of the participants expressed a desire for more opportunities to collaborate with their peers. Furthermore, the participants desired collaboration with administrators, voicing the belief that if administrators established sincere relationships with staff, they would gain the insight to accurately assess PD needs.

The district would have a greater likelihood of facilitating change in the classroom practices of teachers if PD design focused on incorporating agency, informed risk taking, collaboration, and relationship building: the very methods the teacher-participants successfully employed in their own classrooms.

Implications for Practice

The participating teachers in this study were identified by administrators and peers as exceptional practitioners; as such, I feel their experiences, opinions, and ideas have great merit and are worth careful consideration. While analyzing the information gathered through the interviews and subsequent conversations with the teachers, I was able to identify four central themes. The following themes were illustrated in the teachers' lived experiences:

1. Pedagogical, lecture-style courses caused participants to disengage from the learning process. Teachers expressed desires for more agency regarding their PD, and wanted more control over what they learned.
2. Informed risk taking should be encouraged. This may lead to an increase in creative problem solving and greater professional growth.
3. Teachers desired more time to collaborate with their colleagues. Collaboration opportunities seemed to increase their self-confidence while establishing a sense of community among teachers.
4. Teachers felt that administrators were "out of touch" with what was happening in classrooms, and were therefore unable to accurately assess PD needs.

I believe the district would be more likely to "bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students" (Guskey, 2002, p. 381) by developing PD instruction that addresses these issues. As teachers expressed their expectations and aspirations for district PD, I determined several principles of a well-designed PD course:

- Utilizes the learners' previous experience and knowledge to enhance learning;
- Determines and strives to meet the needs of individual learners;
- Provides ample opportunity for peer collaboration;
- Fosters agency and informed risk taking;
- Avoids pedagogical methods and lecturing in favor of a more heutagogical approach;
- Allows for ongoing community building.

I have several suggestions for implementing the principles of a successful PD course. In order to utilize the teachers' experience and knowledge, administrators must first establish a genuine relationship with the teachers. Classes should be followed up with regular interaction between both parties. As administrators regularly observe and participate in the teachers' classrooms, they will better understand the abilities and needs of district educators. This will also serve to establish a stronger sense of support and community.

Allowing teachers more time to collaborate with their peers could further strengthen this community. PD courses should be designed to allow for smaller classes where instruction and collaboration happen simultaneously. A transition from pedagogical lecture-style lessons to peer-to-peer learning and hands-on experimentation could prove beneficial. Participants should be encouraged to step outside of their comfort zone and try new techniques and employ creative problem solving.

Above all, teachers embraced agency in their own classrooms and wished to have more agency regarding their PD learning. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) described the importance of agency in PD, stating, "For teachers to develop ownership of professional development, they need to be active participants in its construction, tailoring programs to their needs and motivations" (p. 11). As administrators move away from the traditional, top-down approach to PD, and allow for more heutagogical, self-determined learning, teachers may be more likely to experience change.

As one participant stated,

> On a school level, on a team level, on a district level, we don't run education the way that it's run in an effective classroom. I think we know how to take a group of people and motivate them to come together, and instead of being

> horses pulling in every direction, to yoke up and pull together. Then they can accomplish amazing things. I think it's possible, because I've seen it year after year with children. If they can do it, so can adults in teams; and so can schools and districts.

Professional development programs that actively involve its participants could have double value with both content and modeling. Learners could be educated not only by what they hear while in a PD class, but by what they see and do. If the district will embrace the changes desired by its teacher-participants, they will likely see an increase in teacher satisfaction and learning.

Implications for Further Research

There are several areas of research that could be explored further by the district. As my study included only a few highly-esteemed teachers, it would be advantageous to expand the participant base to include a wider range of educators. It would also be enlightening to interview the administrators involved in PD to analyze and gain insight from their perspectives.

There is currently no formal method of assessing the effectiveness of district PD classes. It would be beneficial to perform a study contrasting the experiences and opinions of participants, both before and after PD changes were implemented.

Finally, it would prove worthwhile for the district to investigate the PD practices of other successful schools across the nation. PD classes offered by other districts could be a standard for modeling and course design.

Chapter 5: Reflections

D. Joshua Wilson

My Background

I grew up on a small dairy farm in rural Idaho. Our family of seven didn't have much. After a fire, we had almost nothing. When we lost the farm, my mother drove a school bus. My father found work at a secondhand store. At age 40 and with five kids to support, he made the decision to go to college to become a teacher.

It was not easy for him. I am sure he was the oldest student in most of his classes. I know he felt anxious about providing for the family while he was in school. It must have been a challenge to meet the endless demands of work, school, marriage, church, and family. But he found joy in learning, and great satisfaction in teaching. His example instilled in me a deep appreciation for education. I knew from a young age that I wanted to follow in his footsteps.

He became an administrator, and was my principal when I was in middle school. Some kids might have found this embarrassing, but I did not. I was proud of my father, and felt special when he would call me into his office over the loudspeaker, just to talk and joke around for a bit.

However, other than those positive interactions with my father, I disliked my public school experience very much. I was frustrated by the methods teachers employed in the classroom. I wanted to learn different things than what was included in my textbooks. I wanted to explore, and I hated to waste my time with what I felt was "busy work." It did not matter to my teachers whether I already knew what was being taught—something I could prove time and again via tests and assessments.

In 5th grade, I was placed in a gifted and talented math class. I enjoyed the challenge, and especially the math "races" we would have on Fridays. The winner of the race received a candy bar for a prize. I made sure I won the race. It was easy for me, so much so, that I would refuse to do the assignments. I disliked having to prove a method over and over again with 30 problems every night. It was repetitive and illogical.

Because I did not do the math homework, I was quickly exited out of the program. That was an embarrassing day for me, and I vowed not to do any homework again. I quickly picked up some bad habits regarding schoolwork, some of which still haunt me. I have always wondered what would have happened had those teachers understood me as a learner, or had employed heutagogical learning methods.

Thankfully, not all was lost to me academically, because I had my hero to look to. My father was an inspiration to me, and I could always look up to him as he continued to show me how important education was.

My father pursued his doctorate, but never earned it. He was killed by a driver under the influence when I was still in my teens. I was determined that I would live a life that he would be proud of. In 2007, I graduated with my Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. In 2009, I graduated with my Master's degree in Education Administration. This year, I hope to earn my doctorate, and thereby complete the task my father never had the opportunity to finish.

My Doctoral Experience

This process has been incredibly challenging, mostly because I do not see myself as a writer. Yes, I love to learn, to think, to share ideas. But when it comes to putting my ideas into paragraphs… well, that is overwhelmingly difficult. I was further intimidated by the

knowledge that not only would my thoughts be read by strangers, but my words would be analyzed and judged, and I would have to successfully defend them.

I am sure I stretched my teachers' and peers' patience as I struggled to make my ideas cohesive. Their feedback was immensely helpful. I'm grateful for their support, and for the fact that they refused to give up on me. I fought for every word of this dissertation. I fought my shortcomings, my fear, as did my poor wife, who spent endless hours helping me edit and revise.

Pursuing this doctorate has been a life-changing experience. Or rather, an essence-changing experience. I suppose my life is still very much the same, but I am not. I have grown and matured in unexpected ways. My wife tells me that she sees a new self-motivation, a deeper commitment, greater dedication to the things I deem worthwhile. It has been the result of necessity, as this program left so much of the responsibility for learning up to me. It was strange, at first, to have an instructor suggest what I might do, rather than give specific assignments. It took time for me to realize that I was accountable only to myself, and even more time to embrace personal accountability as a driving motivation.

As I transitioned from the traditional, pedagogical approach to a more heutagogical, self-determined style of learning, I began to realize the benefits of agency and personal responsibility. I was not confined to the instructor's prescribed assignments, but had to seek out new information in my own way. This was an intimidating prospect, as it required me to take risks and discover things on my own.

Risk taking and experimentation has become a part of who I am. As part of the doctoral program I had to try out new techniques to see if they worked, and adjust my discoveries to fit my own needs. Through this endeavor, I sought out the support of experts

and colleagues in the educational community. I discovered that collaboration with others could supplement, strengthen, and deepen my learning. As we developed communities of learning, we were edified by each other's strengths.

I find myself applying the principles I studied in all aspects of my daily life. Agency, risk taking, relationship building, collaboration—I think about them often, and utilize what I have learned in my professional and personal life. I am eager to find ways of implementing what I have studied within my school district. I was invited to head a committee to improve Professional Development within my school. I was also offered the position of Assistant Principal, and will use the opportunity to further study and advance PD practices.

I am proud of what I have overcome, and accomplished. I have done more than put pen to paper. I have become a better writer, a deeper thinker, and a more confident and educated teacher. And I hope—I believe—I'm living a life my father would be proud of.

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Appendix A

Human Factors Board Approval

University *of* Idaho

November 13, 2013

To: Bryan Maughan
Cc: D. Joshua Wilson

From: Traci Craig, PhD

Office of Research Assurances
Institutional Review Board
875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010
Moscow ID 83844-3010

Phone: 208-885-6162
Fax: 208-885-5752
irb@uidaho.edu

Chair, University of Idaho Institutional Review Board
University Research Office
Moscow, ID 83844-3010

Title: 'Becoming a Professional Teacher: Experiencing Ontological Shifts Through Professional Development '

Project: 13-276

Approved: 11/11/13
Expires: 11/10/14

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the above-named research project is approved as offering no significant risk to human subjects.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of this memo. Should there be significant changes in the protocol for this project, it will be necessary for you to resubmit the protocol for review by the Committee.

Appendix B

Research Participant Consent Forms And Interview Protocols

Research Participant Consent Form – Wilson Research

As a doctoral student at the University of Idaho in the Professional Practices Doctorate (PPD) program, I am conducting a qualitative research study on *Becoming a Teacher: What Good Teachers Do*. The purpose of this study is to improve the immediate practice of professional development for teachers in a K-12 school district in southeastern Idaho by gaining an understanding of the ontological shift teachers experience while "becoming" more proficient in their profession. Your participation is much appreciated and your time is highly valued. If you choose to participate please read the following and sign below:

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by D. Joshua Wilson and Lee S. Barney, doctoral students at The University of Idaho with Dr. Bryan Maughan (researchers) being the faculty advisor. I understand that this research is designed to determine the professional development needs of teachers in one school district in southeastern Idaho.

My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Participation may involve being interviewed by researchers from The University of Idaho. This potential interview will last approximately one-hour. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recording of the interview will be made.

I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

I understand that the researchers will not identify me by name in any reports, publications, or discussions with others that use information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Any works produced by me, recordings, and transcriptions of these recordings will be stored using military (256-bit AES) encryption.

Any information regarding names, locations, times, or other identifying information will be obfuscated if used in any reports, publications, or discussions with anyone not listed here as researchers.

I understand that by participating in this research future teachers may be advantaged in their education and experience beyond what I have had.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
I have been given a copy of this consent form.

If you have any questions concerning this study now or at any time during the research process, you may contact me at (208) 359-3320 Ext. 6101, email: jaydubbs22@yahoo.com my major advisor, Dr. Bryan Maughan, email bryanm@uidaho.edu; or University of Idaho office of Research Assurances, (208) 885-6162. I appreciate your willingness to participate and the time you are dedicating to this study. Thank you, in advance, for your generous involvement.

Sincerely,

D. Joshua Wilson

____

Participant Name (please print)

__________________________________ ________________

Participant Signature Date

__________________________________ ________________

D. Joshua Wilson, Researcher Date

Interview Protocol – Wilson Research

Thank you for taking the time to help me understand your perceptions of how professional development has helped you become more adept at teaching. Your responses will be helpful in understanding the ontological shifts teachers' experience, as they become more proficient educators. This study will help provide both teacher preparation courses and school districts a better understanding of the changes (professionally and individually) teachers make in order to increase competency and proficiency in their professional development. This information could be used to improve course design in teacher preparation courses, and improve professional development in school districts.

I would like to record our interview and take a few notes to make sure I correctly capture your experiences; however, I hope you will feel free to just tell me your story. Let's just have a great conversation. Of course, you have the right to not answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with or stop participating at any time, and everything you say will remain anonymous.

1. Do you have any questions before we begin?
2. Do I have your permission to record our conversation?
3. Before we get started will you please carefully read through and sign this consent form?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. What initially attracted you to teaching?
2. How did you come to pursue a career in education?
3. In what areas of your life do you invest the most energy/attention?

VALUED GOALS, BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES

1. Can you summarize the kinds of things you are trying to accomplish in your work right now?
2. Are there some specific practices or principles that characterize your approach to teaching that you consider important (for example, distinctive ways of interacting with colleagues, personal philosophies about education, quality of education in your classroom)?
3. What is the ideal image of the kind of educator you want to become?
4. Are there any moral and ethical values that inform your work?

OBSTACLES, PRESSURES, AND REWARDS

1. How have your commitments and values changed since becoming a teacher? Why? What led to those changes?
2. Are there things that you believed in doing at the beginning of your career as an educator that have changed since?
3. Are there specific qualities that have contributed to your achievements (qualities = personal attributes; for example, determination, persistence)?

TEACHING

1. What do you see as your responsibilities as a teacher?
2. What are the most important things that you hope to convey to students?
3. You have identified several things that you hope to convey to students. How do you go about encouraging these things? Any other ways?
4. How would you characterize your teaching style?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. What professional development opportunities have you participated in during your career?
2. How have these contributed to your development as an educator?
3. What types of professional development courses have been most beneficial to you?

CLOSING

1. Over the course of your career, has there been an overarching purpose or goal that gives meaning to what you do that is essential to making your work worthwhile? What is it?
2. Is there anything else you would like to talk about related to the topic of this interview?
3. Once I have transcribed our conversation I would like to have you look over what I wrote and make sure it is accurate, would it be alright if I contacted you again if I have any further questions? Thank you again for your time.

Research Participant Consent Form – Barney Research

As a doctoral student at the University of Idaho in the Professional Practices Doctorate (PPD) program, I am conducting a qualitative research study on *Agentic Learning Among Higher Education Students and Graduates.* The purpose of this study is to improve the practice of instruction in a Computer Information Technology (CIT) programming course at Brigham Young University-Idaho (BYU-I). It is also to gain a deeper understanding of what undergraduate students experience when they are provided opportunities to take learning risks in an agentic course. Your enrollment in a CIT course that incorporates an agentic approach to teaching makes you uniquely situated for this study. Your participation is much appreciated and your time is highly valued. If you choose to participate please read the following and sign below:

My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and/or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Participation may involve being interviewed by the researchers. The interview will last approximately 30 - 45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recording of the interview will be made.

I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Participation in the research will involve the use of works completed as part of my coursework as a Brigham Young University-Idaho student.

I understand that the researchers will not identify me by name in any reports, publications, or discussions with others that use information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Any works produced by me, recordings, and transcriptions of these recordings will be stored using military (256-bit AES) encryption.

Any information regarding names, locations, times, or other identifying information will be obfuscated if used in any reports, publications, or discussions with anyone not listed here as a researcher. I understand that my biographical data such as age, marital status, gender, and ethnicity will be gathered from BYU-Idaho registration information.

This research will conclude by the end of March, 2014 though your interaction with the researcher may end in December, 2013 or February, 2014.

I understand that by participating in this research future students and recent graduates may be advantaged in their education and experience beyond what I have had.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

By signing this form I verify that I am at least 18 years of age and am consenting to participate.

If you have any questions concerning this study now or at any time during the research process, you may contact me at (208) 496-3767, email: barneyl@byui.edu; my major advisor, Dr. Bryan Maughan, email bryanm@uidaho.edu; or University of Idaho office of Research Assurances, (208) 885-6162**.**

If you wish to see the results of the study please send an email to: barneyl@byui.edu with "Agency and Risk Research Result Request" in the subject line. Results will be available after May 2014.

I appreciate your willingness to participate and the time you are dedicating to this study. Thank you, in advance, for your generous involvement

Sincerely,

Lee Barney,

Computer Information Technology

BYU-Idah0

____

Participant Name (please print)

__________________________________ ________________

Participant Signature Date

__________________________________ ________________

Lee Barney, Researcher Date

Interview Protocol – Barney Research

Suggested introductory script outline:

Thank you for taking time to help me learn about your opinions regarding your experience as a student. Please feel free to tell me what you think above and beyond any question I may ask. I want this to be as free-flowing a conversation as we can have. This will be a recorded session as you have agreed and I will probably jot down a few notes during our discussion with your permission. You have the right to not answer any question you are not comfortable with or stop participating at any time.

Do you have any questions at this time?

Interviewer: Do I have permission to record this interview?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & OUTLINE

Six of the participants will be interviewed after the course. This interview will be loosely structured to allow the participant to tell their story. The main interview question will be "In what ways, if any, do you feel you have changed regarding your ability to accept and handle risk taking from the beginning to the end of the course?" Sub-questions will include:

PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE

Personally get acquainted with participant (family, personal interests, etc. if appropriate)

COURSE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

What has it been like for you to be a member of this course?

In what ways would you say this course affected how you view risk taking, your approach to

your current or future career, and learning?

During this course, what, if anything, would you say surprised you the most?

How has your participation in this course affected the way you might work in other classes? (or perhaps in “your future profession”)

In what ways would you say this course has affected how you view your ability to learn? (can you provide an example?)

Has this affected how you view others, such as your peers, as fellow learners?

if yes…"In what kinds of ways?"

Concluding Script: Thank you again for taking your time to answer these questions. This will help me in my professional efforts to teach college students. Do you have any questions for me?