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A PRACTITIONER INQUIRY OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES
PARTICIPATING AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

by

JOE DON PROCTER

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Next to my computer is a small paper with a quote from Miyamoto Musashi that reads, “In order to pass through life, there is the need to have a spirit, to be decisive about exerting all of one’s energies to overcome difficulties.” As I have so often, I recall this quote again as I complete this dissertation.

First, I want to express my gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Arthur E. Hernandez, and members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Susan Hall, and Dr. Elizabeth Holbrook. Dr. Hernandez provided insight how my perspective and teachers’ perspectives informed my audience. Dr. Hall guided me through the writing process, asking questions that prompted me to become a better writer and researcher. Dr. Holbrook was instrumental during the writing process keeping me focused on connecting theory to practice. With the support and guidance of this committee, I was able to achieve my goal. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Audra Skukauskaite for helping me find a direction to initiate this study. Through conversations with Dr. Skukauskaite about writing and experiences with writing, I learned the value and importance of perspective in qualitative research.

Joe Don Procter

DEDICATION

To my lovely wife, thank you for believing in me. Your great courage and enduring support made this possible. Your hand in mine, we walk the miles. To my parents watching from heaven above, this is for you. Investing in education was never a question of “if;” it was a question of “when.” I am proud to say the answer to your question is “now.” Yes, Pop: “Finally.”

A PRACTITIONER INQUIRY OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES PARTICIPATING AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Joe Don Procter, Ph.D.

University of the Incarnate Word, 2018

The focus of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of self-directed professional development learning as participants in a community of practice. The questions for this study were: How did directing their own learning influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development? How did participating in a community of practice influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?

Four teachers participated in a community of practice. Individual participants used practitioner inquiry to collect and to analyze data as appropriate to their classroom practice instructing the students. I was both a participant and a researcher in the study. In my role as participant, I too used practitioner inquiry to examine my professional practice and my experience in the community. My membership in the community of practice provided access to and perspective about participating teachers' experiences.

The conceptual framework included sociocultural theory and social constructivism to explore theories of learning and culture in a community of practice. I utilized methods of interactional ethnography to investigate relationships between discourse, activities, and the participants' construction of knowledge. I examined video recordings, transcripts and written artifacts produced in the community of practice. I analyzed the participant's experiences from their words and descriptions with Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence. Using an interactional ethnographic perspective allowed me to examine how teachers constructed

professional development individually and cooperatively as participants in a community of practice.

Findings from this study suggest, among other things, that teachers individually constructed their own professional development utilizing practitioner inquiry to explore self-selected questions specific to their practice in the context of their work with support from the community. Practitioner inquiry was an individual process. Collaboration in a learning community enabled the teachers to construct their professional development connected to context of work. Findings from this research study contribute to an understanding how Situated Learning Theory connects to teacher professional development. Situated Learning Theory can explain how member participation in a learning community can prompt engagement and motivate learning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	1
Teacher In-Service Professional Development.....	1
Challenges to Professional Development	2
Time limitations for professional development.	2
Limited teacher perspective.	3
Limited connections of professional development to context.	5
Lack of collaboration with teachers.	6
Professional Development in a Learning Community.....	7
Frequency and duration of professional development.	8
Collaboration, support, and feedback.	9
Situated learning in a community.	9
Professional learning community.	11
Community of practice.	11
Purpose Statement.....	12
Research Questions.....	12
Summary.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	16
Preservice Teacher Training	17
In-Service Professional Development.....	19
Situated Learning Theory	20

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Community of Practice	21
Practitioner Inquiry	24
Practitioner Inquiry for Teachers	25
Duration and frequency.....	25
Content knowledge and practice.....	26
Active participation.....	27
Informal learning.....	28
Practitioner inquiry in context.....	29
Change in perception.....	30
Practitioner Inquiry in a Community of Practice	33
Frequent collaboration.....	33
Collaboration and application.....	36
Adaptive learning in a community.....	37
Gap in Methodology	39
Interactional Ethnography as Method.....	39
Participant Observer in a Learning Community	42
Summary	43
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN	46
Conceptual Framework.....	46
Research Design.....	47
Ethnographic perspective.....	48

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Participant observer.	49
Data Collection and Analyses	56
Fieldwork in Practitioner Inquiry.....	57
Practitioner inquiry in a community of practice.	57
Community of practice focus.....	58
Schedule for data collection.....	59
Data collection in practitioner inquiry.	61
Data analysis and interpretation in practitioner inquiry.....	63
Data Analyses with an Ethnographic Perspective	64
Domain analyses.	67
Taxonomic analyses.....	69
Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	70
Research Site.....	72
Participants.....	73
Participant Selection	74
Protection of Participants.....	78
Summary	79
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	81
Autoethnographic Perspective	81
Mr. Martinez’s Story.....	93
Ms. Frizzle’s Story.....	96

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Ms. Jimenez’s Story.....	104
Meeting Eight Reflection Questions.....	108
What happened.....	109
How this COP affected our practice.	111
If this COP were to continue.....	112
Reflection as Participant Observer.....	113
Limitations	116
Data Analysis	117
Domain One: Reasons for Professional Development.....	119
Domain Two: Reasons for a Community of Practice	121
Taxonomy One: Teacher professional development in a community.	123
Domain Three: Parts of Learning	124
Domain Four: Ways to Engage Learners.....	125
Taxonomy Two: Teacher engagement in professional development.	127
Summary.....	128
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION	130
Discussion of Findings.....	131
Response to research question one.	132
Response to research question two.	133
Implications.....	135
Implication one.	136

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION

Implication two.	136
Implication three.	136
Recommendations for Future Research	137
Summary	138
APPENDICES	152
Appendix A Signed Letters of Research Protocol Clearance	153
Appendix B Meeting Agendas.....	157
Appendix C List of Topics Compiled Using Spradley’s DRS	160
Appendix D Sample Domain Analysis Worksheet.....	161
Appendix E List of Domains	162
Appendix F Resulting Domains with Structural Questions.....	163
Appendix G Summary of Taxonomies and Domains	165

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Formal Professional Development and Learning Communities.....	54
2. Taxonomy, Domain, Included Terms, Examples	119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Diagram of my roles as teacher, participant observer, and researcher.	50
2. Example domain analysis.	68

Chapter One: Teacher Professional Development

Professional development (PD) for teachers is costly (Odden, 2011). There are financial costs associated with effective professional development, for example purchasing supplies and equipment, hiring substitute teachers, traveling expenses, and additional non-monetary costs such as time, according to Allan Odden (2011). Kennedy (2016) declared schools in the United States invest a lot of money and time in teacher PD. Utilizing a review of literature consisting of 28 experimental studies published since 1975 researching how PD supports teacher learning, Kennedy asserted PD needed to incorporate how teachers learn, how they are motivated, and how they perform their jobs. Although exact costs are difficult to calculate for teacher professional development, an important factor to consider is every citizen who pays taxes in every community contributes to funding teacher education.

Teacher In-Service Professional Development

In-service professional development is generally intended for teachers to develop their practice and to improve their teaching skills (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Utilizing findings from the National Writing Project, a project-based PD program, Dierking and Fox (2013) asserted continuous teacher professional development is important to improve teachers' knowledge and skills with the goal of increasing student learning. Dierking and Fox examined middle school writing teachers' perceptions of their practice as they participated in intensive writing sessions over the course of 2 years, which included mentoring from expert teachers and collaboration with other teachers. The researchers highlighted duration of sustained PD in addition to collaboration in a learning community as factors that participating teachers reported positively influencing their skills. Similarly, Hochberg and Desimone (2010) argued at least one purpose of teacher professional development was to improve individual teachers' practice with a goal of

improving student learning in a descriptive article that outlined their arguments. Hochberg and Desimone advocated effective PD included combinations of frequent and sustained PD in collaboration with other teachers. Teachers improved their teaching skills when PD focused on strategies relevant to content they taught (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Although PD is necessary, there are challenges for teachers participating in-service PD.

Challenges to Professional Development

Challenges to teachers participating in PD include, but are not limited to, the following topics: infrequent PD sessions (Stewart, 2014), lack of individual teachers' perspectives (Jones & Dexter, 2014), lack of content related to context of work (Opfer & Pedder, 2011), and lack of collaboration with other teachers (Hadar & Brody, 2013; Stewart, 2014).

Time limitations for professional development. Stewart (2014) declared PD sessions offered in limited duration and infrequently in the form of one-shot workshops or lectures support neither teacher learning, nor student learning. In the same descriptive article, Stewart explained teachers need extended time to reinforce their learning by applying learning from PD to their practice. After evaluating teacher in-service PD programs, Desimone (2009) concluded frequency and duration of PD activities are significant factors that may determine the effectiveness of PD.

Utilizing results from their empirical study examining teachers' knowledge and quality of instruction, Neuman and Wright (2010) agreed with Desimone's (2009) assessment PD requires an investment of time beyond infrequent in-service PD. Neuman and Wright conducted a mixed-method study with 148 participating teachers assigned to one of three groups: a control group that received no additional PD, a group that worked with formal PD in the form of a college course related to language and literacy, and a group that collaborated in weekly meetings with

instructional specialists. The role of the instructional specialists was to collaborate with participating teachers and provide ongoing PD related to language and literacy. Neuman and Wright concluded teacher PD benefited from the frequent feedback teachers received working with instructional specialists. Furthermore, participating teachers asserted they applied immediate strategies they had learned in the PD sessions with instructional specialists. Mundy, Howe, and Kupczynski (2015) advocated for more time and frequency of opportunities to practice PD. According to results from their quantitative research study involving responses to an online survey from 299 teachers, there was a high correlation between time participating in in-service PD sessions and frequency of use of strategies. Teachers valued weekly PD sessions in which they had opportunities to use the content they had learned in PD sessions.

The school year calendar for Texas public schools encourages scheduled in-service professional development sessions to occur infrequently. Texas Education Code Subchapter C. Operation of Schools and School Attendance Sec. 25.0811 mandates the schools may not begin before the fourth Monday in August. One week before school begins for students, employment contracts for teachers may start depending on the school district calendar (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Teachers may participate in in-service PD during this week, then the next opportunity to participate in PD is based on the next available school holiday; for example, in October (over a month after the initial PD was offered), teachers may participate in PD again. Following this school holiday, the next opportunity occurs typically in February (Texas Education Agency, n.d.).

Limited teacher perspective. Jones and Dexter (2014) asserted another challenge for in-service teacher PD is that PD does not often include teachers' perspectives. Jones and Dexter conducted a qualitative research study involving math and science teachers at two middle

schools. The researchers examined teacher PD categorized as three systems, formal, informal, and independent. Jones and Dexter explained formal PD includes planned, structured learning sessions. Campus and district leadership initiate formal PD, and then in turn provide it to teachers. Describing informal PD, teachers choose to collaborate and work together on issues the teachers decide, which school or district leadership may not necessarily determine. Jones and Dexter (2014) defined independent PD as “learning activities that teachers engage in on their own initiative and accord, and which possess no connection to their organization” (p. 371). On top of investing time and money in formal PD, the researchers designated informal and independent learning as essential process for PD. Advocating for a combination of these three PD categories, schools and school leadership “are missing opportunities to enhance the teacher and students outcomes by not supporting, recognizing, connecting to, and building upon teachers’ informal and independent learning processes already in place” (Jones & Dexter, 2014, p. 383).

Alternatively, Koellner and Jacobs (2015) described PD as a continuum ranging from adaptive to specified. Utilizing findings from a research study in which they examined the sustainability and adaptability of PD, Koellner and Jacobs developed PD models as a continuum. In their research study, 13 middle school math teachers participated in one of two groups. One group received more training sessions and participated in PD more frequently than the other group of participating teachers. The researchers collected data pretests and posttests to measure changes in content and pedagogical knowledge. In addition, they utilized an observation protocol to collect data based on classroom observations. According to Koellner and Jacobs (2015), an adaptive PD model is “designed to be readily responsive or adapted to the goals, resources, and circumstances of the local PD context” (p. 51). An adaptive model of teacher in-service PD had

the most positive impact on teachers' skills. In contrast to an adaptive PD model, described a specified model of PD provided to teachers "to ensure a particular, predetermined PD experience" (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015, p. 51) Koellner and Jacobs (2015) advocated for an adaptive model of PD in which teachers direct their individual learning because there is "the potential to substantially affect teachers' knowledge and instruction" (p. 64).

Limited connections of professional development to context. Opfer and Pedder (2011) emphasized the importance of including perspectives of teachers in conjunction with PD that occurs during the workday in the context of teaching. Opfer and Pedder reviewed literature related to teacher in-service PD utilizing a complexity theory framework. Their purpose of utilizing a complexity theory framework was to understand how factors related to individual teachers and the school environment affected teacher in-service PD. Additional factors they examined included teachers collaborating as learning communities, the nature of PD activities, and whether the PD was located or situated in the context of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the term "situated learning" to explain how learning is situated in the context of the environment where the learning happens. In the case of teacher in-service PD, learning is situated or job-embedded in the authentic context in which teachers practice. According to Opfer and Pedder (2011), PD is connected to teachers' daily teaching practice and takes place during the school workday in the school environment. Opfer and Pedder advocated for PD to include teacher learning situated in context of practice because of the influential relationship between individual teacher learning and the context in which teachers work. Thus, they recommended future research investigate how context and the organization in which PD takes place influences and is influenced by teacher learning.

Situated learning is adaptive, in contrast to specified PD that Koellner and Jacobs (2015) described as pre-planned sessions provided to teachers. Situated learning is directed by the learners as informal or independent learning (Jones & Dexter, 2014) and related to the context in which learning takes place. Zeichner (2012) called for adaptive in-service teacher PD. Zeichner advocated teacher PD needed to include teachers adapting their own learning in the context of the school where they taught.

Stephens et al. (2011) agreed with Zeichner's demand for authentic for in-service teacher PD. Stephens et al. examined teacher's beliefs and practices related to their authentic learning with opportunities to practice PD. Utilizing a survey, which included 1,428 responses and a case study involving 39 participants, the researchers asserted direct support for teacher PD and opportunities to practice PD positively affected teacher in-service PD. As a result of participating in this study, the teachers improved their instruction skills. Also, their experience with authentic, situated PD helped the teachers make better-informed decisions regarding teaching curriculum. In addition to lack of PD related to context, a lack of collaboration opportunities to practice PD with other professionals is a challenge (Stephens et al., 2011).

Lack of collaboration with teachers. Stewart (2014) claimed formal PD often fails to change teachers' practice. Formal PD sessions often "consist of exposure to content and do not impact a teacher's practice unless they are reinforced through further exploration and practice" (Stewart, 2014, p. 30). Teachers benefit by participating in learning communities. Instead of PD sessions assigned to teachers, collaboration in a learning community allows for opportunities for teachers to reinforce their PD (Stewart, 2014).

Likewise, Hadar and Brody (2013) asserted formal PD isolates teachers and diminishes opportunities to practice. Hadar and Brody conducted a qualitative study analyzing participants'

interview responses. Their study consisted of three separate learning communities in which twelve participants participated in one-year long PD programs. Their findings indicated teacher participation in a collaborative learning community decreased isolation and prompted teachers to examine their practice.

In summary, there are multiple challenges to in-service PD. These challenges to effective PD related to sessions offered in limited duration or frequency. Other challenges concern teachers' roles in their own learning and the context in which they learn and work. Compounding the challenges to effective PD is the lack of collaboration with other teachers in support of their PD. In response to these challenges, possible strategies that deserve further investigation involve the individual teacher and a learning community.

Professional Development in a Learning Community

According to Stanley (2011), learning communities have elements that address some challenges to effective PD. Examining articles related to in-service teacher PD, Stanley identified factors that contribute to effective learning communities. Example factors are increased frequency of collaboration and collaboration that included sharing strategies how to provide instruction and ideas how to plan lessons for effective instruction. Stanley advocated for teachers participating in learning communities to provide their experiences and knowledge as resources for in-service teacher PD. Stanley (2011) stated, "The knowledge that teachers can offer regarding context and practice cannot be underestimated" (p. 77). Through collaboration and examination, teachers can practice and refine instructional strategies with their peers; thereby, improving their practice.

Systematically reviewing literature covering fourteen years of empirical research related to school leadership and student achievement, Hitt and Tucker (2016) asserted teacher

collaboration in a learning community fosters in-service teacher PD. They declared job-embedded learning offered in learning communities is beneficial for teachers to apply PD to their practice. Moreover, Hitt and Tucker identified how school leaders influence teacher PD in learning communities. Leaders who provide PD as a learning community address the needs of teachers by finding ways to use the strengths of individual teachers (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). For example, school leaders may utilize strengths of individual teachers as mentors to provide PD for a learning community or the collective faculty. Learning communities utilize informal learning and allow frequent opportunities for teachers to participate in PD (Jurasaitė-Harbison & Rex, 2010; Stewart, 2014). Utilizing informal learning and directing their own learning in learning communities, community members may continue their learning outside of formal learning sessions that occur infrequently.

Frequency and duration of professional development. Learning communities are designed to have teachers meet over an extended duration in which community members provide on-going support for PD throughout the year, not limited to designated formal PD sessions (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2013). Sun et al. advocated for teacher PD to include collaboration in order to sustain teacher learning from formal PD sessions. According to Sun et al. (2013), community members can support their learning from formal PD sessions with self-directed learning. Exploring teachers' experiences in a PD program focused on writing across 39 schools in a quantitative research study, their results indicated collaboration was a significant variable determining how teachers changed and improved their practice. They suggested one approach to teacher PD is to provide exposure to PD content in formal PD sessions, then continue to support teacher PD in collaboration with other teachers in a learning community.

Collaboration, support, and feedback. Opfer and Pedder (2011) explained collaboration positively influences individual teacher learning. Collaboration in a learning community provides support for formal PD because teachers have opportunities to develop their learning. Specifically, teachers participating in a learning community can promote dialogue, share ideas, and reflection (Lee & Shaari, 2012).

Levy, Thomas, Drago, and Rex (2013) determined teachers collaborating was beneficial for their PD; furthermore, they named factors including immediate feedback and critical assessment as important for PD. Levy et al. reviewed data from previous studies they had conducted to examine how teachers explored their practice across educational fields, including science, social studies, English. For each of these fields, the researchers examined teachers' discourse to understand how teachers conceptualized "inquiry" respective of the content they taught. Levy et al. provided an example, of how inquiry in the field of science differs from inquiry in history. They explained that in science the process of inquiry involves conducting experiments and collecting data. In the field of history, for example, inquiry involves analysis of documents and past events. From their study, Levy et al. concluded teachers developed their understanding of inquiry through critical analysis. by participating in a learning community sharing feedback with each other.

Situated learning in a community. In a learning community, PD is a situated activity that is socially constructed by teachers in or by their group interactions with others (Green & Dixon, 2008). PD is situated or embedded in the context of a teacher's work, their classrooms, and their students. Pella (2011) examined teacher learning as a situated process of in-service PD in a learning community. Using a qualitative research study, which included the researcher's observations of learning community meetings, Pella analyzed 4 middle school teachers'

experiences as participants in a learning community exploring how teachers' participation in a learning community affected their perspectives of their own skills as teachers and their students' learning. In the findings from this study, the participants reported situated PD involved authentic learning experiences, which were beneficial for their improved teaching practice. Pella asserted authentic learning benefited the participating teachers' instructional practice because the participants examined their practice situated in the context of their work in collaboration with other teachers. Critical reflection and analysis of experiences contributed to a change in their teaching practice, for example, discovering how best to teach writing. Through sharing and reflecting with colleagues, the teachers learned to adapt their instruction. The teachers adapted their PD relevant to the context in which they practiced and for their individual needs (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015).

Curwood (2013) provided another example of situated learning in a community examining how 5 high school English teachers integrated technology into their English class curriculum. Over the course of one year, Curwood conducted a qualitative study examining teachers' hands-on learning experiences with technology as they collaborated in a learning community. The participants in this learning community were novices, concerning their level of expertise integrating technology beyond word processing and preparing presentations. Using an ethnographic approach to analyze data, the researcher examined teachers' practices that contributed to their integration of technology in their classes. Curwood (2013) advocated for PD to include learning in a community for skills based PD, especially for technology instruction, because formal PD sessions presented in isolation from a learning community "function to deprive individuals of agency and discount the importance of social learning" (p. 94). Curwood's

demand for PD situated in a learning community is in agreement with claims by Stewart (2014) and Sun et al. (2013) that PD is better sustained in a learning community.

Professional learning community. A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an example of a formal, specified learning community (Jones & Dexter, 2014; Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). In a PLC, leadership outside of the learning community plans and assigns topics, for example from campus or district leadership, and then teachers receive directions (Jones & Dexter, 2014). A specified model of PD as described by Koellner and Jacobs (2015) aligns with the attributes of a PLC because a PLC has a particular design and purpose. In a PLC, campus leadership direct membership and purpose (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). According to notable authors on the design and implementation of PLCs, DuFour et al. (2010) assign membership to teams by teaching assignment, grade level, or a specific class. The structure of a PLC is specific to achieve a specific purpose. The purpose for a PLC is for teachers to collaborate “to analyze and improve their classroom practice” in order to improve student learning (DuFour, 2004, p. 3).

Community of practice. In contrast to the PLC as a specified learning community, a community that shares a common practice directs a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991), originators of the term “community of practice” (COP), described a COP as comprised of individuals learning through a process of social interaction situated in a context of where learning takes place. Lave and Wenger (1991) described a COP as individuals sharing a practice organized at their will. In a COP, individuals direct their own learning, selecting a focus for their learning community. Through collaboration, each member in a COP shares a common interest and purpose for participating with other individuals.

Wenger (1998) explained further there are not specific features of a COP other than the shared practice of individuals. Formal PD, in which membership and topics for PD are assigned to teachers, contrasts to informal PD in a COP. Learning opportunities for teachers participating in a COP are informal as teachers determine the focus for the learning community not relying on an external source (Jones & Dexter, 2014). Lee and Shaari (2012) explained the lack of formal structure in a COP and “focus on unstructured practice forms an important basis for exploratory inquiry and authentic learning” (p. 458). Individual participants have opportunities to suggest a topic or focus of the learning community, relevant to their practice should they so choose (Lee & Shaari, 2012). According to Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) individual community members direct their own learning. Self-directed learning is adaptive (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). Instead of receiving training according to formal PD design, teachers have an active role directing their learning and creating knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). When school districts or campus leadership dictate the purpose and membership of a learning community, teachers lose valuable opportunities for PD; instead, individual teachers can direct their practice with support of a community of practice (Jones & Dexter, 2014). Therefore, teachers’ participation in a community of practice best addresses challenges in formal PD (Pella, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The focus of this study was to explore high school teachers’ perceptions of self-directed professional development learning as participants in a community of practice.

Research Questions

The questions for this study were:

1. How does self-direction of learning influence high school teachers’ perceptions of their professional development?

2. How does participating in a community of practice influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?

Teachers' perspectives as self-directed learners need attention (Sun et al., 2013). How teachers direct their learning and their motivation to participate in professional development need examination (Kennedy, 2016). Teachers participating in a community of practice concerning how teachers share learning opportunities situated in the context of their practice needs attention (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Much of the existing literature describes the limitations and challenges of professional development and offers suggestions for improvement highlighting collaboration in learning communities. To address the challenges associated with PD and contribute to the literature on PD, this study examines teachers' perceptions of professional development self-directing their learning as participants in a community of practice.

Summary

The focus of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of professional development self-directing their learning as participants in a community of practice. Teacher-centered PD challenges the structure and philosophy of long-established formal professional development. The teachers examined their individual experiences directing their own learning experiences. The teachers participated as researchers situated in the context of their work environment directly affecting the quality of their learning experiences. In the community of practice, the teachers had opportunities to collaborate and support each other's professional development.

Chapter 1 introduced the purpose of in-service teacher professional development. Although professional development is important for teacher and student learning, there are challenges limiting professional development, which in turn influence teachers' perceptions of

their professional learning. Challenges for teachers to participate include time based on work schedules and school calendars. Other challenges relate to limited opportunities for teachers to direct their own learning and to participate in professional development connected the context in which they teach. Lack of opportunities for teachers to direct their learning in a learning communities are another influence on teachers' perceptions of professional development.

The following chapter provides a background of relevant literature about teacher professional development. Chapter 2 serves to provide an understanding of what happens in teacher professional development. Topics covered in the next chapter include teacher certification, preservice teacher training and in-service professional development. Additional topics covered are situated learning and practitioner inquiry. In this chapter, I present relevant literature explaining interactive ethnography as a research methodology and background of my role as a participant observer. Chapter 2 concludes with an explanation of the role of researcher as participant observer.

In chapter 3, I explain the methodology for the study. I explain how I utilized an interactive ethnographic approach to examine teachers' perceptions of professional development. Additional topics covered in this chapter include a detailed explanation of my role as participant observer in the community of practice, including how my role functioned and influenced this research study. I also explain the nature of the participants, their selection, and the research site. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the detailed steps taken in collecting and analyzing data through using interactive ethnography.

Chapter 4 contains the analyses of data collected for this research study. I provide my analyses of data using Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS). I used an ethnographic approach to examine the participant's words and their actions collected from the

practitioner inquiry. Using Spradley's DRS, I constructed a domain analysis and taxonomic analyses in order to examine professional development as a cultural practice identifying patterns and principles of the group providing insight to the teachers' perceptions of their professional development.

Finally, chapter 5 consists of the discussion, implications, and recommendations. In this final chapter, I discuss the implications of teachers directing their own professional development. In addition, I examine how their perceptions of professional development influenced their learning experiences. Using teachers' perceptions participating as adult learners in a self-directed community of practice, I make recommendations involving the individual teacher and a learning community. Last, I conclude this research study with recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Many researchers and commentators cite the 1983 publication of a report titled *A Nation at Risk* from the National Commission on Excellence in Education as a turning point in education reform in the United States (Craig, 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Shepard & Kreitzer, 1987). The report described the academic performance of American high school students calling for improvement in student learning and assessment standards. Notable education reform efforts focused on teacher accountability policy related to earning and maintaining certification among other issues include the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, the update to NCLB, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which President Obama signed in December 2015, and the 2009 Race to the Top grant (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, 2017).

The NCLB law also increased attention on students and school performance requiring schools to administer standardized tests to students annually (Cosner & Jones, 2016). Using the test results, schools had to demonstrate progression of student learning as indicated by students' test scores (Steinberg & Kraft, 2017). Schools that failed to show an annual improvement in test results, were subject to possible sanctions, including decreased funding (Groen, 2012). In an update to the NCLB law, the ESSA continues to mandate accountability for student learning. One change included in ESSA was for schools to prepare students for college and careers. In addition, states and local education leaders had more flexibility to choose how to implement their plans for teacher PD (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Another education reform effort can be attributed to the Race to the Top grant in 2009 that required school districts and states to “measure and monitor teacher effectiveness” (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere, & MacSuga-Gage, 2014, p. 106). According to McGuinn (2012),

the Race to the Top grant differed from the No Child Left Behind law in at least one notable approach to education reform: states were rewarded for reforming their approaches to education as opposed to receiving sanctions for not achieving mandated results. Increased attention to teacher PD was at least one noteworthy result of the Race to the Top grant (McGuinn, 2012). McGuinn credited the grant with prompting attention to teacher PD and accountability; thereby prompting states to change their approaches to teacher PD, for example including student test results with teacher performance evaluations and making public teacher evaluation data. Federal law mandates investment in teacher PD, which begins with preservice teacher training.

Preservice Teacher Training

The literature about teacher professional development (PD) focuses primarily on preservice training as opposed to in-service PD (referred to also as professional development). Reviewing literature focused on 15 empirical research studies conducted over the past 25 years, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) identified purposes for teacher PD. Ingersoll and Strong defined preservice as training before employment to develop prospective teachers' skills with instruction and classroom management strategies. In contrast to preservice training, in-service refers to PD for teachers to improve their teaching skills during employment (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). To earn initial teacher certification, teachers in the United States can complete preservice training in at least two ways each with different requirements: one way is traditional certification and the other is alternative certification also referred to as non-traditional teacher certification.

In the course of earning traditional teacher certification, teachers complete coursework to satisfy bachelor's degree requirements in the field of study in which they plan to certify, in addition to teacher training coursework. Preservice teacher training coursework usually includes education theory, instructional strategies, the subject knowledge in the area of the prospective

teacher's certification for secondary certifications and field experience (such as observing experienced teachers and student teaching); teaching under the guidance of mentors, including a supervising university professor and a classroom teacher (Freeman et al., 2014). Additional coursework for preservice teacher training includes classroom management combined with how to plan and present lessons, according to Freeman et al. (2014). During a preservice teacher's field experience, mentors direct and support preservice teachers (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010). For example, in Texas, a prospective English teacher at the high school level following a traditional path to certification, must first earn a bachelor's degree in English, complete teacher training that includes field experience (school observations and student teaching), then pass at least two state mandated certification exams.

Alternative teacher certification is an option for prospective teachers who do not have a background in education, meaning they may not have completed coursework in education (Kwok, 2017). In most states, teachers earning alternative certification must have at least a bachelor's degree in the subject they plan to teach for secondary certification, attend an accredited alternative teacher preparation program, and pass the same teacher certification exams required for traditional certification. Alternative certification requirements may include coursework and/or field experience similar to traditional certification requirements (including observing experienced teachers and teaching under supervision of a mentor). The notable difference between traditional and alternative certification is in the course of earning traditional certification, teachers also complete degree requirements for a bachelor's degree (Kwok, 2017). In the course of earning alternative certification, prospective teachers may apply coursework to a master's degree. Upon completion of preservice teacher training and earning certification, if certified teachers continue to participate in PD, now referred to as in-service PD.

In-Service Professional Development

According to Freeman et al. (2014), teachers new to the profession, may need in-service PD to develop their instructional strategies and class management skills. Freeman et al. reviewed states' policies to determine which states required instruction for teachers concerning class management strategies and how preservice teacher programs provided instruction regarding class management strategies in the process of teacher training. Utilizing results from a review of literature, Freeman et al. (2014) indicated preservice teachers "may not be prepared to effectively manage student behavior upon completion of a teacher preparation program due to a lack of exposure to content" (p. 116). Kwok (2017) emphasized a similar need for in-service PD because teachers' PD influences their teaching skills. Kwok explored teachers' beliefs and their classroom management skills with a mixed-methods research study. Surveying 89 participants and qualitative data including interviews and observations from five participants, Kwok advocated for in-service PD to provide additional support for teachers to develop their skills.

Reviewing literature covering 10 years of articles, Wang, Odell, and Schwille (2008) described factors influencing beginning teachers' skills. Wang et al. (2008) advocated teacher mentors need training to serve as guides and provide support to new teachers because the quality of mentors influences how teachers learn to teach suggesting collaboration with peers and mentors was a beneficial component to teacher PD. Building on the findings from Wang, Odell, and Schwille's review of literature, Allen (2013) investigated the experiences of new teachers. To determine how preservice PD training and in-service PD supported new teachers' skills as teachers, Allen conducted a mixed-method study over the course of five years. Findings from Allen's study provided evidence that new teachers benefited from time specified for PD and focused on teachers' learning. Allen (2013) advocated for "sustained periods of time when

teachers can think deeply about issues of teaching and learning in relation to their own students” (p. 82). Additional findings from Allen’s study reported that extra support from colleagues benefited teachers’ learning.

In addition to improving their teaching practice, teachers participate in PD to earn credit hours toward maintaining their certification. On September 1, 1999, standard teaching certificates replaced the previously designated “lifetime” teaching certificates in Texas. Teachers with standard teaching certificates are now required to complete 150 hours of PD every five years as part of the teaching certificate renewal process (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Teachers holding lifetime certificates are required to participate in professional education opportunities depending on the requirements of the employing school districts.

Aside from maintaining certification, beyond minimum requirements, and separate from employing school districts teachers may select PD based on personal or professional interests (Skerrett, Warrington, & Williamson, 2018). Teachers have opportunities to earn continuing education hours by attending conferences or participating in formal trainings and courses offered face-to-face or online. Federal and state education agencies often provide PD opportunities to teachers, in addition a teacher’s employing school campus may offer locally created PD (Taylor et al., 2015). A common factor of effective in-service PD is learning takes place or is situated in teachers’ work environment (Stephens et al., 2011).

Situated Learning Theory

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger coined the phrase, “situated learning” in their 1991 book titled “*Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation.*” Lave and Wenger (1991) presented situated learning as a theory describing how learning is situated or takes place in the context of the environment. Originally, Lave and Wenger used the term “legitimate peripheral

participation” to describe how an individual experienced situated learning first as a novice observing members of a community, then gradually transitioning to a fully participating member of the community. Later, Wenger et al. (2002) changed their description of individuals participating in a community. Instead of individuals becoming members of a community, individuals participate collectively as a community to create shared resources. Situated Learning Theory explains how member participation becomes the fundamental process of engagement and learning for a learning community based on the following four elements of situated learning: (1) content, (2) context, (3) participation, and (4) community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Content describes the topics, materials, and processes involved in learning (Stein, 1998). Content connects to learners’ lives and experiences (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). Context describes the place, environment, or situation in which learning takes place. Individuals direct their learning using content related to context where learning takes place (Jones & Dexter, 2014). Participation refers to the interchange of ideas connected to learning. Individuals direct their learning and adapt their learning in collaboration with other individuals (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). Situated learning elements, content, context, and participation, make a community possible (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The community of situated learning theory provides the social context of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Participants co-construct learning experiences in a community through social interaction and exchanging ideas with other learners.

Community of Practice

Wenger et al. (2002) named three fundamental elements of communities of practice (COP), namely community, domain, and practice. The foundation of a community of practice starts with individuals determining a clear purpose, communicating the roles of each participant, and creating a sense of belonging and trust, according to Hoffman, Dahlman, and Zierdt (2009).

Hoffman et al. (2009) conducted a research study concerning learning communities to explore participants' beliefs and how their participation affected their learning. They collected data over the course of three years from 57 participants in learning communities through participant observation, field notes, and artifacts produced by the learning community, in addition to administering a survey. Hoffman et al. advocated investing time to develop membership in learning communities. The researchers noted a challenge was membership changed often; members leaving the group and new members joining disrupted the process to creating trust in the learning communities. Hoffman et al. named attributes necessary for learning communities include a facilitator to organize the community, shared leadership among community members, and each member to actively participate accepting different roles. In agreement with the structural elements needed for a learning community Hoffman, Dahlman, and Zierdt named, Doolittle, Sudeck, and Rattigan (2008) added that initiating a learning community requires an investment of time to establish the community and to have community structure worked out by group members. Doolittle et al. (2008) advocated for learning communities to encourage interaction and to challenge teachers isolating themselves from each other.

Domain centers on common interests participants share in a COP, according to Wenger et al. (2002). Community members negotiate a shared domain or focus for the group (Wenger et al., 2002). The domain guides learning and gives purpose for the members to collaborate. Individuals have the capacity to direct their own learning, choosing topics or a focus to enhance their learning (Sun et al., 2013). Members of a learning community contribute resources and knowledge based on individual experiences strengthening learning for the collective community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In a learning community, participants can share ideas and receive feedback, in turn encouraging an exchange of ideas (Lee & Shaari, 2012).

Practice is the specific focus of the community and reflects how the group members develop and share their learning (Wenger et al., 2002). Practice includes common activities community members engage in and ways they communicate about these activities. Participants' shared practice and learning take place in the same environment whether a physical location or a shared space determined by participants (Wenger et al., 2002). Community members direct their learning through their practice; therefore, external forces, outsiders, institutions may influence practitioners, which in turn influences their practice and the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Seeking answers to questions relevant to the immediate challenges they face, members of a learning community may utilize a self-directed approach to learning (Wilson & Hartung, 2015). Wilson and Hartung investigated self-directed and informal learning involving 79 leaders from 22 non-competing organizations. After the participants engaged in conversation and directed discussion topics for their groups, they completed a survey. Using survey responses collected over a period of two years from "executives at high levels of leadership" from a range of organizations including health care, business, and government; the researchers did not name specific organizations (Wilson & Hartung, 2015, p. 606). The purpose of their study was to examine how participants learned from each other, how they reported changes in their skills after participating in learning with participants from different organizations, and how they developed an awareness of themselves and others. Utilizing findings from this quantitative research study, the researchers asserted participants benefited from directing their individual learning and informal discussions in learning communities. Wilson and Hartung (2015) recommended training and PD providers take advantage of informal learning by creating and encouraging opportunities in which participant direct their learning.

Practitioner Inquiry

Practitioner inquiry should be seen as a research approach developed from situated learning. Practitioner inquiry involves practitioners researching and examining their practice and addressing problems they identify in the context of their work at the site where they practice (Stringer, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to outline key elements of practitioner inquiry, which includes (1) selecting a focus or problem, (2) developing a research plan, (3) collecting and analyzing data, and (4) making improvements (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Similar to situated learning, practitioners select content related to their work environment (DiLucchio & Leaman, 2012). The first step in practitioner inquiry is practitioners develop research questions and focus on problems relevant to their practice, the purpose of inquiry. Taylor (2011) described how “intimate knowledge” the practitioner as researcher possesses offers a unique insider perspective necessary to address their own learning. As with situated learning, practitioners examine their practice in the context of their work environment (DiLucchio, Leaman, Eglinton, & Watson, 2014). For practitioners, practitioner inquiry is embedded in their practice. Practitioners research their questions in the environment of their practice in the course or process of their practice. Participants determine how they participate in the second and third steps of practitioner inquiry, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data (Casey, 2005). In sum, practitioner inquiry provides three important similarities to situated learning: (1) practitioners select content directing their inquiry, (2) practitioners conduct their inquiry in the context of their practice, and (3) practitioners conduct their inquiry through their practice.

Practitioner Inquiry for Teachers

Practitioner inquiry is a research approach that provides an understanding of practitioners' experiences and of their practice in the context of their work environment (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). For teachers, practitioner inquiry provides opportunities to research problems and examine their practice (Hill & Haigh, 2012). Practitioners, in this case teachers, have an active role deciding their research interests, collecting and analyzing data relevant to their practice, and reflecting critically to learn and improve their practice (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). The practitioner has the responsibility to identify and address problems connected to their experiences, then in response, develop an action plan. Teachers can utilize practitioner inquiry to seek answers to their questions in the context of their own practice.

Studies of practitioner inquiry by teachers to date have addressed six issues. Duration and frequency are important factors for effective in-service PD. Teachers directing their own learning can improve their content knowledge and practice. Practitioner inquiry is an approach in which teachers actively participate in their learning. In researching questions relevant to their practice, teachers may utilize informal learning. Practitioner inquiry connects to the context in which teachers practice. Positive effects of teachers directing their learning with practitioner inquiry include a change in their perceptions and improved practice.

Duration and frequency. Desimone (2009) argued critical factors of effective in-service PD include alignment with how students learn, duration, relevancy to the teachers' practice, active participation, and collaboration. Highlighting duration and relevancy as perhaps most important, Desimone explained that duration includes frequency and length of time participants engage in learning opportunities; the more time teachers are involved in PD, the more they learn.

Relevancy describes how PD aligns with the teacher's perceptions and their value of the PD focus related to their practice.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) advocated for teachers to participate in PD frequently because teacher learning is part of a complex system in which the elements of situated learning- content, context, participation, and community- influence teacher learning. Each learning opportunity is different because the elements of situated learning change. Opfer and Pedder (2011) asserted "that in different combinations, circumstances, and sequences, the same causes that may produce teacher learning and change may also lead to intellectual stagnation and inertia" (p. 381). Borko (2004) shared Opfer and Pedder's claim that PD requires long-term investment in learning opportunities. Borko declared learning opportunities are effective when they connect to teachers' work environment and allow multiple opportunities to engage in learning and applying learning; therefore, frequency and duration of learning opportunities may influence teachers' learning.

Content knowledge and practice. Curwood (2013) advocated for learners to direct their own learning to address a critical factor of PD Desimone described, relevancy. Examining teachers' practices, Curwood advocated a self-directed approach to teacher learning contributed to increased usage of technology as an instructional strategy. Reflecting on experiences as a teacher researcher, Yeager (2006) reported how she utilized practitioner inquiry to improve her practice and how to share accomplishments of her students. By researching her practice, Yeager (2006) asserted she was able to "look at and talk about what was being accomplished in everyday life in classrooms: how it was being accomplished, what students were doing and learning, with whom, when, where, how, for what purposes, and with what potential consequences" (p. 28). An ethnographic perspective provided a method to understand better her practice as a teacher and to improve her instruction, for example providing to students resources so they could make

connections in their learning. Utilizing data collected and analyzed using practitioner inquiry and an ethnographic perspective, Yeager provided evidence of her improved practice and student learning.

Limbrick, Buchanan, Goodwin, and Schwarcz (2010) conducted a research study to investigate whether teachers participating as researchers of their own practice would improve their instructional strategies and content knowledge about writing. Their study included 20 participating teachers over the course of two years. Limbrick et al. collected data from field notes in addition to participating teachers' written records reflecting on their practice and transcripts from focus groups. Additional data included the participating teachers' students' results on standardized tests of writing. Participating teachers utilized practitioner inquiry to investigate their teaching practices. In the process of researching their practice, collecting and analyzing data regarding their students' writing, participating teachers reported they made changes to their practice (Limbrick et al., 2010). Utilizing practitioner inquiry to investigate critically their practice, the teachers made changes for the benefit of their students' learning.

Active participation. To keep pace with constant change, teachers directing their learning is beneficial (Mor & Mogilevsky, 2013). Mor and Mogilevsky (2013) claimed teachers' active participation and application to their learning to their practice remain critical factors influencing teacher learning regarding a project-based PD program and inquiry-based learning focused on technology. In this mixed methods study, teachers directed their inquiry exploring how to use technology as an instructional tool in their own practice. Teacher-led inquiry did have challenges in the beginning as some participants expressed "confusion and frustration" (Mor & Mogilevsky, 2013, p. 12). Ultimately, teachers reported benefiting from directing their inquiry especially when they engaged in PD for a dynamic field such as technology. Technology is

constantly evolving; therefore, according to Mor and Mogilevsky, in order for teachers to be prepared to teach students, an inquiry-based learning approach benefits teachers.

In agreement with Curwood and Mor and Mogilevsky, Klein (2007) recommended self-directed learning as a component of PD because teachers can adapt their learning. Klein conducted a case study consisting of five participants who participated in PD offered by the school where they worked. The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' experiences with PD. Factors Klein named that contributed to the participants' positive learning experiences were participants directing their own learning and leading formal or direct instruction PD sessions, utilizing informal learning, and receiving support in a learning community.

Informal learning. Informal learning raises teachers' awareness of their practice drawing attention to their questions about their practice and prompting a search for answers (Rock et al., 2016). In contrast to PD as formal workplace learning, Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex (2010) defined informal learning as learning that "occurs in interactions among teachers and their reflections upon their practice, sometimes planned and often happenstance" (p. 267). Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex (2010) collected data as verbal records from the participants' reflections to investigate how teachers directed their own learning and how teachers viewed opportunities for their informal learning. The researchers explained informal learning raises teachers' awareness of their practice drawing attention to their questions about their practice and prompting a search for answers. Consisting of eleven teachers, their ethnographic research project utilized a theoretical framework that teacher learning is a socio-cultural phenomenon meaning "learning is constructed through and thus visible in discourse or the ways that people communicate" (Jurasaitė-Harbison & Rex, 2010, p. 268). Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex (2010) asserted teachers benefited from directing their learning, utilizing informal learning, interacting

and sharing their reflections on their practice. Conversely, when teachers did not have an active role in directing their own learning, they expressed frustration. Individual teachers reported benefits directing their learning, in turn improving their motivation to participate in PD. Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex reported individuals' improved practice connected improved PD for the community of participating teachers.

In a review of 56 empirical research articles spanning the years of 2000 to 2014, Hitt and Tucker (2016) identified common themes relating informal learning and educational leadership. Calling for “a focus on leadership practices that create dynamic and innovative learning environments for adults and children alike” (p. 562), Hitt and Tucker (2016) asserted leaders influence context, the school environment. Additionally, their review of literature focused on how school leadership has influence on teachers' practice. Hitt and Tucker (2016) urged school leaders to support teacher learning not only for content but also “affective factors such as the emotions teachers experience and their internal states” (p. 561). School leaders in cooperation with teachers can encourage learning opportunities in which teachers direct their learning and utilize informal learning for the benefit of their practice and student learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Practitioner inquiry in context. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) advocated for teachers to participate as researchers in practitioner inquiry taking control and ownership of their learning with an active role in creating content, consistent with situated learning. Teachers participating as self-directed researchers are sources as well as “consumers” of knowledge creating content that is situated in the context of their work environment (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). Teachers develop “alternative ways to understand, assess, and improve teaching and learning and using inquiry,” which contributes to an understanding of their own practice and may inform

other teachers (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006, p. 505). In agreement with Cochran-Smith and Donnell's description of the teacher as researcher, Whitney, Hicks, Zuidema, Fredricksen, and Yagelski (2014) claimed teachers' roles changed due to their participating as researchers and directing their own practice. Whitney et al. (2014) advocated for teachers to embrace their role as creators of knowledge and share their learning with other teachers as well as "the press, parents, and the public, whose opportunities to understand teachers' perspective may be few" (p. 178).

Megowan-Romanowicz (2010) reported that teachers benefited from directing their own learning when they participated as researchers and their research was relevant to their practice and situated in the context of their work. In this mixed methods study examining how teachers' experiences participating as researchers influenced their teaching practice, Megowan-Romanowicz utilized interviews, field notes, and survey data collected from 46 high school science teachers who conducted action research projects over the course of one year. Participants experienced in-service PD learning how to conduct research situated in the context of their work. The teachers reported benefits to participating as researchers. Their experience changed the way they taught and changed their view how students learn. As a result of participating as researchers of their practice, the participants reported their confidence in their teaching skills increased. Additionally, the teachers asserted they read more critically research studies and information regarding PD. Their experience as researchers of their practice informed their skills as learners and teachers.

Change in perception. Goodnough (2008) asserted teachers benefit from directing and engaging as active learners contributing to a change in their beliefs and their practice. Goodnough had two purposes for this qualitative study, which were to examine how teachers engaged in learning and how the teachers collaborating as researchers developed in to a

community of practice. Participating in a community of practice over nine months, six teachers employed at one school examined their practice learning how to make their instruction more student-centered. Rather than dominating classroom instruction by directing classroom activities, participants learned how to guide students, so the students could direct their own learning. Reporting participants' experiences from this study, Goodnough declared teachers changed their beliefs and knowledge of content leading to a positive transformation of their practice. Through participating in a community of practice and directing their own learning, the teachers had a better understanding of how to engage students with student-centered activities.

Wallace and Priestley (2011) investigated teachers' perceptions related to PD and how their perceptions influenced their teaching practice in their classrooms. The researchers collected data at five schools using semi-structured interviews with participating teachers. Their results from this qualitative, interpretive case study indicated that teachers tasked with directing their own PD reported positive experiences with their classroom teaching. The participants reported supplementing their instruction "beyond content learning to support general life skills such as responsibility, questioning, informed decision-making, communication, and logical thinking" (Wallace & Priestley, 2011, p. 377). The school's administration supported the teachers directing their own learning, which prompted teachers in turn to encourage students to develop their skills.

Like the results Wallace and Priestley reported, Haug and Sands (2013) asserted practitioner inquiry was related to increased awareness of teacher's instructional strategies and connected to students being more engaged in lessons. The mixed methods study involved two groups of teachers, a control group and treatment group, from three high schools. Over the course of one school year, teachers in the treatment group participated in eight PD sessions and collaborated individually with an instructional coach. Haug and Sands researched how teachers

engaged in practitioner inquiry in addition to how PD sessions could influence teacher practice and student engagement. The researchers collected and analyzed data from their classroom observations, student surveys, and interviews with participants, including the PD session facilitators, instructional coaches and teachers. In their results, Haug and Sands reported that teachers in the treatment group believed their instructional skills improved. The teachers attributed their perceptions to utilizing practitioner inquiry situated in the context of their practice, collaborating in PD sessions, and receiving individual support from an instructional coach.

Esposito and Smith (2006) argued teachers researching their practice feel empowered “because it allows the teacher to investigate his/her own pedagogical choices within his/her classroom and specifically work to meet the needs of all those involved” (p. 57). Esposito, a university professor, in collaboration with Smith, a graduate student, described how teachers participating as researchers influenced both of their perceptions of their practice. Esposito and Smith shared their experiences from a graduate level course in which students conducted action research. As the course instructor, Esposito learned how to support her students, especially students that may be reluctant to conduct research, such as the case with one of her students, Smith. Esposito described how “she had to genuinely listen to her teacher-researcher’s concerns and be prepared to adapt the course at any moment to address those concerns” (Esposito & Smith, 2006, p. 58). Smith, at first a reluctant teacher-researcher, transformed to feeling empowered through researching her own practice. Collecting and analyzing data from her classroom, Smith adjusted her instruction. Smith asserted she perceived that her instruction skills as a classroom teacher improved. Research directed by teachers supports the assertion that

teachers can adapt their practice to their needs as well as their students' needs and develop their knowledge and skills (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015).

Practitioner Inquiry in a Community of Practice

Combining teachers directing their learning with structural elements of community of practice can benefit the individual and the community in which they participate (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Suk Yoon, 2001). Structural elements of communities of practice include frequency, collaboration and application, and adaptive learning.

Frequent collaboration. Garet et al. examined professional development features, such as PD delivery methods (conferences, workshops, collaborative professional sessions, or instructional coaching), duration of the PD sessions, content, and opportunities to engage in PD including receiving feedback on their teaching. Analyzing 1,027 survey responses from teachers who had participated in the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, a federal program that supports teacher PD, the researchers measured changes teachers reported in their content knowledge and instructional skills. The results indicated duration was a significant factor, influencing teacher learning positively. Content connected to the teachers' practice led to an improvement in teachers' content knowledge and instructional skills. Additionally, by including a space for shared common knowledge, ongoing collaboration, and reflection, collaborative PD sessions contributed to positive changes in teachers' practice (Garet et al., 2001).

In findings from a quantitative research study, Mundy et al. (2015) asserted frequent contact and collaboration among practitioners is more beneficial for teacher learning than single-session workshops. Mundy et al. surveyed 299 teachers from three school districts about the teachers' perceptions of PD offered in learning communities and workshops, in addition to how teachers perceived the utility of PD in which they participated. Teachers reported frequent

opportunities to collaborate and apply instructional strategies in their practice were beneficial. In their findings, Mundy et al. advocated for weekly PD sessions for participants provided in learning communities. To provide PD content relevant to teachers' work, the researchers advocated for schools to cooperate with universities such as through graduate level course work. In addition to importance of frequent PD sessions, Levy et al. (2013) asserted when teachers are able to use strategies immediately after PD sessions they attend, the teachers are more likely to change their practice.

Polly and Hannafin (2011) agreed with Levy et al.'s assertion that frequent PD sessions are beneficial for teachers' learning. Polly and Hannafin (2011) investigated "teachers' espoused practices (what they thought they did) and their enactment (what they were observed doing)" during a yearlong PD project (p. 120). The researchers' purpose was to examine how teachers integrated technology in their math classes in this quantitative study. Polly and Hannafin collected and analyzed data, which consisted of video recordings from participating teachers' classrooms and PD sessions in addition to interviews with participating teachers. Evident in Polly and Hannafin's findings, teachers' enacted practice, that is their observable teaching practice, did not always align with their espoused practice, practice they claimed to have enacted. Polly and Hannafin (2011) observed that although teachers "enacted" instructional strategies from their PD sessions, the strategies were a "hybridization of professional development learning that differed fundamentally from the strategies and activities modeled and discussed during workshops" (p. 129). The researchers observed context contributed to the disconnection between teachers espoused and enacted practices. Challenges to classroom instruction including student motivation, large class sizes, and classroom management influenced how teachers implemented instructional strategies; therefore, teachers adapted strategies they practiced in their PD sessions

to serve their students (Polly & Hannafin, 2011). As a possible solution, the researchers suggested teachers co-plan and participate in cooperative learning communities with PD providers providing support initially. After teachers become more proficient with the instructional strategies, then they can direct more of their own learning (Polly & Hannafin, 2011).

Frequent PD sessions in learning communities are beneficial for teachers' learning especially to support novice teachers, according to Kazemi, Ghouseini, Cunard, and Turrou (2016). In their research study, Kazemi et al. (2016) analyzed discourse between the teachers and teacher educators focusing on "rehearsal," a term the researchers defined as practicing a specific instructional strategy with peer educators before using the strategy in a classroom (p. 20). Rehearsal provides learning opportunities in which learners can reflect on challenges they encounter with instructional strategies or other issues including classroom management. Kazemi et al. analyzed 90 video-recorded meetings of teachers and teacher educators from three public universities as they participated in a cycle of PD, which included situated learning in learning communities. Kazemi et al. asserted the significance of participating in learning communities as well as for teachers' learning. Rehearsal in learning communities can support teachers' learning and address weaknesses in "enacted" instructional strategies Polly and Hannafin (2011) named in their research study because rehearsal provides opportunities for teachers to share and receive feedback on their practice from their peers in a learning community (Kazemi et al., 2016). In addition, teachers learn the value of sharing their practice with others and supporting learning in a community (Kazemi et al., 2016).

Collaboration in a community is an element of situated learning, which can decrease isolation in the context of the work environment (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Hadar and Brody

(2013) asserted that “breaking isolation” is both a significant result of PD in a learning community and motivating factor for teacher learning in a study they conducted (p. 157). Their study included 12 educators participating in three separate but concurrent learning communities. Hadar and Brody collected data over the course of one year consisting of interviews with participating teachers, teachers’ self-reported reflections and artifacts participants produced. The researchers mapped individual teacher PD and formation of the learning community to show the relation between these two processes. Hadar and Brody (2013) advocated for teachers to participate in learning communities because talking about student learning promoted individual teacher learning. Participating teachers reported that talking about student learning increased the teachers’ awareness of students’ needs. In turn, teachers changed their instructional practices to meet the needs of students. In addition to promoting individual learning, collaborating in a community was beneficial because “discourse was the glue that held together collaboration and instructional improvement” (Hadar & Brody, 2013, p. 157).

Collaboration and application. The results of the quantitative study by Kelcey and Phelps (2013a) agreed with those of Mundy et al. (2015) and Kazemi et al. (2016) that collaboration is an essential element of effective PD. Kelcey and Phelps analyzed data collected from two databases to investigate the influences of PD on teachers’ content knowledge in this case content knowledge for math and reading. The researchers utilized two databases including the Teacher Knowledge Assessment System, which had data related to teacher’s content knowledge for teaching math, and the Assessment of Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Teachers of Reading study, which had data relating teachers’ content knowledge, their instructional practices, and student learning. Analyzing data based on a national sample of 1,761 math teachers and 818 reading teachers, Kelcey and Phelps correlated teacher knowledge scores

with PD design elements. Kelcey and Phelps (2013a) asserted that “effective professional development involves unpacking and application of ideas by a teacher with his or her immediate colleagues and the coordinated integration of new ideas into their school and instructional context to achieve common aims” (p. 373). Megowan-Romanowicz (2010) provided similar evidence that collaboration and application of learning are important features of effective PD prompting opportunities for conversation and reflection on practice with fellow community members to facilitate learning. In the case of practitioner inquiry, reflection is an important component (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Teachers analyzed data relevant to their practice, then reflected in order to learn and make changes in their practice (Kazemi et al., 2016). Providing opportunities for critical reflection situated in the work environment, teacher learn in collaboration with a learning community (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006).

Adaptive learning in a community. Teachers are able to adapt their learning in a community of practice (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). Teachers direct their learning based on questions and challenges they encounter by utilizing practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). In researching their practice, practitioners may focus on finding solutions themselves or in collaboration with the community sharing their experience. Curwood (2013) and Mor and Mogilevsky (2013) advocated for teachers to direct their learning based on findings from separate research studies in which teachers experienced hands-on learning with technology. Depending on the questions teachers investigate, they direct their learning and search for appropriate resources to answer their questions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). According to Kazemi et al. (2016) practitioners can learn from “rehearsal,” practicing an instructional practice in collaboration with community members, then based on peer feedback, the teacher can make changes to their practice. Sun et al. (2013) advocated for teachers to continue learning content

from formal PD sessions utilizing support from a learning community. Polly and Hannafin (2011) asserted teachers benefit from a guide, for example a professional development provider or an instructional coach, to support teacher learning. Teachers benefit from guided support from a content source, a person or resource with knowledge that informs teachers' learning at least at first (Polly & Hannafin, 2011). After teachers are proficient with content, Polly and Hannafin suggest teachers may direct their learning independent of a source. Ultimately, participants in a community of practice direct their learning, according to Wenger et al. (2002). While participants may contribute content or content may be provided by a source outside of the community, self-directed learning is possible through their interactions and participation in an activity related to the context of their practice (Pella, 2011).

Even with numerous benefits associated with learning communities, researchers also document disadvantages. Roberts (2006) cited the social interaction aspect is the reason for a learning community's strength and at the same time its weakness. Roberts (2006) explained participants cooperated to create shared resources but warned that "preferences and predispositions" for power may influence the learning processes in the community (p. 629). For example, the varying degree of individual member's age, experience, personality, or authority can significantly influence collaboration, according to Roberts. Heron (1996) asserted social interactions and group dynamics may influence the purpose, direction and practice of the community. In agreement with Heron, Wenger et al. (2002) declared power is mediated through community members' practices. In turn, if there is not effective communication among community members or coherent structure, the group may not be successful (Wenger et al., 2002).

Gap in Methodology

Research studies cited in this literature review investigated how teachers learn on the job, the outcomes of PD on their learning, the influence of teacher PD on student learning, and how individuals learn in learning communities. Teachers' perceptions directing their own learning, however, is rarely addressed with qualitative research. Of 196 research articles published in 2012 in four educational journals, Sleeter reported a majority of the published studies were experimental design that lacked qualitative data calling attention to the lack of qualitative teacher education research that investigates teacher learning. The "lack of qualitative data leaves readers only with a sketchy idea of details that would help visualize the applicability of findings to local contexts" (Sleeter, 2014, p. 151). Van Driel and Berry (2012) agreed with Sleeter's assertion that effective teacher research includes personalized and relevant topics for teachers and teacher educators. Van Driel and Berry (2012) advocated for teachers to direct their learning based on their practice and learning from their experiences both individually and in collaboration with other teacher. In the case of educational research, interactional ethnography is advantageous for describing and interpreting complex interactions such as learning and teaching (Green & Bloome, 1997).

Interactional Ethnography as Method

Interactional ethnography is based on a social constructivist perspective of learning in which members of a community construct learning experiences as they interact (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Interactional ethnography is a method to examine participants' interactions, including meanings participants in a community assign to their experiences and how these experiences are constructed over time (Heath & Street, 2008). In the case of teachers' PD for example, learning can be viewed as socially constructed by teachers in or by their group

interactions with others (Heap, 1980). Learning and teaching are constructed by participating members of a community through social interaction based on their experiences and defined by the context in which learning is situated (Green, Dixon, & Zarahlick, 2003). Green et al. (2003) proposed three ethnographic principles to examine particular aspects and practices of group interactions: culture and cultural practices, contrastive analysis, and holistic perspective.

The study of culture and cultural practices involves how members of a social group construct a common culture signaled through the patterns of what they do and how they interact (Green & Meyer, 1991). For example, students in a classroom or teachers working at a school form a social group, in which participants construct culture common for their group. The group's culture is evident in the "patterned ways members of the social group develop for acting and interacting together, for interpreting what occurs, for evaluating what is appropriate to know and do" (Green & Meyer, 1991). Ethnographers explore the group "members' actions and words to make visible the patterns of activity and to frame his or her interpretation within and across time and events for the group being studied" (Green et al., 2003, p. 218).

Ethnographers use contrastive analysis to understand the membership and practices of a social group from various angles (Green et al., 2003). Examining group culture involves triangulating perspectives of time, sources of data, and activities (Green & Bloome, 1997). The ethnographer describes the social group's cultural practices exploring the meanings participants assign to their experiences by collecting and analyzing participants' words, phrases and actions (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012). By comparing and contrasting data through contrastive analysis, the ethnographer can develop an understanding of the ways members construct their ways of being, acting, interacting, and accomplishing phenomena relevant within the cultural group (Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, & Green, 2001).

Holistic perspective relates individual parts of the group's activity and the researcher's analyses to the broader whole (Green et al., 2003). Through a holistic perspective a "piece of culture" can be examined in depth to identify larger cultural issues and elements" (Green et al., 2003, p. 211). Holistic perspective involves exploring how parts fit together as a collective system is constructed. One example of holistic perspective is how individual members relate to the social group as a community. The "part" in this sense is the individual. The learning community constitutes the "whole." Using holistic perspective, a researcher can examine how an individual participates in a community or how the community develops over time (Green et al., 2003). Another example is how topics for individual meetings, "parts," may change over time in comparison to other meetings, for example from the first meeting to the last meeting. A researcher can explore part-whole relationships utilizing various levels of representative events compared to cycles of events.

Using an interactional ethnographic perspective, the researcher investigates relationships between discourse, activities, and the participants' construction of knowledge (Heap, 1980). Data collection and analysis includes the words and phrases participants use in their discourse. According to Tusting (2005), "language is clearly central to much of the experience of negotiation of meaning we encounter in communities of practice" (p. 40). Analysis of language collected can be conducted with Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) Method. Researchers use Spradley's DRS to examine an individual participant's own words to connect meaning of actions and events and to explore how participants construct culture in a collective community. Chapter Three: Research Design presents a more in depth explanation of how I collected and analyzed data using an interactional ethnography.

An emic or insider's perspective is used to examine interactions and discourse of a learning community (Labaree, 2002). The researcher as an insider, as participant observer interacts with participants and utilizes their perspective to collect and analyze data allowing an understanding of participants' experiences based on their words and actions (Spradley, 1980). The next section provides a description and explanation of the role of participant observer in a learning community.

Participant Observer in a Learning Community

The participant observer functions in multiple roles (Heath & Street, 2008). As an insider, as participant, the participant observer collaborates with the participants engaging in activities (Heath, 1982). At other times, the participant observer, in the role of researcher, may direct the participants. The main function of the participant observer role is to provide access to a participant's or community's insider knowledge and "reveal a new perspective, a hidden meaning, or a unique understanding that is not otherwise achievable by an outsider" (Labaree, 2002, p. 103). A researcher that has a prior relationship or connection to participants is privy to insider knowledge prior to the research study. Taylor (2011) described how an "intimate insider" has a relationship with participants already. In contrast to an outsider, an insider has an inherent understanding of culture and relationships under investigation can provide a better understanding of data (Labaree, 2002). Heath and Street (2008) advocated for an insider knowledge to understand ethnography because the researcher has access to more data.

Regardless of the advantages of intimate insider relationship, there are possible disadvantages to researchers as participant observers. There are power of roles and roles of power to consider (Heron, 1996). The researcher has to consider the power of each participant's role in the investigation, including their own. According to Heron, each participant's role in the

investigation may have a unique consequence. Years of teaching experience, course subjects taught, age, and gender are a few factors that could influence not only the participant observer role but also the roles of participants. Seniority and status in the work site may influence data collection and analysis. Additionally, based on a sense of intimacy or familiarity with the researcher, participants may reveal information that could be inappropriate or sensitive (Labaree, 2002). Taylor (2011) asserted the researcher has a responsibility to disclose how data collected from a research study are analyzed and treated to protect the participant and the researcher's relationship with participants. An additional caution is how the researcher disengages from the research setting. The researcher's exit involves considering obligations and relations to participants (Hymes, 1974). Ultimately, the researcher as participant observer has a responsibility to maintain cooperation and collaboration with participants (Labaree, 2002).

Summary

This review of the literature consists of purposes of professional development, situated learning, examining practitioner inquiry and communities of practice, in addition to interactional ethnography as a method. Prospective teachers usually complete preservice training prior to employment in order to develop their skills with instruction and classroom management strategies; however, a purpose for in-service professional development is to improve their teaching skills during employment.

Researchers such as Opfer and Pedder (2011) attribute learning situated in teachers' work environment as effective for in-service professional development. Four elements of situated learning are (1) content, (2) context, (3) participation, and (4) community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Content relates to the topics and materials, which connect to learners' lives and experiences (Wenger, 1998). The place, environment, or situation in which learning takes place

is context (Wenger, 1998). Participants' exchange of ideas and directing their learning defines participation (Wenger, 1998). The social context of learning is community in which participants construct learning experiences in collaboration with other community members (Wenger et al., 2002). In a community of practice, practice describes how learning community members engage in and share their learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The topic or purpose guiding the community is the domain as determined by the community members (Wenger et al., 2002).

Researchers claim there are advantages to teachers utilizing practitioner inquiry in a community of practice (Kazemi et al., 2016). Teachers can utilize practitioner inquiry to research questions and challenges they encounter in the context of their work. By directing content relevant to their practice with practitioner inquiry, teachers are motivated to engage in their own learning. Another advantage to practitioner inquiry is the teacher can participate as an adult learner; thereby addressing a need in literature to understand how teachers as adult learners reflect on their professional practice and learn from their experiences.

Interactional ethnography is a method to examine teachers' experiences participating in a community of practice to analyze the meanings participants assign to their experiences and how they constructed these meanings over time (Green & Bloome, 1997). There are three ethnographic principles to investigate the interactions and practice of a community: (1) culture and cultural practices, (2) contrastive analysis, and (3) holistic perspective. Ethnographers examine how member of a community of practice construct a common culture evident from patterns how they interact and their actions. Contrastive analysis involves triangulating perspectives of time, sources of data, and activities to understand the membership and practices of a social group. Ethnographers utilize holistic perspective to examine how "pieces" of a culture relate to a "whole."

Utilizing an ethnographic perspective, a researcher interprets the group's culture and cultural practices from an emic or insider's perspective. A participant observer shifts their perspective from insider, engaging in activities with participants to outsider, collecting data as an observer. In a role as a participant observer, a researcher's purpose is to collect insider knowledge to examine a culture in detail. In the following chapter, chapter 3, I explain the research design for this research study including a description of the research site and participants.

Chapter Three: Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore perceptions of high school teachers' professional development when self-directing their learning as participants in a community of practice.

The questions for this study were:

1. How does directing their own learning influence high school teachers' perceptions of professional development?
2. How does participating in a community of practice influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?

I used practitioner inquiry with an ethnographic perspective to investigate teachers' perceptions of professional development (PD) as they directed their own learning in a community of practice (COP).

In this chapter, I first introduce the conceptual framework including sociocultural theory and social constructivism. Next, I present the qualitative research design that utilized a practitioner inquiry approach and explain how I use an ethnographic perspective as a conceptual basis. I explain my perspectives as researcher, the research site, the participants, and the protection of the participants. Then, I describe the processes of the data collection and data analyses of this research study, which included fieldwork in practitioner inquiry and data analyses with an ethnographic perspective. Finally, I summarize this chapter.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included theories of learning and culture in a community of practice focusing on sociocultural theory and social constructivism. From a sociocultural perspective, the social world in which people live and work influences their

learning (Shaffer, 2005). Examples of sociocultural factors that influence people's perceptions of themselves how a society defines people include age, race, gender, family, and work influence (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Sociocultural factors influence individuals' interactions and relationships affecting their engagement in a group (Bee & Bjorkland, 2004). This perspective recognizes members of a group are socialized in to a group; the group influences a member's role in the community (Jarvis, 1999).

From a social constructivist view, learning is a process of constructing meaning as members make sense of their experiences (Lunenberg, 2006). Vygotsky (1978) provided a foundational understanding of social constructivism. Vygotsky proposed situated cognition is a social learning process facilitated by members of a culture or group through their language and interactions with other members. For members in a group, learning is an active process in which members construct knowledge by talking and engaging in collaborative and cooperative activities (Merriam et al., 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Lave and Wenger (1991) defined situated learning as a process by which newcomers to the group learn from more skilled group members. Through their interactions, group members in construct knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Situated Learning Theory connects sociocultural theory and social constructivism in which members of a learning community construct learning experiences with support of a learning community situated in the context of professional practice (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

Research Design

Qualitative research examines human experience, beliefs, ideas, systems, and cultures in the context of people's everyday lives (Creswell, 2008). Researchers, through prolonged contact in the participants' setting, collect data to describe and explain social phenomena (Yin, 2011). The qualitative research process is a process of discovery of qualities of individuals and social

groups grounded in a context involving the participants. To understand the human experience in the realm of a social science, researchers collect and analyze participants' accounts of their experiences and views (Holliday, 2007). Researchers conducting qualitative research rely on themselves as the research instrument, in which their biases and interpretations influence the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher employs introspection and critical reflection to confront personal biases and tacit assumptions, which can influence data collection and analysis.

Ethnographic perspective. An interactional ethnography approach made it possible to analyze the meanings participants assigned to their experiences and how these meanings were constructed over time (Green et al., 2003). I used a qualitative interpretive design utilizing methods of practitioner inquiry and an ethnographic perspective to examine cultural phenomena and practices of this learning community and interpret from an emic or insider's perspective the group's culture and cultural practices (Green & Bloome, 1997). First, the teachers participated in a community of practice (COP) utilizing practitioner inquiry to examine their individual practice in a group. Next, I utilized an ethnographic perspective to examine teachers' perceptions of professional development (PD). The three principles of ethnographic perspective I used were analysis of culture and cultural practices, contrastive analysis and holistic perspective.

I analyzed the culture and cultural practices using the common culture community members constructed and signaled through their actions and interactions (Green & Meyer, 1991). Members of a group construct culture expressed through their collective discourse over time (Green et al., 2003). I investigated verbal exchanges "as the basis for the exploration of other aspects of the culture or phenomenon" (Green et al., 2003, p. 75). For example, I examined participants' words and actions connected their perceptions as learners. Utilizing data collected

from the COP meetings including the teachers' discourse and their actions from the practitioner inquiry, I examined PD as a cultural practice by identifying patterns.

I used contrastive analysis to understand how the teachers perceived PD participating as members of a COP. I described the teachers' membership in this group, and then examined their practice contrasting data, such as video recordings, transcripts, and written artifacts, across different points in time and events. I examined how similarities and differences in data described teachers' PD experiences. I looked for units of meaning that participants assigned to their cultural practices. For example, when I examined the data to explore the participants' perceived purpose of PD, I compared differences between teachers' experiences and the message communicated by campus administration.

For holistic perspective, I examined how "parts" fit together to create a broader "whole." The "parts" included how individual members of a social group perceive PD, which they expressed in their discourse. For example, I compiled lists of words and phrases participants used to describe or discuss their experiences with PD. Next, I grouped these words and phrases together based on similarity and differences. I looked for connections between these words and phrases across our meetings. The "whole" included a description of PD as a cultural practice, which the participants expressed in their meetings. Using a holistic perspective, I looked at part-whole relationships between participants' words and phrases used for the duration of this community of practice. (I provide a detailed description of how I utilized holistic perspective in this chapter in the section titled "Data Analysis with an Ethnographic Perspective.")

Participant observer. To ensure I maintained the focus on the perspectives and actions of the participating teachers rather than my own, I used an ethnographic perspective as a conceptual basis. My rationale for my role as participant observer was to "generate conclusions

that were properly grounded in both my own and the participants' experiences" (Heron, 1996, p. 24). In this approach, I was able to include my thoughts as an insider and analyses as an outsider in addition to the participants' words and actions. I used an ethnographic perspective to account for my intentional shift from insider to researcher.

Figure 1 illustrates the roles I had in this practitioner inquiry and how I negotiated my perspective as an insider and researcher.

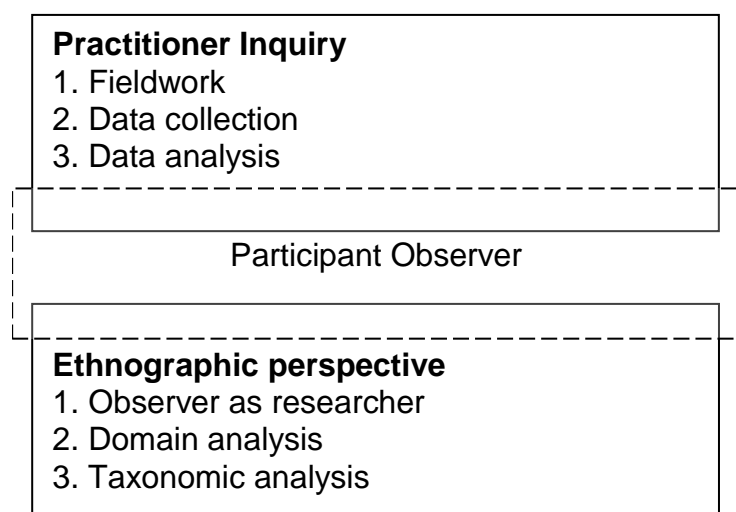


Figure 1. Diagram of my roles as teacher, participant observer, and researcher.

The top box in figure 1 outlines the steps participants used for their practitioner inquiry. In the second box, I transitioned from participant in the practitioner inquiry to researcher. I used my emic perspective to include my thoughts and perspective as a participant. The dotted lines connecting the boxes at the top and in the middle illustrate the overlap and transition between my roles as a participant in the practitioner inquiry and then my role in the bottom box as researcher utilizing an ethnographic perspective. In the third box, I outlined the ethnographic perspective I used to analyze the data collected in the practitioner inquiry. In order to participate with the teachers in this study and to analyze their perceptions of learning (including my own), I utilized an interactional ethnographic method. Interactional ethnography provided a method in which I could examine teachers' interactions through analyzing words and phrases participants used. My

role as participant observer provided a method to participate as an insider, a teacher, and an outsider, as researcher. Later in this chapter, I explain how I utilized practitioner inquiry and an ethnographic perspective to collect and analyze data for this study.

I participated as an insider along with the teachers analyzing my practice and offering my suggestions for effective practice. In addition to participant, I was the facilitator of the COP in this qualitative study, which meant I had to be cognizant of my influence relating to the meeting times, locations, and topics. While considering that at the conclusion of our COP meetings, I would next independently examine data we had collected collectively, I attempted to account for any influence I may have expressed in my management of the COP. My multiple functions as participant observer, as insider and outsider, influenced this study. By utilizing my role as participant observer, my focus was on the teachers' experiences collected in the COP meetings. At the same time, my role as researcher (observer) was to support the teachers with practitioner inquiry.

I was familiar with practitioner inquiry; therefore, my role involved assisting and supporting the teachers as they utilized practitioner inquiry (Polly & Hannafin, 2011). I coordinated the meetings and encouraged the participants to document, and share their experience, which involved negotiation with the participants and invited feedback from the participants. For each of our COP meetings I used "my lens as a participant," as a teacher using practitioner inquiry to investigate my own individual practice.

Teachers as participants were in a role separate from the researcher. Each of the participants was personally familiar and engaged with their practice we wanted to study, so they could participate fully in the community. Individual teachers directed their learning suggesting topics relevant to their classroom experiences. (In the section titled "Fieldwork in Practitioner

Inquiry,” I explain how the teachers directed their practitioner inquiry.) With support of our learning community, teachers had opportunities to decide the focus for our meetings.

My role as a participant observer in the practitioner inquiry provided a basis for developing an emic perspective about the cultural practices of the group in the context of the school environment (Green & Meyer, 1991). As an insider, I wanted to collect data regarding teachers’ perceptions of their professional development. Based on my personal observations teachers teaching their classes and conversations with teachers during PD sessions, teachers regarded PD as a necessary and beneficial; however, the same teachers reported that the time and effort to practice and utilize their learning was limited. Some teachers engaged initially in PD initiatives only to stop using content they had learned. For others, learning opportunities remained elusive. Teachers often shared a sentiment expressed by a former colleague when he complained: “I feel neither professional nor developed.” Comments (and complaints) about PD prompted me to search for a topic beneficial and applicable to teachers’ practice.

As a participant observer, I made observation notes as a teacher researcher participating in a COP during and after the meetings examining the PD experiences of teachers. I used my etic perspective to examine the culture in which people participated to detail their cultural membership and knowledge of the group (Green & Meyer, 1991). I “put on my lens” as a researcher and analyzed the collected data from the perspective of an outsider. From my perspective as an outsider, I examined the COP as a collective with individual perspectives included. Again, there were occasions when I shifted my perspective back to participant, for example to include details in my transcripts or when analyzing a participant’s experience. By recalling events from the COP in my role as participant, this helped me to complete my analyses as a researcher. During the meetings, I could not clearly define when I was a participant as

opposed to observer. There were occasions in meetings when I made field notes reflective of “my researcher lens.” These notes included observations related to teachers describing their experiences with PD, for example. At the conclusion of the COP meetings, I was able to shift my perspective from participant to observer with a more clearly defined approach to examine the experiences of the collective COP. I reviewed transcripts, field notes, audio and video records with my researcher lens analyzing and interpreting data as if I had not been an individual participant.

As an insider and participant, familiarity with the participants and the research site was beneficial because the teachers and I examined our PD in the context of our work (Labaree, 2002). I entered the research study with an understanding of PD based on my experience as a teacher. An understanding of the social situation and PD as a cultural practice provided a basis for collecting and analyzing data with an ethnographic perspective (Spradley, 1980).

Before I initiated this study, I was employed at the research site as a high school teacher and campus coordinator for the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. In my role as teacher and ESL coordinator, I focused on advancing knowledge about second language acquisition and about strategies for teaching ESL students. I worked with the teachers I invited to participate in this COP. I had worked with the teachers providing support for ESL students in their classes; therefore, the teachers and I were familiar with teaching strategies we had used. We were familiar with each other, so the COP had an inherent trust factor already started. I assured the participating teachers that my role in the COP was as a teacher investigating my practice in cooperation with them.

Although we had worked cooperatively in the past, we had not collaborated as a community. We had attended the same formal PD sessions offered each school year at the

research site; however, we had not participated in the same PLC meetings. Table 1 presents a comparison of how the campus administration designed PD for teachers.

Table 1

Formal Professional Development and Learning Communities

	Formal PD	Professional Learning Community	Community of Practice
Membership	Assigned	Assigned	Voluntary
Management	Campus administrators	Department leaders	Individual teachers
Domain	Curriculum and assessment	Curriculum and assessment	Teachers' choices and interests

Note. Comparison of professional development.

Membership of formal PD was similar to a Professional Learning Communities (PLC). At the high school level, district or campus administrators may assign members to traditional PD and a PLC most often assigning membership depending on grade level or by the subject they teach (DuFour, 2004). At this campus, the administration organized learning communities designed as PLCs. Campus administration assigned membership to a PLC depending on the content teachers taught; there was not collaboration between departments or between PLCs. That is to say, math teachers, for example, attended a separate PLC than English teachers. In addition, the campus administration managed formal PD sessions and PLCs determining the domain or the topic for PD (Wenger et al., 2002). For our COP, I invited individual teachers to participate voluntarily. Teachers had an active role directing the focus by exploring their individual classroom experiences with support from each other (Lee & Shaari, 2012). I explain in Chapter Three: Research Design how participants managed this COP and selected a domain.

My interactions with the teachers I invited to this study were limited to the time I participated with them in formal PD sessions and in the course of the school year when I visited

their classes to provide support and guidance to ESL students in their classes. These interactions, though sometimes brief, contributed to my understanding and appreciation of these teachers as professional educators. I came to understand their approaches to working with students in the interactions we had.

Even though our COP meetings were not at regular intervals, we met more frequently than traditional PD sessions, typically scheduled four times in a school year. In contrast to PLC meeting sessions, which are usually scheduled weekly our COP meetings were less frequent. The COP meetings were opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share their reflections, inquire into other teachers' reflections, and direct their inquiry. Meeting less frequently than I had planned allowed more time for teachers to participate in data collection, reflection and to direct their practice. In our meetings, there was more data to analyze than if we had met weekly or biweekly.

As a participant observer, I kept in mind my own perspective as an adult learner. I had hoped to collaborate in a learning community with other teachers who shared the same appreciation of our perspectives as adult learners. I recalled principles of adult learning from a graduate course I had taken previously. The six principles of adult learners are: (1) they desire to direct their own learning, (2) their experiences are sources for learning, (3) immediate questions prompt adult learners to learn, (4) they learn in context related to challenges or problems, (5) their internal motivation is powerful, (6) they want to understand why they need to learn, according to Knowles, Elwood III, and Swanson (1998).

In my experience, teachers may reflect on their experiences as practitioners and as teachers examining their practice through a "lens" as learner. In this manner of learning, teachers' experiences are resources for their learning often adopting a pragmatic approach to learning (Haug & Sands, 2013). For example, if the teacher wanted to learn something new about

integrating technology in their classroom, they might first look for information from a colleague or an internet resource (Curwood, 2013). In addition to direction from a school's leaders, teachers may not wait for formal PD sessions to take advantage of or to seek learning opportunities; instead, they may want to direct their own learning (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). Finally, as adult learners, teachers want to know why they are learning.

My goal for this study was not just to inform about practitioner inquiry, but also to empower the teachers to be researchers of their own practice. As mentioned in the literature about teacher professional development, teachers' perceptions are significant factor for PD effectiveness. I had a goal in mind to explore our perceptions of learning in a learning community not only for the benefit of our professional practice, but also to satisfy our needs as adult learners. Utilizing a systematic research protocol to document our experiences as researchers could be beneficial. In addition to benefiting teachers, I wanted to share with campus administration evidence from teachers participating directing their own learning with practitioner inquiry in a COP. With these outcomes in mind, I recruited teachers to participate as researchers. In the following sections, I explain data collection and analyses. Later in this chapter, I explain how I established trustworthiness and credibility for this research study in addition to providing details concerning the research site and participants invited to join this research study.

Data Collection and Analyses

In this section, I provide an overview how I utilized practitioner inquiry and an ethnographic perspective to collect and analyze data for this study. Using practitioner inquiry, the teachers in the COP collected and analyzed data related to their experiences. In my role as researcher utilizing an ethnographic perspective, I analyzed data from the COP meetings. See figure 1 for an illustration of how I collected and analyzed data.

Fieldwork in Practitioner Inquiry

To initiate this study, I followed three of four steps in the practitioner inquiry guide Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) outlined for teachers investigating their practice in a community. Their guide is titled *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Professional Development*. The four steps Dana and Yendol-Hoppey list are (1) select a focus and develop a research plan, (2) collect data, (3) analyze and interpret the data, and (4) share findings with others. For the practitioner inquiry in our COP, as a facilitator I focused on the first three steps because the fourth, to share findings, I announced to the group was an individual decision.

There was a cycle to the practitioner inquiry COP. Each individual group member engaged in their own practitioner inquiry collecting and analyzing data, then we met as a group to share our insights and to ask questions. Individuals directed their inquiry and decided what they wanted to research and the implications as they might apply to their practice as related to campus and district mandates. In the COP, the teachers also directed the inquiry of the group. The teachers decided the direction of their practitioner inquiry and the COP ensured this study was cooperative. Although I participated as the COP facilitator and guide, I was also a participant with equal influence in the group (Heron, 1996; Polly & Hannafin, 2011).

Practitioner inquiry in a community of practice. The COP design served to bring together like-minded individuals and allowed them freedom to share their experiences and knowledge connected to their individual and general professional practice (Pugh & Prusak, 2013). The attributes that made this COP a cooperative inquiry are that each individual had authority to make decisions, directed their individual inquiry, participated in a cycle of experience and reflection, and then shared their individual reflections with the group (Heron, 1996).

Each participant had the authority to make decisions in the group (Heron, 1996). Participants directed their inquiry based on their interests and questions they posed relevant to their practice. The teachers examined their practice, determined their needs and resources, directed their learning, and determined the most applicable PD experiences. The participants managed and directed the focus of their practitioner inquiry within this COP. COP meetings occurred as cycles to include time and opportunities to experiment with their practice or investigate a question, then reflect on their practice. In the group meetings, the teachers shared their individual reflections.

To guide our learning in a community of practice, I volunteered practitioner inquiry as a research approach for the participants to examine their own practice individually. Practitioner inquiry provided a structure and purpose for the teachers in the community of practice to explore their practice. Referring to past PD initiatives from our campus administration, writing was one notable topic in which teachers had expressed an interest. In the process of inviting teachers to participate in this community of practice, I suggested we could examine our practice about writing.

Community of practice focus. The first step in this practitioner inquiry was for the teachers to select a focus for the community. In my role as participant observer, I initiated a topic for this COP.

I purposely selected the topic writing for two reasons: (1) Writing was a topic of my personal interest as a teacher and the topic was general enough to ensure participants could adapt it to their interests. As a teacher, I wanted to know how writing teachers utilized in other course disciplines. Writing was a topic I wanted to explore with practitioner inquiry. As a writer, I wanted to explore other teachers' experiences as writers. (2) I wondered how writing connected

to PD experiences. In the past, the campus administrators had assigned writing as a topic of PD for the teachers at this school. After an initial formal PD session, however, administrators did not continue to support teachers' learning. For example, teachers attended a meeting the beginning of the school year in which the teachers participated in PD instructing them how to include writing activities in their classes. PD focused on writing instruction was limited to this one session at the beginning of the year. Therefore, I asked myself how participating in a COP focusing on writing could support writing in our classes. Relatedly, I wondered how I could connect my lessons in English class with lessons in a math class through writing.

Before I announced writing as a topic to the group, I had already volunteered writing as a focus to the individual teachers when I invited them to participate in this practitioner inquiry. Each of us had expressed a desire to include writing in our classes and our practice as teachers, so at the first COP meeting, I introduced writing as the focus of the practitioner inquiry. As the meetings continued, each participating teacher had opportunities to initiate topics and direct the COP meetings in connection to the writing that was meaningful to them. With this practitioner inquiry, I had an opportunity to collaborate with other teachers that had once expressed enthusiasm for writing. During COP meetings, my role as facilitator involved keeping the group, myself included, focused on the topic of writing as we used a practitioner inquiry approach to examine our practice.

Schedule for data collection. Beginning in April 2015, the spring semester of the 2014-2015 school year, the COP met for eight meetings over the course of seven months. The COP meetings concluded in October 2015, the fall semester of the 2015-16 school year. I facilitated the days and times for our COP to meet in person as a group depending on teacher and school schedules.

I scheduled COP meetings to begin the spring semester of the school year in order to ensure teachers had an opportunity to incorporate the COP meetings into their schedules. By late April, teachers had time available to participate in the COP. Until April, there was school-wide testing that dominated the school calendar. Teachers were busy administering the tests. Teachers, especially the participants, did not have time (or energy) to participate in this COP after administering tests all day.

I took the opportunity to schedule the COP meetings and initiate the practitioner inquiry after the school-wide standardized tests in the second semester. With summer approaching, I had worried that the participants would not be willing or available to participate in our meetings during the summer. Initially, I had planned for the learning community to meet every two weeks and the participants had expressed interest in joining as a group regularly; however, scheduling four teachers to meet in person was a challenge because prior commitments prevented us from meeting as a COP every two weeks as planned. I scheduled meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday in order to avoid holidays scheduled in the school calendar. Another factor to consider was that teachers attended campus department meetings usually on Wednesdays.

In reality, teachers participating in the COP met every three weeks in the spring semester, one time in the summer, and then every two weeks in the fall. There was a gap of eight weeks since our last meeting in June 2015 at the end of the spring semester until our meeting in the summer. Then, after our summer meeting there was another significant gap of seven weeks until we met in September 2015 in the fall semester. Our fall semester meeting, again because of participants' busy schedules, did not occur until after the teachers had already been on contract for four weeks.

Informal learning was a significant factor in our PD in the COP. As individuals, we contacted each other between meetings to inquire about our practice and to support each other as practitioners. Individuals gained additional informal learning by investigating their practice, participating in professional learning communities (PLC) assigned to their department and formal PD sessions offered by the campus and district. In our meetings, informal learning informed our collective experiences because we shared our individual informal learning. In this manner of continuous learning (informal and formal), our PD was sustained through the cycle of our COP.

The school calendar allowed more opportunities to meet in the fall semester. There were fewer projects to complete and teachers did not administer school-wide tests until the spring semester. These factors were significant in planning our meeting schedule. The meeting schedule I facilitated fit a cycle so that our meetings started after a busy time of the school year and ended before the busy time of the school year started again.

I had proposed to the group that we meet eight to ten times depending on the willingness of the individual group members and the longevity of our learning community. Participants could choose to leave the group as they wanted. A deciding factor for concluding the COP was data saturation. When more meetings would yield less data to collect because of repetition in topics or patterns, data saturation was achieved (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As the facilitator of the group (and participant), if I noticed that our group meetings had started to repeat patterns or if participants experienced boredom with the COP, then I would suggest we conclude our practitioner inquiry.

Data collection in practitioner inquiry. In my role as COP facilitator, I directed the community following a practitioner inquiry approach. The participating teachers were not

familiar with this approach, so I made suggestions about data collection and analysis. I was conscious of my role as participant observer when making these suggestions, as I did not want to impose my influence on the participants. After we established topics for the data we would collect, we discussed methods for collecting and analyzing data. In an effort to keep the practitioner inquiry authentic and centered on the participants, I made general suggestions based on topics the teachers mentioned.

Data collection for the participating teachers involved iterative collection and analysis on two levels: individually and collectively. Individual participants collected data as appropriate to their classroom practice instructing the students. For example, in one meeting we discussed how providing students with examples of our writing as teachers could benefit our instruction and student learning. At the conclusion of the meeting, we agreed to collect data regarding this topic. Our collective meetings prompted discussion and examination of data we had collected and data we wanted to collect individually for our next meeting. In our COP meetings, teachers discussed their experiences, their instructional strategies, and student outcomes (see Appendix B for meeting agendas including the topics for data collection). Individual experiences and practice, informal learning, formal PD, and collective COP meetings comprised data for analysis.

The teachers researched their practice, so they had a choice to make recordings. The teachers as participants in this practitioner inquiry had the option to make audio and video recordings with their own equipment in addition to the recordings I made. To collect textual records about their experiences in the community, the teachers recorded their personal thoughts, reactions, and perceptions. I suggested to the teachers that they keep their field notes as a reflective journal in which they could record personal observations not limited to thoughts, reactions, and questions about their PD. In their work on teachers as researchers, MacLean and

Mohr (1999) suggested teachers utilize personal recordings as reflective logs in which they record their observations and personal notes, then in community meetings teachers share their records and use the records to explore their experiences. Their individual field notes served as records for data analysis. Even though the participants kept reflective logs initially, they did not maintain their written records of their experiences for the duration of this study. The limited written records they did keep served as artifacts for their views of PD and artifacts of their experiences.

As a participant observer, I collected data from the participating teachers as audio and video recordings with audio and video equipment during each of our scheduled meetings. I transferred and stored audiovisual files to a password-protected computer. I directed the audio and video recording equipment from a front angle toward the whole group. I asked the teachers to provide me any other records relevant to understanding their learning for the duration of this practitioner inquiry. In addition to maintaining a reflective journal, I included detailed records of informal conversations, observations, and artifacts.

Data analysis and interpretation in practitioner inquiry. According to the timeline for the practitioner inquiry, in the first week of this practitioner inquiry, the teachers in the COP began collecting and analyzing data. The teachers and I in the COP participated in analyzing the data we collected. Data analysis involved me in my role as facilitator, leading the group to review our purpose for this practitioner inquiry and explore our experiences in a COP. Interpreting data, teachers examined data and compared it to the purpose of this research study (see Appendix B for meeting agendas including the topics for data collection).

As the meeting facilitator, I asked the community to explain what they saw happening in their data and what insights they had from reviewing their data. Individual teachers shared their

experiences and collected data detailed in the previous section. In our COP meetings as a collective, we analyzed our data and interpreted the data reflecting on our practice. In the group setting, we were able to ask questions of each other and explore what we learned about ourselves as teachers and practitioners in addition to providing insight to our learning community about our interpretations of data others had collected. Based on our interpretations (individual and collective), the teachers decided how the data informed our practice and developed implications prompting new questions for inquiry.

Throughout each of these COP meetings, I guided data analysis in my role as participant observer, and when warranted, guided individuals to connect their experiences individually, to our community, and to the teaching profession in general. From my perspective as researcher, I had in mind how the teachers' individual experiences connected to PD, so I sometimes directed discussion to the topic of PD and sometimes my role as facilitator meant I had to keep the community on task. For the majority of the time invested in our COP meetings, data analysis centered on the teaching profession; however, discussion of PD sometimes turned toward a focus on student behavior and student learning (and resistance to learning). In these occasions, I used my perspective as researcher to direct conversation back to the data collected. At the conclusion of our practitioner inquiry, I shifted my perspective from participant to researcher.

Data Analyses with an Ethnographic Perspective

From my perspective as researcher, I investigated teachers' perceptions of PD. Utilizing participant observation as a data collection and analysis method was critical to me keeping track of my perspective during the collective COP meetings as a participating teacher and at the same time as a researcher. In my role as participant, I had in mind my practice under examination, and

then as a researcher, I used my perspective to analyze my practice, the participants' practices, and collective COP as an outsider.

I used Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) to describe the culture of the COP and analyze data. Spradley's DRS provided a guide to organize and analyze qualitative data with an ethnographic perspective allowed me to understand the participant's experiences from their words and descriptions (Brenner, 2006) .

I applied Spradley's (1980) DRS approach by following these steps: (a) locating social situation, (b) doing participant observation, (c) making an ethnographic record, (d) making descriptive observations, (e) making a domain analysis, (f) making focused observations, and (g) making a taxonomic analysis. In Chapter 4: Analysis, I present the findings for the domain and taxonomic analyses. I examined data in the practitioner inquiry process to interpret possible patterns of PD. I reviewed our collected notes and video recorded meetings in addition to written artifacts teachers collected for the duration of this practitioner inquiry.

For the first step in DRS, locating a social situation, I chose a high school as the research site. I present details of the research site in this chapter. In the second step, doing participant observation, I engaged in a COP with the participants as they used practitioner inquiry. The details of these two steps including initiating the practitioner inquiry and doing participant research in a COP are included in Chapter Four: Analysis. In step three of DRS, I used video and audio records I collected from the COP meetings to produce a running index of the time and activities constructed by the teachers in each meeting. I took notes about the topics of each meeting. For example, our initial meetings were different from the final meetings. I used a running index to record the changing topics of each meeting.

To explore verbal exchanges among COP members in our meetings in greater detail, I made an ethnographic record using a pragmatic transcription format (Evers, 2011). The process of pragmatic transcription I developed for my own purpose of this study is not verbatim. I made decisions as a researcher what data to include. The representative transcription served to represent the participating teachers as professionals. The choices I made in transcribing data include a “gisted transcription,” a form of transcription consisting of a negotiation of words and word choice based on what was audible in the recordings (Evers, 2011). I included neither linguistic elements such as annotations depicting pauses or phonetic symbols, nor did I include in the representative transcription “non-word elements” (Hammersley, 2010); instead, I focused on transcribing what I could hear teachers say. I intended to represent participants’ speech not including fillers or hesitation particles, for example. Transcribed episodes include the words and phrases the participants spoke in addition to the context in which the episodes happened. The transcript included indications of changes in activities, topics of discussion, and other events. Transcription as part of the running index included elements from participants’ artifacts.

I reviewed my field notes and transcribed data from the recordings to start analysis and interpretation. I looked for words and phrases participants used when talking about PD. Because analysis with an ethnographic perspective focuses on language, I compiled a list of “included terms” based on words and phrases participants used verbatim. I reviewed the transcripts noting words and phrases the teachers associated with PD including any references related to student learning and teacher learning.

Continuing the process of making an ethnographic record, I reentered the transcripts and applied a label to the topics we discussed when the participants used included terms. For example, for each occurrence of the included term “us,” I judged if the term was in reference to

the teachers' COP. If the speaker used "us" in reference to this COP, then I labeled it as the topic "participating in community." Using these topic labels allowed me to describe what happened in the meetings (refer to Appendix C for a list of topics used in connection to included terms).

In the next step, step 4 of DRS, making descriptive observations, I reviewed my transcript, my field notes and the recordings, following Spradley's (1980) suggestion to use a process of "question-discovery" (p. 33). In making an ethnographic record, I "discovered" questions instead of using a predetermined set of questions. Based on my descriptive observations I asked: "What's going on here?" I examined the data and wrote general descriptions of the community meetings, taking notes, for example, about how the purpose of the group changed over time in subsequent meetings. I added notes to my running index to show the meeting topics. Then, I applied this same question to the topics I had listed in previous step. I asked myself what was happening in regard to participating in a community. I added these notes my running index.

In describing the data, I used thick description to understand how participants interpreted their experiences with PD participating in a learning community (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Thick descriptions I utilized provided context and meaning for participants' words and actions. I documented each participant's role in the ethnographic record I made, which served as an audit trail to account for our interactions (Merriam, 2002). Consistent with the finding patterns with an ethnographic perspective, in the next step I studied the teachers' PD experiences to identify "patterns and the principles of practice of members of a social group" (Green et al., 2003, p. 70).

Domain analyses. Spradley (1980) explained a domain is comprised of included terms and a semantic relationship that the researchers assigns to the domain. Domain analysis involves the researcher selecting a single semantic relationship in order to group included terms

associated with a cover term that the researcher assigns. Figure 2 is a sample domain analysis worksheet. The researcher reviews a list of included terms. Next, the researcher selects a semantic relationship between included terms and a cover term. In figure 2, the included terms “reflecting,” “being accountable,” and “learning,” are reasons for “professional development,” the cover term. The domain name, “reasons for professional development,” describes the cover term.

DOMAIN= Reasons for professional development		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Reflecting	are reasons for →	professional development
Being accountable		
Learning		

Figure 2. Example domain analysis.

Last, the researcher compiles a list of domains resulting from domain analysis to provide an “overview of the social situation” in order to understand the meaning participants apply to their culture (Spradley, 1980, p. 98). The purpose of the domain analysis is to show how participants describe or experience something relevant to their culture, then to find connections and patterns ultimately organizing these connections as domains. Making a domain analysis helped me to make sense of the data identifying patterns across events and time focusing on the teachers’ PD experiences.

For step 5, making a domain analysis, I looked for semantic relationships between the list of included terms and cover terms. First, I selected a single semantic relationship, as suggested by Spradley (1980), in order to group included terms based on a semantic relationship (see Appendix D for the sample domain analysis worksheet). Reviewing the list of included terms, I compiled domains by using semantic relationships, such as “x is a kind of y,” “x is a reason for y,” and “x is a way to y.” Referring back to my list of included terms, I grouped terms by

semantic relationship in order to create a domain. I repeated this process using different semantic relationships. Last, I made a list of domains I identified (see Appendix E for a list of domains).

Step 6, making focused observations, involved selecting an ethnographic focus based on the list of domains I had made and writing structural questions to ask myself as I reviewed the data. I developed structural questions based on a domain. A structural question is the domain formed as a question. For example, for the domain “kinds of professional development,” the structural question was “What are all the kinds of professional development?” Keeping in mind this structural question, I asked myself which “terms” that participants used could be “a kind of *something*?” (refer to Appendix F for domain analysis worksheets with structural questions included).

Taxonomic analyses. In the next step, I followed Spradley’s step 7, making a taxonomic analysis, which involved a process of searching for larger, more inclusive domains comprised of subsets of a domain from the domain analysis. I utilized the ethnographic principle of a holistic perspective based on part-whole relationships to construct taxonomies. I had analyzed the “parts” in the domain analysis. Next, I analyzed the taxonomy, thereby creating new cover terms constituting the “whole.” In the next step, I constructed a completed taxonomy to represent each domain.

I revised my domain analysis worksheets combining similar included terms across domains based on the same semantic relationships. I asked myself a variation of one of the structural questions: “What does PD involve?” and the stem “Professional development involves...” in order to analyze how domains may be subsets of other domains and to sort included terms into categories. I repeated the process of combining domains according to the

semantic the relationship the domains had in common to show relationships among the domains representing teachers' perceptions of PD.

I saw domains that had repeated words, for example, professional development and similar words, such as, learning, learner and engage, participate. The word "engage" stood out by itself. Participants often referred to their engagement or lack of engagement in PD. In this process of revising my domain analysis worksheets, I also deleted included terms and revised cover terms. I eliminated included terms from my domain analyses because the terms did not specifically relate to PD in accordance with the purpose of this study. For example, participants mentioned student learning as a purpose of professional development. I made a conscious decision as the researcher not to include references to student learning in making a taxonomic analysis (see Appendix G for a summary of domain and taxonomic analyses). In the following sections, I explain trustworthiness and credibility, participants, participant selection, and the community of practice for this research study.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

I established trustworthiness and credibility at two levels for this research study. First, for practitioner inquiry, there were factors based on my role as participant. At the second level, there were features of qualitative research that affected trustworthiness and credibility of this research study.

Watkins and Brooks (1994) suggested the trustworthiness of practitioner inquiry does not necessarily align with validity measures for other methodologies. In practitioner inquiry, the practitioners are the research instruments collecting and analyzing data related to a problem they select. Creswell (2009) advised prolonged time in the field is a positive for researcher and study credibility stating, "The more experience that a researcher has with participants in their actual

setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings” (p. 192). Trustworthiness and credibility of practitioner inquiry connect to how the practitioner participates in the inquiry process and the practitioners’ skills as a researcher. The participating teachers were not familiar with practitioner inquiry; therefore, as participant observer I provided the steps from Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) how to conduct practitioner inquiry. To ensure credibility, was I clearly established and documented my role in the COP as participant observer in the section titled, “Participant Observer.”

I established credibility through extensive documentation and interaction with the teachers as practitioners and participants in the COP (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I triangulated perspectives of the participants including my perspective as a teacher and researcher using data collected from multiple sources, including video recordings of meetings, in person active participation, transcription of meetings, field notes providing evidence for triangulation (Yin, 2011). By triangulating teachers’ perspectives, their artifacts, and the activities developed within the COP, I examined how the practitioners directed their own PD. Thick description contributed to this study’s trustworthiness and credibility, which Marshall and Rossman (2011) described as originating with how participants interpret their experiences and triangulated data.

Collaboration was an additional factor contributing to the trustworthiness of this research study. The records and the data reflect interactions and decisions made by the community. The teachers’ collaboration in the COP ensured member checking was recursive and continuous throughout the course of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In COP meetings, participants and I shared data and our interpretations by reviewing past meetings. By reviewing data with participants from previous meetings, I made sure I grounded my interpretations as a participant observer in the data collected. The participation of multiple practitioners contributed to this

study's trustworthiness as their accounts of the interactions with the community and their personal records comprised an audit trail (Merriam, 2002).

Research Site

The research site was one high school located in the Tower School District in South Texas. (I used pseudonyms for the name of the school district in this practitioner inquiry.) The high school had a current enrollment of approximately 3,000 students with approximately 200 teachers employed on the campus. There were about 25 teachers in each of the four core departments- English, math, science, and social studies.

From my perspective as a researcher and facilitator for this COP, access to the site was convenient. I was employed at the high school as a teacher in the English department. My role on campus was ESL teacher and ESL campus program coordinator for students whom the school district identified as second language learners. I taught students the district's English curriculum for English I, English II, and English III as well as a writing course, all of which I modified for ESL students. In addition, I tutored students in their other subjects, including math, science, and social studies. As a teacher on the campus, I worked with other teachers to provide linguistic accommodations for second language learners. I also coordinated ESL students' schedules and testing.

Walford (2008) cautioned against conducting research in a familiar setting based solely on convenience. Walford asserted, "It is crucial that distinction be made between site selection and access to that site" (p. 17). Walford continued to explain that site selection should include a consideration of the researcher's theoretical framework or research question. On the other hand, access is a continuous process that "the researcher has continually to negotiate further" and "it can be seen as a process of building relationships with people" (Walford, 2008, p. 16).

My rationale for selecting a familiar research site aligned with Walford's advice. The teachers and I examined our practice in the context of our work; therefore, the school where the participants worked was an appropriate site. The research questions for this study about teachers' experiences with PD also aligned with Walford's warning. For this practitioner inquiry, access to a familiar setting was necessary. The degree of accessibility to a social situation influences the research process as in how data is collected and how data is analyzed (Spradley, 1980). Access in this case entailed more than entering the school. Access in this practitioner inquiry included an understanding of the social situation in which teachers practiced and participated as learners.

Participants

As the facilitator in the COP for this study, I purposely recruited three participants. I represented the English department in our COP. Bringing together teachers from various disciplines gave participants the opportunity to share their different perspectives on PD and to provide feedback within the community. The interdisciplinary COP functioned also as a space for teachers to reflect critically on their practice (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Lee and Boud (2003) suggested that a group learning approach to writing promotes critical reflection in their examination of teachers participating in writing groups in the context of their instructional practice. Participation in the COP with colleagues from across disciplines can prompt teachers to view their practice differently. The unique experiences and perspectives each participant contributed prompted the learning community to consider challenges in other ways and from other perspectives.

I made a purposeful decision to limit the number of participants to four in order to allow each teacher an opportunity to participate in the practitioner inquiry as an active member of the community. The limited number of participants also allowed participants to form a cohesive

learning community. A group of participants in a COP larger than four could have made cohesiveness a challenge because the intimacy of a small group would have diminished (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Time limitations for community meetings were another factor limiting the size of the community to four practitioners. With a larger group, there are likely to be fewer opportunities to share insights and experiences in a community setting. The purpose of the COP was for teachers to examine their practice in a community. A group of four participants ensured each participant had an active role in a community with time to share their experiences.

Participant Selection

I recruited teachers who had more than five years of experience teaching in their content areas at the high school level, not limited to this particular school. Novice teachers defined as having less than three years of experience are in the early stages of their practice in which they are adjusting to their role as professionals (Patterson, 2005). New to the profession, novice teachers are learning school procedures, classroom practice, and classroom management. Experienced teachers develop their professional practice and are better suited to learn from their classroom practice (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Instead of focusing on learning to teach, teachers with experience have resources and strategies to implement as needed in their practice, providing opportunities for reflection on their practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In the COP, experienced teachers participating in practitioner inquiry focused on reflecting on their practice and learning from practice.

When I considered participants I wanted to invite for this COP, I had in mind teachers who were receptive to exploring their practice in a group. I wanted to invite teachers who had a positive attitude toward learning and would engage in a process of action and reflection through practitioner inquiry. I wrote a list of names of teachers with whom I had a personal connection

through our common workplace, and then with this list of names in hand, I set out to start the “contracting” phase of the COP visiting each person. The original list of names consisted of five teachers.

To begin, I stopped by the classroom of the first person I had on my list. This teacher taught a biology class that included a majority of ESL students. My connection to this teacher was that we had shared many of the same students in her science class and my English class. I explained the research study involving practitioner inquiry and how we would explore writing as a topic in a COP, then I invited her to join the group. Unfortunately, she was not able to participate because of a prior commitment; she was taking classes toward her certification to become an administrator. She was excited to have the opportunity to participate in a COP; however, she did not have time to spare for this study. I had an alternative candidate in mind to represent the science teacher perspective, so I visited the next person on my list.

Ms. Frizzle, a pseudonym she adopted herself in this study, was another teacher with whom I had shared students in the past. A reason I had Ms. Frizzle in mind was that she had often shared with me examples of students’ writing. Since writing was a focus of this practitioner inquiry, I hoped that she would accept my invitation. I explained the practitioner inquiry I had in mind and invited her to join the COP. She mentioned that she was a graduate student finishing her thesis, which happened to be an action research study. She was receptive to the concept of exploring her practice because she understood the merit of teachers as researchers and the value of examining her own practice regarding writing. I made sure to explain the time commitment to the COP would involve time after school hours. (I had stipulated to the campus administration that the COP would not meet during school hours in order not to interfere with teachers’ work

hours and responsibilities.) Ms. Frizzle accepted my invitation. With her acceptance, we had two participants in our COP.

Next, I visited a math teacher and made my same invitation to him, including a general outline of practitioner inquiry and the purpose of COP was to explore writing. This math teacher like the first science teacher I had invited declined based on his busy schedule. He was enrolled in graduate school also and did not have spare time to commit to working in a COP after work.

I anticipated there would be teachers who would decline to participate in this practitioner inquiry, so I referred to my list of names again and visited another math teacher. When I visited Ms. Jimenez in her classroom, it was early morning and students were already involved in studying in her room. In forming the COP, I invited teachers that I had known to be dedicated to their profession and receptive to reflecting on their practice. Ms. Jimenez was an exemplar of a participant I hoped would join this COP. She had extensive experience working with ESL students and always seemed receptive to learning something new. I explained to her the time commitment and the nature of practitioner inquiry. She accepted my invitation and shared that she looked forward to working in a COP. With three members in our COP, I visited the next prospective participant, a social studies teacher.

Mr. Martinez was a teacher with whom I had also shared the same students. In addition, he and I had taught ESL students in summer school. Working in summer school requires additional hours and invested time when teachers are not on contract, so I thought he would be receptive to the time commitment required for this COP. At first, Mr. Martinez was not sure about how practitioner inquiry worked. After I explained the focus of the COP would be on writing, he became more interested. He explained that he had always had an interest in writing because it connected multiple courses, for example, writing as a skill connects economics to

math. Therefore, he was interested in the topic and excited about cooperating with a learning community to develop writing. With Mr. Martinez's acceptance to the COP, there were now four teachers (including myself representing English).

The teachers with whom I participated in the COP worked at the same campus for the past seven years. The familiarity we had with each other as professionals was a positive factor because we had developed trust. Marshall and Rossman (2011) asserted trust is a significant factor in qualitative research studies. The participants shared their struggles and achievements in the COP as a PD experience; therefore, a COP in which group members felt safe to share their experiences and ideas was essential. Facilitation of practitioner inquiry and collaborative learning in a community necessitates trust among the group members (Sgroi & Saltiel, 1998). Trust was a necessary component for the individuals' learning experiences and the COP learning experiences.

In practitioner inquiry, the practitioner as researcher guides the inquiry; therefore, an additional factor I considered for participant selection was the participants' willingness and enthusiasm to participate in the COP. I also had to consider the personal nature of learning. Sharing writing or personal reflection can be intimidating. Teachers participating in practitioner inquiry needed to be willing to reflect and discuss their findings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Participants in this COP shared their insights and questions to guide the practitioner inquiry.

To summarize the participants' responses to my invitation to collaborate in this COP, the teachers expressed enthusiasm. They were receptive to sharing their practice and perceptions of their learning in a COP. The participants I invited valued their profession as teachers expressing a desire to share their experiences with other teachers. When I mentioned to the participating teachers that they would be engaged in research, there did express trepidation; however, they

kept a positive attitude and accepted my invitation. A positive attitude to learning was one of the important attributes I sought in selecting participants. My focus for this study was teachers' perceptions; therefore, I recruited members for our learning community who would contribute to the group. The teachers valued their experiences as learners and looked forward to developing their practice.

Protection of Participants

I treated the participants respectfully and ethically. Before beginning this study, I submitted the required forms for approval to the University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A for Signed Letters of Research Protocol Clearance). I also followed the approval procedure for the school district before beginning this study. Before beginning this study on the campus, I obtained written permission from the administration to conduct this research study.

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary and each participant signed a consent form prior to participation. The form included an explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and the role and time commitment of the participants. I included the consent form initial guidelines about teacher participation in group sessions. The teachers would participate in a process of PD and they would share their thoughts, experiences, and writings with the COP. The teachers had a role in constructing rules for participation in the COP; therefore, I provided information about their role in the COP and asked for their consent with the signed consent form before the COP began. Individuals had the opportunity to ask questions to assure their understanding of the information. I assured participants that their decision to participate or not participate in this study would not affect their employment status or relationship with me as their colleague.

Participants had the choice to share their identity or to protect their identity. In the consent form, the participants marked their choice on the consent form whether to use their full name or protect their identity with a pseudonym. If participants did not choose to include identifying information, then I maintained their confidentiality and used pseudonyms for identifying information in all transcribed data. There were no physical risks or expenses related to participating in this study. The participants were free to stop taking part in the study at any time.

All of the participants in the COP had access to data collected with audio and video equipment during and after the study. After the completion of this research study, I asked the participants to give me copies of their notes and reflections. In my role as the facilitator, I retained all electronic copies of the audio and video recordings in addition to the participants' notes and reflections. I stored all files in a password protected computer and all artifacts in a secure cabinet away from the school campus.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of professional development self-directing their learning in a community of practice. I explored how participants directing their own learning influenced their perceptions of their professional development. In addition, I explored how participating in a community of practice influenced their perceptions of their professional development. In chapter three, I explained the methodology I used for this study. I provided background on the qualitative design that utilizes practitioner inquiry approaches and explained how I used an ethnographic perspective as a conceptual basis. Next, I detailed my perspective (including how it shifted) as participant observer.

My roles as practitioner, participant observer, and primary researcher provided a unique method to explore teachers' perceptions of professional development. For this qualitative research study, I participated as an insider in a community of practice utilizing practitioner inquiry. I collaborated with the participants to collect and analyze data as we examined our practice. Included in this chapter are the processes of data collection and data analyses from an ethnographic perspective I utilized for this research study. In the next chapter, I present findings based on the data analyzed for this research study.

Chapter Four: Findings

The focus of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of self-directed professional development learning as participants in a community of practice.

The questions for this study were:

1. How does self-direction of learning influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?
2. How does participating in a community of practice influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?

In this chapter, I present findings from this practitioner inquiry and interactional ethnography. To examine teachers' perceptions of PD, I collected data including the participant's words and their actions. The teachers as participants and myself included as a participant observer, utilized practitioner inquiry to analyze our individual practice and to contribute to a collective process of PD analyzing each other's experiences. I begin with a descriptive account of the participants and COP of this study, which serves to provide a context of the qualitatively analyzed data (Wolcott, 2008).

Autoethnographic Perspective

Beginning the spring semester of the 2014-15 school year, I collaborated with three teachers in a community of practice (COP) to explore our classroom experiences. The group met afterschool for eight meetings averaging forty-five minutes to one hour each meeting from April 2015 until October 2015. All but one meeting was during the school year with one meeting during the summer.

The teachers worked through an iterative process of practitioner inquiry applying three steps: (1) select a focus and develop a research plan, (2) collect data, (3) analyze and interpret the

data, as outlined by Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) in their guide for teachers as researchers titled *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Professional Development*. There is a fourth step in practitioner inquiry, sharing findings with others. I suggested this fourth step was an individual decision. In response, the participating teachers mentioned they planned to share their experiences and insights from practitioner inquiry with their respective departments; however, at the conclusion of this study, I did not follow up with the teachers to verify if they shared their findings with others. I informed the participants that I intended to share evidence of our experiences described by practitioner inquiry in a COP with our campus administration.

My interest in practitioner inquiry had started with examining my own practice. In my experience, practitioner inquiry was a useful process to document and share my own classroom experiences with others. I utilized practitioner inquiry to explore questions I had related to my instructional strategies. Documenting my inquiry process and results served as a record of my personal practice. I could reflect on my practice and make changes. For example, instead of relying on anecdotal evidence how I used technology as an instructional strategy, practitioner inquiry served as a record of my experiences. My personal goal was to improve my practice. Furthermore, I used documentation of my practice as evidence in my performance evaluations. Additionally, I planned to share my inquiry process and results with other teachers at our campus PD sessions and education conferences. Teachers might have similar questions; therefore, we could provide answers and provide insights to our practice. I hoped that the participating teachers share my enthusiasm for practitioner inquiry. As I reveal later in this chapter, the participants' experiences in this COP surprised me.

Before I invited three colleagues to participate in this study, I had informed them my role served multiple functions in this COP. I had explained I would participate as a participant

observer in our group analyzing my practice and offering my suggestions as we utilized practitioner inquiry. I participated as a teacher generating, observing, and documenting our perspectives and actions as we worked through practitioner inquiry (Agar, 1996). I volunteered to guide us through the steps and because I was familiar with practitioner inquiry. I endeavored to ensure we focused on topics relevant to our COP. I focused on our collective experiences in the COP meetings generating my conclusions based on my experiences and the participants' words and actions recorded as audio and video files. My role as participant observer provided insight that might not otherwise be visible to the researcher (Labaree, 2002).

For our first meeting when the teachers and I met after school, I was tired physically and at the same time excited to start our meetings. To initiate the first step of practitioner inquiry, I volunteered writing as the focus by posing a question to the teachers: What is writing? My intention was to bring our focus to writing as opposed to the function of our COP or practitioner inquiry. The foundation of this COP was participants directing their inquiry based on their classroom experiences; therefore, I facilitated the discussion to focus on how they defined writing and how they incorporated writing in their instruction. Later in the meeting, we discussed how our COP would function.

In our conversation regarding how each of us starts writing a first draft, I took an opportunity to direct our conversation to establish norms for our COP. Initiating our conversation about group norms, I explained we shared the management of the group. I encouraged group members to share with our group articles, ideas, or prompts that they wanted to bring to our meetings. My role, I explained, was to facilitate our group discussions and to communicate meeting times and locations. In order to share our meeting logistics and to document our

meetings, I shared our meeting agendas with topics suggested by participants (see Appendix B for a list of meeting agendas).

After a brief discussion regarding our COP norms, we returned to our discussion about how we deal with challenges of encouraging students to write. We examined possible reasons for students' trepidation approaching writing. In response to the students' needs as writers, we shared our perspective on instructional strategies we used. Next, our topic of discussion turned to our personal experiences as writers. I shared how I approached writing by first creating an outline. I shared how my experiences as a writer informed my instruction. In my practice, I encourage my students outline their thoughts, then write a draft.

Near the conclusion of our first meeting, I directed our conversation to practitioner inquiry as research process. I asked the group how we would collect data related to our individual practice. I suggested we needed a plan to examine our classroom experiences with writing. When I mentioned research in our COP, there was what I describe as an audible collective gasp from the teachers. The participants' reception to practitioner inquiry was not what I had expected. Before this COP began, I had planned for teachers to work through the steps of practitioner inquiry in a series of planned steps. I had thought that in the course of our community meetings we would document our efforts at each step. Before beginning this study, the teachers associated research with formal, empirical study. Although they were interested in exploring their practice and reflecting on their experiences, they expressed a lack of enthusiasm for the idea of participating and contributing to a formal structure by which to collect and analyze data.

To ease their anxiety (after all, I wanted them to feel comfortable in our group and to participate), I suggested each of us write in a journal reflections and questions that we

encountered. The journal functioned as a collection of ideas from which teachers use to inform or reflect on their practice (Frank, 2001). I provided examples from this first meeting, which I planned to investigate in our future meetings and in the course of my classroom instruction. Examples I shared included fear of writing; a topic we had discussed in our current meeting. Another idea I planned to investigate further was organization and styles of writing. After we reviewed the purpose of the inquiry and the steps involved in practitioner inquiry, the teachers were receptive to participating in this study and utilizing practitioner inquiry.

Bringing the discussion to the second step in practitioner inquiry, I asked the group to consider how they would collect data. Then, in our COP meetings, how could we analyze data to improve our practice? Ultimately, I emphasized, I started our meeting because it came back to our professional development. I really wanted to grow as a teacher. I invited this select group of teachers to join me because they had different perspectives I was excited to hear about. I did not know where we were going or what was going to happen, which was exciting and a little scary.

Concluding our first meeting, the teachers and I organized a schedule to meet keeping in mind when the school year calendar was busy. The spring semester was especially hectic because in addition to our responsibilities teaching classes and reporting grades, teachers had responsibilities administering standardized tests. Moreover, participants attended weekly departmental Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings based on directives from campus administration. At this campus, PLC meetings and our COP meetings were not related. In contrast to formal PLC meetings, in our COP meetings we directed our discussions based on questions coming from our classroom experiences.

I started our second meeting by reminding the group that our focus from our first meeting was about writing. I also reminded the teachers one of my roles in this group was to facilitate the

meetings and to coordinate our meeting schedules. We had not met for three weeks since our previous meeting due to a demanding school schedule. The teachers and I had been involved in school-wide testing administering tests to students, which precluded us from meeting more frequently.

As a topic of discussion for our second meeting, I volunteered the teachers may want to discuss our individual backgrounds as readers and writers in an effort to bring our conversation back to the focus of our group and continue our discussion from the first meeting. If we were interested understanding our practices as teachers, then it made sense to explore who we were as readers and writers. I wondered how our identities as readers and writers influenced who we were as teachers. In our group, we had teachers from math, science, and social students, so I wondered how their backgrounds influenced their practice.

In addition to investigating our practice, I kept in mind that I wanted to support the development of our COP; therefore, I suggested we discuss norms. We were more than a group of teachers sitting around discussing our practice. We were researching our practice with practitioner inquiry in a COP. Establishing norms was one-step in legitimizing our experiences. Initiating our norms, I referred to green composition books I provided each participant. I suggested we could use these books to collect our thoughts during meetings and to document our inquiry process. I had in mind the adage: Practice what you preach. If you want your students to write, then you had better write yourself. I provided these composition books to encourage the teachers to participate as writers documenting their thoughts and questions related to their classroom experiences between meetings. We could refer to these composition books as needed for continuity. My intention of starting this COP was to have teachers actively research their own

practice. The green composition books were to serve as artifacts of our experiences in this learning community.

For my part in this group, I emphasized that I was the main source of communication regarding meeting times and places. I valued the teachers' time and efforts to volunteer for our COP and I wanted to ensure each of us stay informed of any changes in our meeting schedule. From my personal experience, I am irritated when meeting facilitators do not communicate changes to meeting participants. In my role as facilitator, I endeavored to ensure we were up-to-date.

Another element of our community I addressed was vulnerability in our meeting. As a writer myself, I could understand how the teachers in our COP may feel reluctant to share their writing with each other. Constructing our COP involved teachers investing in their own learning (Stewart, 2014). I wanted the teachers to understand that I knew how writing as well as how sharing our experiences in a group might prompt discomfort. By initiating a norm to address our vulnerability, I was saying that I understood they may feel uncomfortable but I encouraged them to share any way. Again, I referred to the idea that if you are going to ask someone else to do something, then you should be willing to do it yourself. In addition, I intended our norm addressing vulnerability to remind the teachers to support each other.

Satisfied with our list norms, I returned our attention to the topic for today's meeting, which I had suggested was to explore who we were as readers and writers. We discussed our reading preferences and our purposes for writing. I shared how current events often get my attention. I turn to online news sites to access information quickly. I can stay informed and not invest a lot of time reading beyond an article's headline if I desire.

While our conversation was robust, I was mindful of our time for this meeting and for our meeting schedule. I had planned our COP to meet for eight to ten sessions, so I hoped that we would soon focus more intently on step two of practitioner inquiry, data collection and analysis. To close the second meeting, I directed our attention back to the norms we had discussed at the beginning of today's meeting. I volunteered to locate articles related to our meeting's topics and then share with the group in our next meeting in order to continue the topic and discussion momentum started in this meeting. We had discussed a variety of topics, so I wanted to bring optional topics to our next meeting in which we might explore one or more of those topics in greater depth.

For our third meeting, we met on the last day of the school year. As was my usual routine facilitating this COP, I reviewed our meeting agendas with the teachers. Although today was the end of our school year, my endeavor to learn as a teacher and as a writer continued. Prior to this meeting, I had shared with the teachers a short book chapter titled *Fighting Tofu* (Goldberg, 2005). I shared this particular chapter because it described one author's experience getting started to write and their discipline as a writer. The author explained how there are always a multitude of tasks and challenges that writers often feel compelled to complete before sitting down to write. This was certainly a sentiment I shared with the author. This chapter also served to narrow the focus for our practitioner inquiry. For the first two meetings we had worked on establishing norms for our COP, discussing our identities as readers and writers, and sharing our experiences with reading and writing. I shared this article to direct our attention to our practice and to develop questions for our inquiry. In a previous meeting, Mr. Martinez had mentioned his interest including writing in content classes such as social studies, a topic he referred to as cross-

curricular writing; therefore, today I included his suggestion as an agenda topic to explore in our group.

Through the course of our third meeting, I shared my personal experiences as a writer and my classroom experiences teaching writing. I shared my personal struggles with sitting down at a blank page and beginning to write. I often find a hundred other tasks to attend to before I have courage to start writing. I explained to the group that even though I was aware my procrastination was detrimental to my writing, I often followed a pattern of finding something else to do before I could finally get started. I shared my classroom experiences, explaining how students with whom I work often have less difficulty starting writing as opposed to finding a focus for their writing. In class, we often write personal narratives. Students prefer to write details about multiple events. My challenge, I explained, is to teach the students to write a focused written account of an event much like describing a picture. Students instead often write an account of a memory that reads more like a movie they have in their minds.

At about halfway through our meeting, I brought the group's attention back to the agenda specifically to the topic Mr. Martinez had mentioned, cross-curricular writing. This topic provided an opportunity for me to volunteer a focus for our practitioner inquiry. I suggested we each produce a writing artifact. Mr. Martinez had mentioned a class assignment he referred to as "soundtrack of your life." The goals of this writing product were for us to participate as writers and to produce a writing sample we could in turn share with our students in our classes.

In my case, I planned to construct a timeline detailing several significant events in my life. I thought this writing project was a perfect opportunity for me to experiment with this timeline and share with our COP. Concluding this meeting, we made a plan to work on our

individual assignments, so that when we did meet the next time in our COP, we could share our artifacts.

We met during the summer for our fourth meeting. Since the last meeting, I worked on my timeline project I had mentioned in meeting three. Using a link to an online multimedia timeline project I had received from our school librarian, I experimented with different sites until I found one that I could understand how to use and one that I thought was interesting. On the site I chose titled, *Hstry*, I constructed an interactive timeline illustrating significant events in my life including pictures, video, and text. In our meeting, I presented my project to the teachers.

I shared my experiences working for a language school in Japan where I had accepted my first teaching position after I graduated with my bachelor's degree in English. I included information about world events that had occurred the years I was in Japan. Providing this information and discussing the events with my colleagues prompted opportunities for us to share information about ourselves. Likewise, we shared ideas how we could use this writing assignment in our own classes to connect to our students. By presenting select highlighted events from my life through this project, the teachers and I connected personally and professionally. On a personal level, I shared information about how I started teaching. The teachers asked questions and learned new information about me. Professionally, we explored how we could use this site as a writing project in our classes. Meeting four was our only meeting during the summer, so in reviewing this writing assignment, we planned to use it as a springboard for our lessons in the fall.

As I reviewed meetings I transcribed, I noticed that I contributed less than in previous meetings. For the first three meetings, I often initiated conversation, facilitated discussions, and worked on developing our community. In reviewing my ethnographic record, I noted I asked

questions to the participants in order to encourage conversation. For example, in our first meeting, I asked, “What does writing mean for you?” After one participant answered, I waited quietly for a second participant to respond. I sat quietly and directed my gaze at other participants until someone responded. As the meetings progressed, participants started to ask each other questions or share ideas without prompting from me. Then, by the fourth meeting, I managed conversation topics less frequently in our COP. The teachers directed our conversations more often, initiating topics of our COP.

Our fifth meeting was the first meeting of the following school year in September. Although we had not met in the same physical space as a group, I stayed connected through email and in person conversations. In my passing conversations, I discussed the progress of our COP meetings, including topics that we wanted to address. For example, a topic that we discussed in this meeting focused on how we as teachers guide our students to become reflective learners at the same time developing their writing skills. Sharing our own experiences as adult learners and our experiences when we were students, we outlined a list of questions we used to guide our learning.

Meeting six occurred about one week later. I mentioned the cycle teachers go through during the school year. I observed in my practice a pattern to our writing assignments. At the beginning of the school year, I often assigned students reflexive writing assignments. I prompt students to write about themselves and their experiences. An age-old prompt (or some variation) that came to mind was requiring students to write about what they did during their summer vacation. We discussed in our group how starting a foundation with students writing about a familiar topic is a convenient starting point for writing essays. From students writing about themselves, in which they can focus on writing, not so much the content but getting their ideas

on paper, then next teachers can work with them for revision and improving students' writing skills.

For most of this sixth meeting, I observed the group discussion rather than participate. The teachers explored their topic and engaged in conversation. In contrast to previous meetings when I led the meetings, this time the teachers directed more of the conversation. In the following sections for two participants, namely Ms. Jimenez and Ms. Frizzle, I share how they directed the COP. For my part, my observations I shared in this meeting included how students conduct research without realizing they are conducting research. Teachers prompt students to explain their thinking. Students often search for answers to questions they pose. In a sense, students are conducting research to inform their learning. One reason I purposely observed this meeting was that I felt we had reached an interesting progression of our meetings. As I had intended in the beginning, I facilitated the meetings, then the teachers directed their inquiry and the conversation in the COP based on their classroom experiences.

In meeting seven, we had discussed incorporating reflection strategies in our classroom instruction for students to use. I recalled in our third meeting we discussed the same issue of students reflecting on their learning. Because this was our seventh meeting and I had proposed meeting eight to ten sessions, I asked the COP about their perceptions of this learning community. I asked if these meetings were beneficial for them or if our meetings led to any changes in their instruction strategies. My goal was to encourage the teachers to adapt our COP meetings to meet our needs as teachers. I share their positive responses in their respective sections in this chapter.

Our eighth meeting marked the conclusion of our collaborative inquiry in our COP. At this point, I recount each participant's perspective in separate sections working through meeting

sessions one through seven. Then in a final section, I present our collective experiences from meeting eight as we reflected on our experiences collaborating in this COP.

Mr. Martinez's Story

Mr. Martinez, a social studies teacher, joined this COP based on his interest in cross-curricular writing. Discussing a focus for his practitioner inquiry, his interest centered on how students in their English classes write about topics they had studied in their history class, for example. Mr. Martinez often referred to current events reported in the news as notable points he used to connect classes through writing assignments. He brought in students' interests incorporating social studies curriculum. Although he had in mind writing assignments across different classes, he did not have time during the school year to implement this plan. In this COP, he hoped to work on cross-curricular writing, which would allow him opportunities to view writing assignments from other teachers' perspectives.

Continuing the first meeting, Mr. Martinez initiated a discussion about why students may be reluctant to participate as writers. In his experiences teaching ESL students, he asserted students' fear of being wrong or not writing correctly as possible reasons they are hesitant to write in their classes. Mr. Martinez shared how he incorporated writing opportunities in addition to multiple-choice tests. Providing students with opportunities to express themselves in writing related to the curriculum seemed to encourage them to write. Though reluctant at the beginning of the school year, over time the students gained an appreciation of writing by sharing their stories with him.

Mr. Martinez viewed writing as an investment that required more time at the beginning of the school year. He took time to encourage his students to write about themselves, then later incorporated writing assignments with the curriculum such as with the multiple-choice tests he

mentioned. He shared a story about one particular student from Japan who excelled in her writing. He attributed her proficient writing skills to teachers investing time in teaching writing skills including essay structures. For example, teachers need to instruct students how to write an introduction, a thesis, and a conclusion. As a result of this discussion, Mr. Martinez's focus for his practitioner inquiry was how teachers from differing disciplines could incorporate common writing assignment in their classes.

In the beginning of the second meeting, Mr. Martinez was reticent as we discussed norms and how our COP would function. In his brief contribution, he mentioned how communication was important factor to include in our norms. In a later discussion when we discussed topics each of us liked to read, he became more animated and engaged in his explanation of his reading habits. He expressed his interest in reading current events for his personal interest as well as for supplementary instructional materials for his classes. He was always looking for connections between what he was reading in the news and the curriculum he was teaching to support his students' learning.

As for his writing habits and the habits he tried to instill in his students, for him writing was a discipline. Writing was an activity that you must do every day in order to improve. Even though he wished he always had access to a pen and paper in order to collect his thoughts, he expressed reluctance to carry around these materials. (His reluctance to carry pen and paper included the green composition books I had provided.)

To encourage his students to read, he provided to them news magazines he had finished reading. In one example, he shared a story of offering *The Economist* to students to read after they finished a test he had assigned. He encouraged students to read and to discuss current topics by exposing them to magazines in which he himself was interested. While he admitted students

often described these magazines as “boring,” there were occasions when students engaged in conversation with him about the articles. Mr. Martinez asserted students reading, even short articles was a positive because at least the students were reading.

Another topic in the first meeting, Mr. Martinez reminisced about diagramming sentences. When he started teaching in the late 1980’s, he found teaching grammar explicitly through diagramming sentences was helpful especially for his ESL students. He referred to teaching grammar as a lost art because in our current curriculum, teachers do not teach grammar. He still taught writing in his social studies classes but not to a great depth as in the past. Instead, he incorporated writing in his class assignments and at least addressed the content but not the grammar to make sure students learn how to communicate their message in writing. A thought foremost in his mind, and a topic we had mentioned in our earlier discussion, was how students may be reluctant to write because of their fear. Students have a fear of others judging them, of revealing what they do not know, and/or of sharing their thoughts. He used writing as a way to address their fears and encourage conversation.

In meeting three responding to the chapter excerpt I had provided, *Fighting Tofu*, he commiserated with our feeling of procrastination (Goldberg, 2005). He emphasized that he was more inclined to write about a topic he chose as opposed to a topic that someone assigned him. He provided an example writing assignment one of his colleagues had mentioned based on creating a soundtrack of your life. In this discussion, he was animated sharing this idea and the possibilities because this assignment encouraged creativity. It gave students an opportunity to create a project based on their individual lives. Moreover, this project incorporated music, video, writing.

He described the benefits of sharing his personal experiences with his students and likewise students sharing provided insight to their experiences. He felt their reciprocal sharing helped them feel connected. He found a common ground to connect to students and in turn apply to his instruction. For example, through writing assignments he discovered information about his students such as where they were from. He incorporated students' interests in his instruction in order to engage them in writing.

In our fourth meeting, he referred back to his interest incorporating music in his instruction to his sixth-grade English class. For example, he provided song lyrics for his students to analyze as a way to get students' interest in a lesson, then connecting lyrics or topics from a song connected to his lesson. Although he did not prepare a soundtrack artifact to share with the COP, he did collaborate in our analysis of projects the other teachers had completed. He emphasized that seeing the projects and seeing the possibilities motivated him to incorporate these projects in his classroom instruction in the fall.

Unfortunately, Mr. Martinez was not able to join the COP again in the fall semester. He regretted not being able to continue; however, he had commitments to his family, which prevented him from joining our after school meetings. As an alternative, he asked about having meetings in the mornings before school, but the other teachers were not able to attend meetings before school. I did offer to include him in our electronic communications and I emphasized the door was always open for him to join our COP again.

Ms. Frizzle's Story

Ms. Frizzle was absent for our first meeting, so after our COP had met, I sent an email with our agenda and the topics we had discussed. In the second meeting, she suggested norms for

our COP including being supportive of each other. In our negotiation of norms, she described how our perspectives could influence our meetings. For example, a math teacher may have a different perception of how to include writing as part of their classroom instruction. She prompted us to consider these questions: Do we focus on grammar? Do we examine writing style? What is our purpose for examining writing? What aspect of writing are we examining in a particular meeting? Collaborating in a self-directed COP was a new experience for each us; her suggestion to keep an open mind reminded us to encourage creativity and to take risks with the support of this group.

In her explanation of what she liked to read in meeting two, she referred to reading non-fiction books online and in print focused on science. As for her reasons to write, she described her frustration writing an action research project report, a required class assignment for her degree in school administration. She did not hold back describing working with APA citations expressing her feelings by stating, "I hate my life." At the time of our meeting, she had written 22 pages and was three-quarters complete. She said while collecting the data was interesting, writing the report and analyzing the data was burdensome. She preferred to write about topics that interested her without the formality of publishing guidelines that in this case were required for her degree. She shared when reading or writing something she is told to do, then she finds a hundred ways to procrastinate.

Writing and taking notes, reflecting on her lesson plans to share with her colleagues was another reason she wrote. She kept in mind how to improve her instruction and to how to help other teachers teaching the same class possibly for the first time or even how to adapt materials to students' interests. She endeavored to provide magazines for students, such as *National Geographic* and *Texas Highways*, so she might inspire their interest in a topic. Articles and

pictures in magazines and online science websites were a way for her to connect to her students and to have a better understanding of what their interests are.

Ms. Frizzle shared a notable experience in this meeting. Mr. Martinez started the conversation with his enthusiastic relating of his experience teaching English prior to teaching social studies. He declared, “I loved teaching them about diagramming sentences!” In response to his proclamation, you can hear Ms. Frizzle’s distress in the audio recording as she described her earliest memory of a teacher punishing her for not diagramming sentences correctly. In clipped phrases, she recounted her story, “My teacher said I was going to be a failure at life because I couldn’t diagram sentences.” She uttered in a quiet flat voice, “I locked myself in the bathroom in fourth grade because she was mean. So I don’t know how to diagram sentences and I apologize for that English people.” Even today (so many years later), Ms. Frizzle said she still cringes when she recalls her experiences trying to learn diagramming sentences.

In our COP, the participants commiserated with her “discomfort” but at the same time found her story quite humorous. (Mr. Martinez and I judged she was not in serious distress because after she shared her story she did at least smile.) Over our laughter, you could hear Ms. Frizzle continue to explain how she attributed her experiences in English class as an important reason for her decision to become a science teacher. We jokingly offered to start a support group for diagramming sentences to deal with her self-described trauma.

Based on her personal experiences as a student and appreciating the challenges her current students face, expressed an interest in how to engage students in writing. As we had discussed in this session, she advocated for students to choose their own topics for writing assignments. In addition, she described how using pictures could connect text to students’ learning.

In our third meeting, Ms. Frizzle described her process getting started to write. While computers are great resource, starting to write ideas on paper with a pencil was one strategy she used to focus on the topic she was writing. For her students, she suggested they imagine a movie for the topic they were writing. She reported that in her classroom experiences as a teacher, she often found students have difficulty visualizing their ideas. In order to guide students' learning to connect to the topic of instruction or even to write a response to topic, she often showed video clips. The short videos or pictures provided context for the students to visualize a context for the topic. This strategy next lent itself to writing, putting words on paper based on the images in their heads.

A question that she emphasized in our meeting was how to teach creativity to students. Too often teachers provide a rubric or the same topic to the whole class and expect a specific formatted answer. Instead, she wondered how to encourage students to take risks in their writing. Whether the answer is right or wrong, she wanted her students at least to write a response based on their knowledge. After they write something (anything), next they could work on revising their ideas.

She shared a personal project in memory of her father who had passed away years before. Every year on the anniversary of his death, she shared with her classes a book of pictures she had made in tribute. She reported sharing this project with the students made her feel more connected to them. In turn, the students connected to her. She mentioned her book of pictures allowed her to express herself, allowed for the students to see a model of how they could express themselves, and it allowed a way for her to connect through a personal experience with her students.

Sharing another classroom strategy to get her students' attention, she talked about using a game for instruction. There is always competition with new technology such as cell phones,

which she felt she has to compete with in order to get students interested in a lesson topic. This discussion led to her sharing how providing choice to students to select topics for their writing may engage them to be creative.

In meeting four, Ms. Frizzle started our conversation relating how she used the website Pinterest to locate ideas she could apply to her classroom instruction. One example she shared was prompting the students to create a question based on an answer she provided first. The idea was that the student would write a question related to the answer she provided on a note card. The note card served as the student's exit ticket from class. To facilitate the assignment, she mentioned encouraging students to work with a partner. This way she could assess student learning more efficiently and students could support each other's learning.

Next, Ms. Frizzle and I each shared projects we had created. Ms. Frizzle shared a personal video project she had created highlighting a significant person in her life with an online application called "Animoto." Utilizing the tribute to her father, she had mentioned in our previous meeting, she adapted that project to create video with music. After she shared insights into her life, we discussed how we could use projects such as this one as classroom resources for instruction. This project was another opportunity to connect to students and discover more about their lives. Building on this project, she offered an alternative use for this project. Teachers could use this format to review class materials and assignments every six weeks and at the end of a semester. She shared with the group her goal for students to create a video connecting a visual with the text and reviewing key concepts from the class.

Additional technology projects she shared related to the class website she was working on. She posted to this site her class syllabus, the list of required materials for the class, and other helpful links to online videos that students could refer to for support. Not only were the materials

she created useful for the students, but also she offered other teachers to access her materials online. In closing this meeting, she looked forward to our next meeting keeping in mind she would be busy with planning an event for new students.

At the start of our fifth meeting, Ms. Frizzle asserted her students' writing had started to improve. She attributed their improved writing skills to a change she had made in her instruction strategies as result of our discussions in our COP. For example, previously she prompted her students to write a response to a question at the beginning of each class. Her new approach included alternating topics between topics related specifically to her science class content and other topics that prompted the students to imagine an answer. At first, students wrote only a few words or short sentences, which were often incomplete. She mentioned that even though students used statements marked as bullet points, she considered these appropriate because she teaches science. For her basic students, her change in strategy was effective because although they are not necessarily writing sentences they are writing something. Now as the students are writing more often and she is assessing their writing, she noted they are writing more without her prompting. Her students write more often and in complete sentences more often.

Ms. Frizzle planned to include in her writing assignments students writing a six-week goal. She shared example questions: What did you do well? What can you do to improve? Her goal was make students proactive. Students lead their reflection and make plans to improve for themselves. She planned to adapt the idea shared by Ms. Jimenez for her class to include lab assignments and homework. Ultimately, she wanted to include students' reflections as part of a contract between students and their parents. She planned to include additional questions as part of a survey for the end of the school year: What did I do to help you? What would you tell other

students as advice? She wanted her students' opinions based on their reflection so she could make changes to her teaching.

In closing this meeting, Ms. Frizzle preferred to not plan for our next meeting topic or plan in detail. She did not want to "ponder" anything. Eventually she did focus on her students' who failed for the current six-week grading period. By the conclusion of this meeting, she suggested a topic for our next meeting, which was how to help students pass for the next grading period.

Ms. Frizzle initiated meeting six asking what we were talking about today. In response to our conversation regarding a cycle to the school year, she explained as a teacher she first implemented what she referred to as "groundwork and refinement." Groundwork, she explained, involved students practicing writing- not only writing content or answers to questions but also legibly. Students in her classes needed more support. In her opinion, specifically regarding writing, people assume students in high school can write. Refinement involved supporting students to see connections between content in their different classes, for example, connections between science and math. Students question why in science they are doing math. According to Ms. Frizzle, teachers have to teach students to learn the way they want to learn. She suggested allowing students to adapt so they could use content and skills they are learning. She reflected on her own experiences in high school and college. She needed to adapt her learning style in order to learn certain material. This translated to her teaching practice. To accommodate students' special needs, she included YouTube videos on her web page to help students learn.

She referred the meeting topic back to teaching her students how to reflect. Ms. Frizzle presented to our COP example questions she provided to students to encourage them to write (even though not necessarily related to class content) because in her experience, students write

more when the questions were not about content. She guided her students' reflection with questions such as "how long have you studied" and "describe how you studied." She reminded her students that not every question has a wrong or right answer. Other example questions she utilized to prompt students included: How confident are you about the test? What could your teachers do to help you? If other people helped me as much as I helped others, how much help would I get? If my day were recorded on video, what would others say about me? Ms. Frizzle strategy employing reflection was to help students be comfortable explaining about themselves, even though they might not be proficient responding to questions related to class content.

In meeting seven, we continued our discussion on the topic of reflection. Ms. Frizzle shared a class activity in which students read an article about a proposed housing development built over an aquifer recharge zone. In this activity, students explored advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. As a reflection component for this activity, she asked students to consider how the housing development may affect their lives if they lived in the housing development. Ms. Frizzle shared her insight how she thought writing in her class was benefiting her instruction. From her perspective, she explained, "Even if a teacher thinks they are not improving their writing skills, as a teacher you get to know your kids better."

Concluding meeting seven, she responded to my question if our COP meetings were benefiting her practice. Ms. Frizzle reported that as result of participating in our learning community, she changed her practice. She shared samples of her students' writing reflections as artifacts. Reflecting on her classroom experiences with teachers from other content areas increased her awareness of the advantages of including writing as an instructional strategy. She attributed using ideas from our group discussions to include a variety of writing assignments and to assign writing more frequently.

Ms. Jimenez's Story

In our first meeting, Mrs. Jimenez responded to my question: What does writing mean for you? She explained writing in her classes starts with her assigning a prompt. Sources for her writing prompts include curriculum prepared by the school district or she provides her own depending on the class assignment. Next, she incorporated activities to promote thorough discussion around the prompt before students respond in writing to the prompt individually. Therefore, discussing a prompt before writing was an important step in the writing process. Ms. Jimenez explained she required her students to provide sources for their information. Providing sources served to support students' discussions (both the speakers and the listeners) in addition to generating evidence to include in their writing assignments. She knows they have ideas as evident in discussions they have before writing; however, students tend not to share their ideas when writing (even though they respond to the same topic from their discussion). Ms. Jimenez asserted, "Writing takes time!" She may invest time in class discussion activities for a whole week before asking her students to write.

Though she regarded writing as a natural ability, she instilled the idea that with a format for an essay, students can learn to express themselves in writing. She taught her students essays start with an introduction and a thesis statement followed by paragraphs each with a clear purpose. Unless she assigned an essay, she did not focus on mechanics of the writing; more important for her was that students put their ideas on paper. Ms. Jimenez declared, "Writing shows their thinking."

In our meeting, she shared her personal experiences from an English course she took in college. Every Friday her professor assigned time to write; there were no outlines, it was time to

just write. She looked forward to this time of unstructured writing. To this day, she keeps her own journal and uses unstructured writing to express her thoughts.

Ms. Jimenez assigned peer editing, so students have ownership of their own writing and decisions about how to revise. Sometimes her students are worse critics than teachers. She encouraged communication through writing through students. They have to ask each other for clarification about comments. She wanted them to learn to appreciate someone else's perspective. "Of course, your friends will tell you something you wrote is good but is that really helpful to you as a writer?" she often asked her students. At the conclusion of our first meeting, we planned to meet for our next meeting. Unfortunately, Ms. Jimenez informed the group she was not able to attend.

Initiating our third meeting, I presented the question: How do you get started as writers? Ms. Jimenez preferred to start by reflecting on the prompt, deciding the purpose including what she wanted to say, then writing with paper and pencil. She preferred to begin with unstructured writing. After writing multiple drafts, erasing, and rewriting until she felt ready to type, then she moved to a computer to continue writing.

She commented that technology is not always the students' best resource. Students get surface information from internet sources, then complain they do not have time to investigate a topic. She observed there was a balance to providing structure but not limiting students. She encouraged them to visualize (like a movie) what they want to write. She wanted them to write a response to at least get started, then later revise as needed. She viewed her role as providing encouragement to imagine and see in their mind's eye what they want to write.

With multimedia projects, she showed them writing is not always or rather not only about writing an essay. Writing is about expressing yourself your thoughts. Based on our conversation,

she discovered her focus for her practitioner inquiry. She planned to revise a timeline project they had completed in class. She wanted students to add music and visuals to their projects. Then with a gallery walk in which students would view others' projects, she included a reflective component. Her students would comment on what they learned about others and about themselves in this project. Through the writing process, Ms. Jimenez modeled how she approached writing her project. She emphasized modeling the writing process helped her connect with students because otherwise they have a tendency to dismiss the teacher.

Ms. Jimenez lamented that teachers are often times reduced to entertainers. Students get bored unless they have new entertainment provided to them. She encouraged her students to think about the world beyond school. For example, she mentioned, you cannot tell your boss or college professor, hang on before you start class because I need to charge my phone.

Ms. Jimenez was not able to attend our fourth meeting and expressed how she felt lost missing the meeting. In meeting five, Ms. Jimenez shared an instructional strategy in which she required students to keep a planner in a notebook binder, which she described as a written record of their class assignments in one notebook. She mentioned keeping a planner was beneficial for her students especially for students who were absent. They can simply refer back to their planner to see what they missed. She also shared how proud she was of herself because she had recently applied technology to her practice by creating a website. Her students were impressed!

An additional component of student planners is students setting goals for themselves: a long-term, a midterm, and a short-term goal. For their long-term goal, they wrote a goal related to their future careers. Their midterm related to the college they planned to attend and their prospective degree. The short-term related to the current school year. She guided them with

questions; for example, what do you want to do and what are your goals? The students' next steps included describing the specific steps to achieve their goals for college and their careers.

At end of every six-week grading period, Ms. Jimenez required students to reflect on their grades. She provided to her students their grade reports and instructions how to analyze grades. She prompted their reflection with a list of questions: Why were you successful? Why did you perform poorly? What steps will you take to improve? What is your goal for next six weeks? The students' written reflections served another purpose. She used the students' perspectives to share with their parents. Instead of explaining a student's performance from her perspective, she included the student's perspective. She found conversations that included this information achieved her purpose to share her students' perspectives and experiences with their parents. She went on to explain that every six weeks she revised the questions guiding the students' reflection to include a larger assessment. For example, at the end of each semester, she wanted them to evaluate their semester grades and credits. She met with students individually to discuss their reflections. Their meetings, she explained, allowed her to connect with students and better understand their experiences. For our next meeting, Ms. Jimenez suggested we explore interventions we planned with students.

In meeting six, Ms. Jimenez continued our conversation about how reflection is to learn about your learning. She shared more guiding questions she utilized in her instruction: How did I learn? What was my point of confusion? What are topics connected to? What was meaningful about tutorial today? What did you gain? What was the purpose for you?

Her math class instruction included subjects such as statistics, Algebra 3, Calculus, and other math she described as "deep stuff." Students need to ask deeper questions. To facilitate the introspective skills needed to review their thoughts and actions, she posted at the beginning of

her classes quotes for students to examine. Next, she modeled her thinking process showing how to “really examine” a quote and write a response.

In the course of our conversations in our COP, Ms. Jimenez observed we transfer what we learn to our teaching style. For her students, she asked them to consider how their style of learning applied to a specific class. In her experience, Ms. Jimenez said over years her style changed. She prefers to color-code her notes and highlight notes.

In our seventh meeting, Ms. Jimenez shared how our COP meetings contributed to a change in her instructional strategies. Hearing from her colleagues sharing their experiences, she was more strict assigning written reflections to students. She reported she was taking more time to read the students’ writing! In her responses to their writing, she included personalized comments. Writing prompted students to visualize their thoughts. They had to explain their reasoning through writing that required an explanation more than a yes or no response. Another change in her practice included assigning articles to read. Participating in our COP provided her strategies to instill learning habits through instruction in the students. She emphasized learning is the student’s responsibility. Her responsibility was to guide their learning.

Meeting Eight Reflection Questions

In our eighth meeting, we reflected on our seven meetings as a COP in which we examined our practice individually and collaboratively. Mr. Martinez was not able to attend after meeting four. Although I invited him to participate in this final meeting, he was not able to attend. In order to examine the teachers’ perceptions participating in our COP, I provided questions to guide our reflections in this final meeting. The guiding questions included: What happened? How did this COP affect your practice? If you were to continue, what would you want to study or what would you want to investigate about your practice?

What happened. Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to direct their own learning. Ms. Frizzle asserted collaborating in a COP “made me more aware of reading and writing.” She explained her experience investigating writing made her “more cognizant of (a) this is something that I should be doing and (b) it’s something that isn’t necessarily that difficult to implement.” Writing assignments gave her a quick assessment how her students were learning or if they were learning. She gained insight how they think about content and even in general- how they learn and think.

Ms. Jimenez asserted she included more writing activities as part of her classroom instruction. As a result of collaborating in our COP, a benefit she discovered was students making connections to other classes. For example, she heard comments from her senior students on the similarity of their college applications essays to the writing assignments they completed for class. She explained her “new” strategy involved encouraging students to revise their essays “instead of reinventing the wheel!” She continued to explain they took initiatives to explore issues they hear or read about in the news. She expressed her satisfaction that students were prepared because they were making connections between their classes and current events outside of school.

From my perspective, I learned to introduce writing assignments to teachers as an opportunity to assess students’ learning. In the past, I had introduced writing as an assignment to assess language from an ESL perspective. My approach with teachers, though, was not usually successful. The response I received most frequently was teachers said they taught content, not language. Working in this COP gave me a different perspective how to approach working with teachers to include writing in the instruction.

Ms. Jimenez described how reflecting on her instructional strategies in a COP prepared her for her professional performance evaluation conducted by our campus administration. She stated, “This is helping us prepare for that because it asks us so much about setting up goals, writing up goals, and how we start with the goals at the top and then we start shrinking it down until it comes down to us.” As a result of collaborating in our COP, she focused on actions she was taking to achieve her goals! She reported several teachers were uncomfortable with working through the process preparing for their evaluations. Just like students are apprehensive to write and to define their position (their opinions), the teachers are feeling conflict too. Working in this COP helped her feel prepared.

Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez expressed their frustration with weekly PLC meetings they attended with their respective departments because of the lack of feedback for teachers from administration. For the PLC she attended, Ms. Frizzle had the responsibility to document the meeting minutes for each meeting. In our COP, she questioned how writing the same meeting minutes each week in her PLC made her “a better teacher” and “how this is improving the school.” She questioned, “Who exactly is reading [the meeting minutes]?” Ms. Jimenez agreed with this point from Ms. Frizzle: it is a lot of writing and just who is checking all these meeting minutes.

Ms. Jimenez reminded us in her experience teachers have to model the outcomes they want to see. If you ask you students to reflect, to share, to plan, to make goals, then you had better do it yourself too. Adding to Ms. Jimenez’s idea, Ms. Frizzle said in this COP we addressed misconceptions in a timely manner unlike her experience in PLC meetings. Ms. Jimenez asserted there needed to be a reason for writing, especially writing PLC meeting minutes. She added that a lack of feedback based on meeting minutes (and writing in general)

leads to a decrease of validity. “There’s no point to it,” she asserted. Ms. Frizzle explained how “for writing to seem valuable it has to be treated as important; it has to be treated as valuable.” From their perspectives, writing meeting minutes was pointless because there was a lack of feedback from the administrators who required the notes.

How this COP affected our practice. I posed this question to our COP: Do you believe that working in this community helped you as a teacher, as a learner, and if not then what would have helped to better our community working together? The teachers responded how affirmatively; participating in our COP changed their perceptions of their practice. The teachers expressed how reflecting on their personal experiences as students and their professional experiences teaching prompted critical reflection. They evaluated why and how they included writing in their classroom instruction.

For example, Ms. Jimenez asserted her participation in this COP “made me look into myself.” Further, she indicated that her reflection prompted questions such as, “Am I doing it just for the fact that that’s what I’m supposed to do or am I doing it to help the kids?” She reviewed her lesson plans and class assignments with these questions in mind and made changes accordingly.

Similarly, Ms. Frizzle stated she always followed mandates issued by our campus administration. If the principal said to include writing assignments as part of classroom instruction, then she included writing. Participating in this COP led her to see how writing is useful for her instruction. For example, she realized that not every writing assignment had to be an essay; it can be short, it can be fun, and it can be interesting. For her students, shorter or more fun or more interesting reading and writing assignments led students to be more engaged. She attributed hearing different outlooks on writing to discovering other ways of assigning writing

and being more purposeful in how she utilizes writing as an instructional strategy. Another suggestion from Ms. Frizzle was to pair an experienced teacher with a new teacher in order to train new teachers. She reasoned new teachers would be more successful incorporating writing assignments in their instruction because they will have an understanding how writing looks like or how it is useful for instruction. Ending her thought she emphasized, “They won’t be doing something just because they are told to do it.”

Collaborating with the teachers, I gained insight to what other teachers were doing in their classrooms; for example, how they included writing instruction in their classes. Also, I had a better understanding of how their personal and professional experiences influenced their teaching philosophies. They shared their personal experiences when they were students, which influenced their professional choices, for example how and why they teach.

If this COP were to continue. I asked how our COP if we were to continue, what would you want to study or what would you want to investigate about your practice? As a follow-up question, I asked for participants’ opinions how to improve this COP. In response, the teachers highlighted the importance of being part of a community. Their suggestions included inviting more teachers to connect professionally and to share authentic feedback with a goal of improving their professional practice.

Ms. Frizzle liked that this group was a bunch of teachers who have been doing this a while and have been around the block. In the future to improve her experience in a COP, she would incorporate more teachers from other subjects. Ms. Jimenez added to Ms. Frizzle’s suggestion about including more subjects adding representatives from different subjects could participate in a COP, then when they return to their respective departments, they could share what they had experienced in the COP. This way there will be more feedback and sharing.

Sharing also builds a sense of community and it makes those teachers feel like somebody cares about them.

A highlight of my experience was our in person COP meetings, I explained. Although electronic communication, such as email, allows people to feel “connected,” it just does not work well. At one time, I attempted to contact teachers by sending an electronic survey requesting their availability so I could meet with them. I received few responses so I resorted to visiting the teachers in person. The response rate was much better! Our schedules are busy and there is never a convenient time to meet, but COP meetings in person were best. I felt that if we had met online we might not have shared our personal and professional experiences at all.

Ms. Jimenez suggested designing evaluations to help her assess her practice. She asked the COP directly, “Are we doing enough in class?” She wanted feedback from her colleagues. She wanted ways to grow as teacher, to make us better teachers, and to make the students better learners. She continued to question, “How do you evaluate. How do we make it work?” She explained if the COP designed their evaluations, “then we can have a say how to document things.” Documenting her experience in a COP would help incorporate reflection. Summarizing her comments, she explained, “You write your goals. You practice. You reflect. You get feedback.”

I agreed with Ms. Jimenez’s idea about how to design evaluations. We could document our practice to provide authentic evidence on which to reflect. In this COP, the teachers repeatedly emphasized they wanted authentic feedback. Our current system of teacher evaluation does not satisfy our needs as adult learners and teachers. We wanted timely authentic feedback to know how we could improve our practice.

Reflection as Participant Observer

As a result participating in this research study, my experiences in this COP influenced my personal philosophy of leadership.

Collaborating in our COP, our discussions often included personal stories that connected to our professional careers. Our personal lives influence our professional practice. We acknowledged change is difficult and learning involves vulnerability for teacher as well as students. Sharing our personal and professional experiences facilitated our interactions and made us feel connected. As a leader, I need to take the time (and opportunities) to have teachers make connections to each other. In future PD sessions I lead, I plan to include activities that allow participants to share about themselves. The purpose of their sharing is to connect to their colleagues, cooperate, and share resources they create (Roberts, 2006).

While I advocate for shared leadership in a learning community, the teachers in this COP benefited from guidance and support. My focus for this study was to examine teachers' perceptions directing their own learning with practitioner inquiry; however, the teachers utilized practitioner inquiry less than I had anticipated. Even though the teachers directed their learning in this COP, choosing topics for discussion related to their practice, they did not utilize the three prescribed steps to practitioner inquiry that I had initiated. My original intention was for teachers to direct their learning by utilizing practitioner inquiry to investigate their practice. I had introduced to the teachers the steps in practitioner inquiry, so they could document their experiences investigating their practice. In our COP, I had in mind a plan to initiate a topic, and then each individual participant would guide or contribute to the topic. My intention was for the teachers to participate as co-researchers selecting topics for discussion and investigating their classroom experiences. In contrast to the PLC meetings the teachers attended, I intended our learning community to function differently. In their respective PLC meetings, teachers followed

directives from campus administration that dictates topics for their discussions. I learned quickly, though that our learning community benefited having topics “suggested.”

In our first three meetings, I spoke often as evident in the transcripts. In our initial meetings, I introduced topics related to conducting research with practitioner inquiry. In response, teachers did not say much compared later meetings. As I explained in my reflection, the teachers expressed reluctance when I introduced research to our COP including the mention of practitioner inquiry. In these initial meetings, participants led the discussion more often when topics focused on their personal and professional experiences. For example, sharing their experiences as writers and encouraging their students to write. In later meetings, I spoke less frequently, listening as teachers took more control of our discussions. Teachers directed their inquiry and our COP sharing their classroom experiences. Example topics teachers discussed related to collaborating how to incorporate writing in their content and how to teach their students reflection strategies. As I listened, I monitored how our discussions related to the topic at hand. In instances when the topics of discussion deviated from the topic, I would redirect our discussion by asking participants a question related to the topic. Participants’ limited use of practitioner inquiry may be because of the teachers’ lack of familiarity with practitioner inquiry or the function of a COP. As an alternative, I could have modeled the practitioner inquiry process.

While I still advocate for teachers to direct their own learning and to participate as researchers of their own practice, I have gained a better appreciation of how my leadership may (or may not) support other professionals’ PD. Therefore, I can understand the perspective of a campus administrator about the importance of providing leadership and holding group members accountable for their participation and learning. Depending on the purpose or topic of discussion

for a learning community, a designated leader may need to facilitate the community at least initially.

Limitations

As participant observer, my perspective influenced my data collection and analysis. I was part of this lived experience conducting research as the research instrument; my tacit assumptions and interpretations influenced the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I used introspection and critical reflection to account for my experiences and views, which influenced data collection and analysis (Holliday, 2007). I documented my role as participant observer recording my own reflections and thoughts during and after meetings to account for my influence in this COP.

Reviewing audio recordings and transcriptions, I was aware that my participation in this research study influenced our COP, especially relating to the meeting topics and data collection and analyses. While my role influenced the community, I was careful to document each participant's role in the ethnographic record I made. My ethnographic record served as an audit trail to account for our interactions (Merriam, 2002). As part of my ethnographic record, I utilized thick description to account for participants' interpretations of their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Describing our interactions, I used thick description to provide context and meaning for participants' words and actions. Using data collected from multiple sources, including video recordings of meetings, transcription of meetings, and field notes, I triangulated multiple sources of data to account for the participants' multiple perspectives (Yin, 2011). Reviewing data from past meetings with participants, I grounded my interpretations in the data collected.

My understanding of PD and the research site as a social context of learning was the basis for collecting and analyzing data with an ethnographic perspective (Spradley, 1980). Limiting this study to a single setting allowed me to examine PD in a context where participants shared their practice engaging in and communicating about PD. Familiarity with the participants, their experiences, and the research site was beneficial to examining our experiences in the context of our practice (Labaree, 2002). Limiting the number of participants and collaborating in a small group of teachers with whom I was familiar, allowed opportunities to share their experiences and perceptions.

The teachers directed our COP sharing topics relevant to their classroom experiences although they did not utilize the three steps of practitioner inquiry I had presented initially. Instead of investigating our practice as co-researchers utilizing practitioner inquiry, we examined our perceptions directing our own learning. Our experiences were authentic sources of our learning. We engaged in examining our classroom experiences and sharing feedback leading to our positive perceptions of PD.

Data Analysis

Using Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) as a guide for my data analyses, I examined PD as a cultural practice identifying patterns and principles of the group to construct domain and taxonomic analyses. I provided in Chapter Three a detailed description of the conceptual framework, research design and the steps I followed for my analyses. My purpose was to investigate teachers' perceptions participating in a COP. My goal was to understand how self-direction of learning affected the participants' perceptions of their PD.

After I transcribed our meetings, I reviewed the transcripts compiling a list of words and phrases participants used related to their classroom experiences and their participation in this COP (see Appendix C for a list of topics used in connection to included terms). Next, I used sentence frames Spradley (1980) suggested, for example “x is a kind of y,” “x is a reason for y,” and “x is a way to y,” in order to understand the teachers’ experiences. I combined sentence frames to construct domains. I made a list of domains I identified (see Appendix E for a list of domains). Next, I revised my list of domains, combining similar domains and eliminating domains that were not relevant to the purpose of this study.

I developed structural questions based on a domain. A structural question is the domain formed as a question. For example, for the domain “kinds of professional development,” the structural question was “What are all the kinds of professional development?” Keeping in mind the structural question: “What are all the kinds of professional development,” I asked myself which “terms” that participants used could be “a kind of something?” (see Appendix F for domain analysis worksheets with structural questions included). I combined domains to show relationships between their experiences teaching and participating in this COP. Last, I combined domains to construct taxonomies (see Appendix G for a summary of domain and taxonomic analyses).

My analyses targeted and resulted in two taxonomies and four domains. Table 2 includes the taxonomies representative of domain relationships. The domains and included terms listed in table 2 represent how participants described their experiences relevant to their classroom experiences and collaborating in this COP. In the last column, I listed example words and phrases participants used.

Table 2

Taxonomy, Domain, Included Terms, Examples

Taxonomy	Domain	Included terms	Examples
Professional development in a community	Reasons for PD	Reflecting, Being accountable, Learning	instructional strategies, more aware, more cognizant
	Reasons for a learning community	Sharing feedback, Sharing common experiences, Making connections	connect, learning strategy, support, successful
Engagement in professional development	Parts of learning	Being vulnerable, Conflict	uneasiness, uncomfortable, open up, find out
	Ways to engage learners	Making professional choices, Having learner-centered activities	for class, for fun, current events, relevant

Note. Analyses based on Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS)

These data contributed to understanding how teachers' directing their learning and participating in a community of practice influenced their perceptions of PD.

Domain One: Reasons for Professional Development

Constructing domain one, I reviewed my transcripts from our eight COP meetings noting words and phrases participants used such as reflecting, accountable, and learning (see Appendix C for a list of topics used in connection to included terms). Using semantic relationships, such as "x is a kind of y" and "x is a reason for y," I grouped terms by semantic relationship in order to construct this domain. Next, I used the structural question: What are reasons for PD? The following accounts from Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez illustrate their reasons for PD.

Domain one represents the teachers' reasons for PD as they explored their classroom experiences teaching and participating in this COP. Wanting to improve for the benefit of their students' learning, they selected topics relevant to the context of their practice for their inquiry. Their classroom experiences were authentic sources for learning. In the following stories, Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez share how in our meetings, they explored authentic topics relevant to the context of their practice affected their perceptions of their PD.

In our eighth meeting, we reflected on our experiences participating in this COP. We had collaborated together examining our practice over the course of seven meetings. In this final meeting, the participants explained how examining their practice affected their perceptions of their PD. In the following accounts by Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez, they discussed how reflection, learning, and accountability resulted from examining their practice.

Ms. Frizzle explained how reflecting on her practice contributed to her personal learning as a science teacher. She changed her thinking about reading and writing as instructional strategies. She asserted, "I felt like it made me more aware of reading and writing." Ms. Frizzle continued to explain that discussing reading and discussing writing "made me more cognizant of (a) this is something that I should be doing and (b) it's something that isn't necessarily difficult to implement." Ms. Frizzle attributed changes in her practice to collaborating and reflecting on her PD in this COP.

Ms. Jimenez shared a similar experience. She asserted participating in this COP "made me look into myself." Further, she indicated that her reflection prompted questions such as, "Am I doing it just for the fact that that's what I'm supposed to do or am I doing it to help the kids?" Ms. Jimenez perceived her personal accountability as a teacher as a reason to for her PD. She wanted to improve her practice for the benefit of her students.

This domain illustrates the teachers' reasons for PD. Participating in this COP influenced their perceptions of PD. In the context of their practice, they examined and reflected based on their classroom experiences that contributed to their positive perceptions of self-directing PD.

Domain Two: Reasons for a Community of Practice

In constructing domain two, I looked for words and phrases participants used related to communities of practice, including connect, support, feedback, and sharing. Next, I constructed domains by using semantic relationships; for example, "x is a way to engage learners," "x is a kind of PD," and "x is a way to design PD." Examining the domains, I noticed common phrases such as community. I focused on examining participants' perceptions of PD; therefore, I eliminated the semantic relationship "x is a way to design PD." Next, I combined domains by utilizing structural questions. Sample structural questions I asked myself were, "What are all the kinds of professional development?" and "What are ways to engage learners?" I identified "terms" that participants used that answered these questions. I was interested in their perceptions specifically related about COP so I eliminated any mention of PLCs. Last, I revised domains to make a final list (see Appendix G for a summary of domain and taxonomic analyses). The result was domain two: reasons for participating in a COP.

Domain two refers to teachers' reasons for participating in a COP. The teachers shared common classroom experiences and shared feedback related to their experiences. Sharing personal and professional experiences in our COP, teachers wanted feedback to improve their practice. The COP was space where teachers discussed instructional strategies relevant to their practice and the questions they had, then in subsequent meetings, share their experiences and feedback again. They had authentic topics relevant to their practice, which positively influenced their perceptions of their PD.

In our eighth meeting as we reflected on our experiences participating in this COP, Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez shared how feedback from their colleagues was useful. For example, Ms. Jimenez expressed how collaborating in our COP prepared her to write goals as part of her performance evaluation. She stated, “This is helping us prepare for that because it asks us so much about setting up goals, writing up goals, and how we start with the goals and the top and then we start shrinking it down until it comes down to us.” She attributed her feeling of preparation sharing our common experiences in our community. She explained, “We can share our experiences. And it helps. I think it does help in the long run.” Ms. Jimenez wanted timely feedback from her colleagues in order to improve her practice.

Ms. Frizzle and Ms. Jimenez addressed how immediate feedback from their colleagues contributed to their positive perceptions of collaborating in this COP. Dissatisfied with the response she had from a campus administrator who reported writing copious notes for each PLC meeting was intended “for accountability and to make sure everybody is doing what they’re supposed to.” Ms. Frizzle expressed her frustration demanding, “How is this making me a better teacher?” There was a connection missing between the notes she took in PLC meetings and her teaching. Ms. Frizzle went on to explain, “For writing to seem valuable it has to be treated as important it has to be treated as valuable. And the minute you start treating it as just something else to do or a time filler or anything like that well...” Ms. Jimenez finished her thought, “There’s no point to it.”

For Ms. Jimenez sharing our common experiences and feedback in our COP helped us make connections to each other, to our students, and to our class content we teach. Through making these connections, she explained we had achieved goal “and it’s something were aiming

for. We're aiming for the idea to for all of us to connect somewhere. So I think this has helped us.”

These examples from Ms. Jimenez and Ms. Frizzle show this domain, reasons for a learning community, related to teachers' perceptions of their practice. This domain illustrates how they made connections participating in a learning community. The teachers shared experiences and feedback related to authentic topics in an effort to improve their practice.

Taxonomy One: Teacher professional development in a community. To construct taxonomy one, namely PD in a learning community, I combined domains based on the common term “community.” In another domain, “reasons for participating in a community,” the answer to my structural question, “What are reasons for participating in a community” combined with “ways to participate in PD.” The teachers mentioned sharing feedback was a reason for PD and for participating in a community. The domain “participation in a community” as a reason for PD was a stronger, more compelling domain than a “ways to participate”; therefore, I eliminated “ways to participate.”

The theme for this taxonomy is directing their inquiry related to context of their practice in a community contributed to positive perceptions of PD. Community was the social context for PD where participants interact and explore ideas with others to co-construct learning experiences. In the course of our meetings, we compared elements of each learning community, PLC and COP. The teachers had participated in a PLC; however, this COP was a new, unfamiliar experience. Included terms I identified describe teachers' positive perceptions collaborating in our COP focused on their classroom-based experiences. In this taxonomy, there are two domains: reasons for PD and reasons for participating in a learning community. Specifically,

teachers addressed their perceptions of sharing feedback with support from our learning community contributed to them feeling connected.

Domain Three: Parts of Learning

To construct domain three, I reviewed the transcripts for each of the meetings noting key words I identified that related to “learning.” Next, I used the semantic relationship “x is a part of learning” in order to group key words I had identified. In this process, I constructed domains using participants’ words. Key terms the participants reported were uneasiness, conflict, uncomfortable, open up, and find out. For example, in reference to the stories above, I created domains “conflict is a part of learning,” “uneasiness is a part of learning,” and “being uncomfortable is a part of learning.” After I listed key words for this semantic relationship, I reviewed my transcripts using a structural question, “what are the parts of learning.” With this structural question in mind, I revised my list of domains based on the semantic relationship parts of learning (see Appendix G for a summary of domain and taxonomic analyses).

In the domain “parts of learning,” the teachers described their perceptions of being vulnerable in this learning community and as a result, their understanding about how perceptions of/about learning may affect learning. Key terms and phrases participants discussed included being open, being critical, and changing your mindset. Being vulnerable influenced teachers’ engagement examining their practice and participating in our COP.

An example from Ms. Jimenez illustrates her perspective of being vulnerable. She explained to engage in learning requires a change in mindset to be open and embrace risk sharing your experiences with others. She shared her perceptions of participating in this COP sharing writing projects: “I think some of us are feeling that uneasiness at times... it’s causing for us to fill with conflict too.” She continued to explain that practicing writing in a community “made

several of us feel uncomfortable on what we have to do.” Ms. Jimenez’s example illustrates how teachers’ feelings of vulnerability, like their students, may affect their willingness to engage. As adult learners, teachers may recognize the source of their uneasiness and continue to work through their “conflict.”

Mr. Martinez valued his efforts to be vulnerable with his students. He shared his personal stories in order to connect with his students on a personal level. Mr. Martinez asserted that sharing his background and experiences with the students was beneficial to his instruction and making students feel more comfortable. He explained that by sharing his background and “opening up to the kids,” his students were more likely to trust him. He credited his conversations with students and writing assignments as beneficial ways to understand his students. He explained about writing, “It also gives you an insight into when they write because you start finding out things about them.” He continued to explain, “And then you know where they’re coming from.” Mr. Martinez’s story illustrates how sharing his personal experiences helped his instruction.

Domain Four: Ways to Engage Learners

To construct domain four, I used the semantic relationship “x is a way to engage learners.” Through the process of using this semantic relationship, I found two prevalent topics: choice and learner-centered activities. Engagement in learning was a topic often mentioned in our discussions whether students in the classroom or teachers participating in PD. I reviewed transcripts noting words and phrases teachers said about engagement. I looked for words and phrases participants used to describe their experiences actively engaging in positive experiences with PD. There was a difference between participating in PD and engaging in PD.

The domain “ways to engage learners” refers to how teachers emphasized having choice as professionals connected to their interests and motivation. Engagement in learning included choosing topics for our discussions. Engagement also related to the teachers’ experiences as sources of learning. They engaged in their practice using topics relevant to their lives and their classroom experiences. Participants used example words and phrases such as fun, happy, excited. According to their perceptions, teachers’ choice affected their engagement.

In our second meeting, participants discussed how they identified themselves as writers and readers. We discussed our purposes for writing including how we utilized writing in our personal and professional lives. We talked about what genres we like to read and for what purpose. Mr. Martinez shared a story of an exchange he had with his wife regarding his reading habits, illustrating how a teacher’s interests and their professional choices may overlap.

Mr. Martinez shared how choice is an integral component of his learning and teaching. Mr. Martinez explained, “I need to read a lot about current events all the time so I find myself, of course, reading the newspaper.” He continued, “My wife asks, ‘Are you doing that for class or are you doing that for fun?’” In response to his wife’s question, Mr. Martinez replied, “Well, that’s for fun actually. Of course, things that I read, I go, ‘hey, I can use that in class.’” Mr. Martinez emphasized he was always looking for topics and articles to share with his classes. In his exchange with his wife, he explained when he read current events in a newspaper or news magazine he read with two purposes in mind: to stay informed about current news and to find relevant articles for his classroom instruction.

In meeting three, we discussed creativity. On one hand, we encourage students to imagine in their minds’ a story they want to write. On the other hand, teachers felt their professional responsibility included entertaining students, a role they lamented. Ms. Jimenez complained,

“We have become entertainers. And we’ve got to figure out how to entertain them to keep their attention also. Because that’s what their games do.”

Our discussions included ways to encourage students’ interests and engage in learning. The teachers saw benefit in modeling learner-centered activities that engaged them (through instruction) and their students. Assessing her perceptions of her students’ writing skills Ms. Frizzle explained, “I feel by the time we get them in high school, they’re very well-trained on the fact that they’re supposed to be writing something for someone for some purpose that’s already predetermined.” She examined the challenge of working with her students: “Is high school too late? Can we teach them to be creative again?” Taking risks, she said, is part of the process to teaching creativity. Students have to express their ideas first, which for her is the biggest challenge- getting them to start writing.

In our COP, Ms. Frizzle accepted the challenge to convert a memorial project she had created to an online video using “Animoto.” When she shared her project, she excitedly shared her experience working her project proclaiming, “I love Animoto. It just makes me happy. This is so fun because I went through all my scanned pictures. I’m a visual kind of person. I was so excited about this too!” She connected personal experience to an engaging learner-centered activity that also served as her instructional strategy to encourage creativity.

These examples from Mr. Martinez and Ms. Frizzle show this domain, ways to engage learners, related to choices professionals make (which included his personal interests). Selecting authentic materials was engaging for the teachers.

Taxonomy Two: Teacher engagement in professional development. To construct taxonomy two, I revised my domain analysis worksheets combining similar included terms across domains based on the same semantic relationships that were “x is a part of learning” and

“x is a way to engage learners.” I searched for larger, more inclusive domains comprised of subsets of a domain from the domain analysis. To combine domains further, I asked myself the structural questions: What are parts of learning? What are ways to engage learners? I saw domains that had repeated words, for example, professional development and similar words, such as, learning, learner, and participate. In this process of revising my domain analyses worksheets, I also deleted included terms and revised cover terms. I eliminated included terms from my domain analyses. For example, I had originally included specific activities for PD participants mentioned such as reading; however, I eliminated this included term because it did not correspond to the overall theme of engagement.

The central theme of the engaging teachers’ taxonomy is that teachers valued opportunities to direct their learning thereby influencing their perceptions of PD. Engagement is the emotional investment in an activity affecting participants’ perceptions. Included terms dealt with emotional issues and factors influencing emotional issues. Located in this taxonomy are two domains relating to emotional investment and perceptions: parts of learning and ways to engage learners. Specifically, teachers addressed being vulnerable and having professional choices to direct their learning.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided background on the individual participants and the learning community. Next, I described the practitioner inquiry method participants utilized in the COP. I detailed the three steps the participants used to guide their practitioner inquiry investigating their individual practice, which consisted of (1) selecting a focus, (2) collecting data, (3) analyzing and interpreting data. My role as participant observer allowed insight to the learning community

as a participant. Additionally, I accounted for limitations I encountered collecting and analyzing data.

From my perspective as a participant observer, I presented the findings using interactional ethnography to examine and explain the teachers' perceptions and experiences in this COP including my own. Using an interactive ethnographic approach and Spradley's DRS, I constructed taxonomies and domains based on participants' words and actions. The domains and taxonomies connected the teachers' perceptions as learners to their PD and the context of their learning. The findings in this chapter included two taxonomies showing relationships among domains: (1) professional development in a community and (2) engagement in professional development. I constructed these two taxonomies based on four domains: (1) reasons for professional development, (2) reasons for a learning community, (3) parts of learning, and (4) ways to engage learners. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings from this chapter and make recommendations based on these findings.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss findings from this qualitative research study in which I examined teachers' perceptions of their PD. In my discussion, I respond to the research questions for this study. I provide three implications about teachers directing their learning, communities of practice, and PD in the context of work. Then, I make recommendations for future research. Finally, I summarize this chapter.

The focus of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of professional development directing their own learning as participants in a community of practice (COP). Using a social constructivist view of learning as a conceptual framework, I examined teachers' perceptions and practices participating in a COP. Members of a group or learning community construct meaning with other members through language and interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). To collect and analyze data using interactive ethnography, I utilized my role as a participant observer. I participated as a practitioner investigating my own practice and as a researcher investigating practitioners utilizing practitioner inquiry. My membership and participation in the COP provided access to the participating teachers' experiences. Data collected in the practitioner inquiry served to inform individual teachers about their PD experiences. I analyzed the data using my lens as a researcher to explore how the teachers constructed a common culture signaled through their words and actions (Green & Meyer, 1991).

Utilizing Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence (1980), I analyzed participants' discourse and interactions. I reviewed my field notes and transcribed data focusing on words and phrases participants used when talking about their personal and professional classroom experiences including PD. Next, I constructed domains and then taxonomies based on participants' words used to describe and explain their perceptions and experiences in this COP

(see Appendix G for a summary of domain and taxonomic analyses). My analyses resulted in two taxonomies: (1) professional development in a community and (2) engagement in professional development. I constructed four domains, which were: (1) reasons for professional development, (2) reasons for a learning community, (3) parts of learning, and (4) ways to engage learners. In the next section, I discuss the findings for this study relating the theories and concepts listed above to the domains and taxonomies resulting from my analyses.

Discussion of Findings

Qualitative research is a developmental process of examining human experience, beliefs, ideas, systems, and cultures in the context of people's everyday lives (Creswell, 2008). Researchers collect and analyze data involving the participants' experiences and views (Yin, 2011). Researchers rely on themselves as research instruments cognizant their biases and interpretations influence the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As a result, researchers conducting qualitative research may modify or change their original research questions.

Through the course of this qualitative study, the teachers participated as co-researchers. They constructed experiences and functioned as data sources in this study. They guided our collaborative inquiry in our COP. Although participants did not utilize practitioner inquiry as a research process in distinct steps, they did direct their experiences in our COP. The findings I discuss contribute to answering the research questions I posed at the beginning of this study.

The questions for this study were:

1. How does self-direction of learning influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?

2. How does participating in a community of practice influence high school teachers' perceptions of their professional development?

Response to research question one. Self-direction and being vulnerable contributed to positive perceptions of PD affecting engagement and motivation. Teachers directing their own learning had a positive influence on their perceptions of their learning as represented in taxonomy two. The teacher's perceptions were consistent with the literature that professionals directing their learning contributed to a positive change in their beliefs and perceptions of their practice (Goodnough, 2008).

Teacher engagement, represented in domain three, connected to teachers as individual adult learners and as colleagues, participating in this COP. Teachers in this study attributed their engagement to the authentic topics they chose for our collaborative inquiry. In response to current challenges teachers encountered in their classrooms, they directed discussions in search of strategies to improve their practice. Wilson and Hartung (2015) reported similar findings: participants directing their learning attributed positive changes in their skills to collaborating in discussions. The teachers in this study embraced their classroom experiences as learning opportunities. Examining authentic and relevant experiences motivated their willingness to share their vulnerability. Equally, the teachers asserted their feelings of vulnerability influenced their engagement examining their own practice. PD for teachers in this COP was an iterative process. Furthermore, teachers reciprocated PD opportunities engaging group members in PD.

Findings from this study agree with the findings from Wallace and Priestley (2011) that teachers' perceptions of their PD positively affected their teaching experiences prompting teachers to be more aware of their instructional strategies. Authentic learning opportunities situated in the context of their practice influenced the teachers' positive perceptions of their

instruction skills; they worked through their vulnerability to be more confident in their instruction skills (Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010).

Teachers preferred to have an active role directing their learning as evident in domain four. Teachers took advantage of learning opportunities through directing their practice (Jones & Dexter, 2014). Making professional choices enhanced their perceptions of engagement. They directed inquiry of their practice incorporating their questions and their insider perspective (Taylor, 2011). They utilized their unique perspective to address challenges they identified based on their experience in the context of their work environment. Van Driel and Berry (2012) add to Taylor's claim that effective learning incorporates personalized topics with learner-centered activities relevant to an individual's practice and collaboration with other teachers

Self-direction of learning allowed teachers to choose topics relevant to their practice and adapt discussions in our COP (Curwood, 2013; Koellner & Jacobs, 2015; Mor & Mogilevsky, 2013). Setting goals for themselves also motivated the teachers to assess their personal and professional experiences and in turn, provide feedback to others in the learning community. This feedback process aligns with Roberts' (2006) assertion social interaction is a fundamental element for a learning community in which participants cooperate and create shared resources. Collaboration proved beneficial affecting teachers' positive perceptions of their PD.

Response to research question two. Participating in a COP contributed to the teachers' positive perceptions of their PD. According to my observations (and teacher experiences), evident in taxonomy (1), teachers' perceptions were positive highlighting their engagement as a factor when individuals direct their learning and participate in a collaborative learning community.

Reflected in Domain one, participants directed content (topics) that was timely and relevant to their inquiry. Participants were sources and consumers of content (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). Participants' experiences were sources for their individual and collaborative inquiry situated in the context of their work environment (Whitney et al., 2014). Teachers selected topics related to the context of their practice, the school where they worked. Through cooperative inquiry in this COP, community members took advantage of individual strengths and addressed weaknesses. Each individual committed to improving their individual practice utilizing their perspectives as teachers from different core departments and backgrounds. Participants' experiences in this study were consistent with findings from Curwood (2013) that participants directing their learning encouraged or promoted relevant content, which in turn promoted engagement. Discussing questions and challenges based on their classroom experiences was a factor participants noted as important for their engagement in this community of practice.

In our community, the teachers shared participation examining our individual teaching practices and sharing our inquiry process in collaboration in our COP as evident in domain two. We utilized four elements of situated learning as the fundamental process of engagement for our COP: (1) content, (2) context, (3) participation, and (4) community. Community functioned to provide a social learning context where teachers exchanged ideas connected to their work and their classroom experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The COP in which they participated allowed for collaboration and reflection (Stewart, 2014).

Shared practice (which included rehearsing and assessing instruction strategies) was an influential factor affecting teachers' perceptions. Teachers "rehearsed" or practiced instructional strategies with group members influencing their perceptions of PD (Kazemi et al., 2016). This

finding in domain two aligns with an important factor for PD that Kelcey and Phelps (2013b) identified as collaboration. Teachers in cooperation with their colleagues “unpacked” and applied new ideas to their practice. Levy et al. (2013) asserted advantages of collaboration included immediate feedback and assessment offered by their peers. Collaborating in a learning community can prompt teachers to examine their practice leading to changes in their instructional practice to meet the needs of their students (Mundy et al., 2015).

In collaboration with colleagues, the teachers engaged in making meaning of their inquiry leading to positive changes in their instructional strategies. Aligning with findings from Sun et al. (2013), collaboration was an important factor influencing teachers’ perceptions of engagement. Furthermore, findings from this study are similar to results from Haug and Sands (2013) and Limbrick et al. (2010) that suggest teachers engaged in an inquiry of their practice, individually and collectively in the COP, can positively influence teachers’ perceptions of their practice.

Community influenced more than PD. Over the course of this research study, dynamics of this COP contributed teachers feeling connected. They developed a sense of membership in this community with confidence their ideas were valued. Sharing experiences not necessarily related to their teaching practice contributed to teacher engagement. In contrast to PLC meetings, teachers from different content areas in this COP incorporated their perspectives to examine their personal and professional experiences. This unique opportunity allowed teachers to connect and strengthen a sense of community beyond improving their practice.

Implications

As a result of this research, I provide three implications regarding communities of practice for teachers, teacher educators, and school administrators.

Implication one. Teachers may direct their own learning based on personal or professional interests in addition to maintaining certification and separate from their employer's requirements (Skerrett et al., 2018). As evident in domain one, teachers' classroom experiences are authentic sources for learning. Selecting topics relevant to the context of their practice, teachers wanted to improve their instructional skills for their students' benefit. To document their experiences directing their PD and to share their perspectives, practitioner inquiry is a useful approach (Whitney et al., 2014). Documentation of teachers' learning experiences provides evidence of practice for the benefit of a teachers' own experiences and also for others, including PD providers such as teacher educators (Hill & Haigh, 2012).

Implication two. New teachers need support to develop their instructional skills (Kwok, 2017). Teacher educators may utilize COP to instruct new teachers developing their instructional skills and class management skills (Freeman et al., 2014). Collaborating in a COP, new teachers can learn from each other and develop their individual practice (Wilson & Hartung, 2015). Findings provided in taxonomy two supported benefits of collaboration. Examining topics relevant to their practice, teachers benefit from timely feedback, also contributing to their perceptions of engagement. New teachers can rehearse instructional strategies and receive feedback in learning communities. Mundy et al. (2015) advocated for learning communities in which teachers can apply their relevant learning in addition to guided support such as coursework, instructional coaching, or mentor teachers.

Implication three. School administrators may allow teachers to collaborate in a COP self-directing their learning as an appropriate method to influence teacher motivation (Polly & Hannafin, 2011). As demonstrated in findings from this study, specifically domain four, participants asserted directing topics for their learning affected their engagement positively

influencing their motivation to participate in PD. In collaborative learning communities, teachers can support their learning through timely feedback from community members (Kazemi et al., 2016). Furthermore, including teachers in the management of their learning communities can provide a method for them to direct their learning relevant to their practice. Following a suggestion by Lee and Shaari (2012), a beneficial approach to managing learning communities begins with a highly-structured PLC, then evolves to a self-directed COP. For example, a campus administration may establish a community initially and communicate to teachers the purpose and topics for the PLC. As the PLC develops, teachers may direct the purpose and topics as a COP.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the future, practitioners may research their practice themselves contributing to the understanding of their experiences and perceptions of their PD. Autoethnography is one research approach in which practitioners may explore their own experience incorporating their personal perceptions and emotions (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). Practitioners may explore their practice using self-reflection and writing about their experiences. For example, evolving technology may prompt new questions for educational researchers. Researchers may use a reflective research approach, such as autoethnography, to explore how they adapt to new technology affecting their learning. As practitioners and researchers learn, their experiences may in turn influence how future generations of learners experience learning. To address the needs and learning styles of learners, researchers may benefit from examining their own practice (Mendez, 2013).

Leaders in education and other professions may benefit from examining their own practice with practitioner inquiry or autoethnography. Exploring personal and professional

experiences through reflective research can contribute to an understanding of how leaders influence others. Leaders may find ways strategies methods to connect and engage followers examining their own practice. Their reflections may make visible their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, leaders can adapt their leadership style relevant to the context in which they practice (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015). Exploring their experiences through writing may inform their practice as well as inform outsiders, which in the case of educational leaders includes school administrators and the general public.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained how I utilized practitioner inquiry and an interactive ethnographic approach to explore high school teachers' perceptions of professional development directing their learning in a community of practice. Through our collaboration, we directed our inquiry individually; however, the participants did not utilize practitioner inquiry as distinct steps. Consistent with the developmental process of qualitative research, the participants as co-researchers modified the research plan I had in mind originally.

Teachers directing their learning experiences contributed to their positive perceptions of engagement. In addition to making professional choices, teachers embraced authentic learning opportunities as in the case of practitioner inquiry. Teachers adapted their learning based on their classroom experiences. Investing emotionally in their learning, they embraced being vulnerable in order to be open to change. Examining their own practice and engaging in their learning actively directing their inquiry contributed to their positive perceptions of their professional learning.

Reviewing the elements of our community of practice as related to Situated Learning Theory, I provided evidence how our collaboration influenced our practice and engagement.

Situated in the context of their work, teachers shared their classroom experiences as sources of learning. In this learning community, they described how their accountability to themselves prompted them to want to improve making them aware how their instruction affected students' learning. Our COP provided opportunities to share common experiences and to share timely feedback on our questions and experiences. Exchanging ideas and professional experiences contributed to our PD as well as our relationships. We connected with each other based on shared personal and professional experiences in ways not possible through formal PD. Our community of professionals constructed learning experiences and developed connections to each other contributing to positive perceptions of PD.

Implications for this study include teacher examining their practice to provide evidence of their profession. I advocate for teachers to utilize practitioner inquiry to document and share their practice with others, so they may have a better understanding of teachers' professional experiences. For teacher educators, collaborating with new teachers in a community of practice may support professional development. Members of learning communities can examine topics relevant to professional practice and share timely feedback. Educational leaders may utilize self-directed learning in a community of practice to motivate teachers and staff. Learning opportunities connected to the work environment contribute to positive perceptions teacher learning and professional relationships.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Signed Letters of Research Protocol Clearance



4/14/2015

Joe Procter
223 Veda Mae Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78216

Dear Joe:

Your request to conduct the study titled *A Practitioner Inquiry of High School Teachers' Experiences Participating as a Community of Writers* was approved by expedited review on 4/14/2015. Your IRB approval number is 15-04-005. Any written communication with potential subjects or subjects must be approved and include the IRB approval number. Electronic surveys or electronic consent forms, or other material delivered electronically to subjects must have the IRB approval number inserted into the survey or documents before they are used.

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

- This approval is for one year from the date of the IRB approval.
- Request for continuing review must be completed for projects extending past one year. Use the **IRB Continuation/Completion form**.
- Changes in protocol procedures must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the **Protocol Revision and Amendment form**.
- Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported immediately.

Approved protocols are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about this protocol.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Ohnemus

Rebecca Ohnemus, MAA, CRA
Research Officer
University of the Incarnate Word IRB



5/5/2016

Joe Procter
223 Veda Mae Drive
San Antonio, TX 78216

Dear Joe:

Your request for continued review of expedited protocol 15-04-005 titled *A Practitioner Inquiry of High School Teachers' Experiences Participating as a Community of Writers* was approved. The expiration date for this protocol is 4/30/2017.

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

- This approval is for one year from the date of the IRB approval.
- Request for continuing review must be completed for projects extending past one year. Use the **IRB Continuation/Completion form**.
- Changes in protocol procedures must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the **Protocol Revision and Amendment form**.
- Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported immediately.

Approved protocols are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about this protocol.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development.

Sincerely,

Ana Wandless-Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA

Ana Wandless-Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA
Research Officer
University of the Incarnate Word IRB



January 20 2017

PI: Joe Procter

Protocol title: A Practitioner Inquiry of High School Teachers' Experiences Participating as a Community of Practice

Joe:

Your request for revisions to Expedited protocol 15-04-005 was approved. The following revisions to your protocol have been approved:

- Study title: Changed to "A Practitioner Inquiry of High School Teachers' Experiences Participating as a Community of Practice"
- Faculty Supervisor: Changed to Arthur Hernandez

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

- This approval is for one year from the date of the IRB approval.
- Request for continuing review must be completed for projects extending past one year. Use the IRB Continuation/Completion form.
- Changes in protocol procedures must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the Protocol Revision and Amendment form.
- Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported immediately.

Approved protocols are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about this protocol.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current approved protocol. Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development.

Sincerely,

Ana Wandles-Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA

Ana Wandles-Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA

Research Officer, Office of Research Development

University of the Incarnate Word

(210) 805-3036

wandles@uiwtx.edu



April 18 2018

PI: Joe Procter

Protocol title: A Practitioner Inquiry of High School Teachers' Experiences Participating as a Community of Practice

Joe:

Your request for continued review of Expedited protocol 15-04-005 titled "A Practitioner Inquiry of High School Teachers' Experiences Participating as a Community of Practice" was approved. This approval will expire one year from 04/18/2018.

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

- Request for continuing review must be completed for projects extending past one year. Use the **IRB Continuing Review Request form**.
- Changes in protocol procedures must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the **IRB Amendment Request form**.
- Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported immediately.

Approved protocols are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about this protocol.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current approved protocol. Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development.

Sincerely,

Ana Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA

Ana Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA
Research Officer, Office of Research Development
University of the Incarnate Word
(210) 805-3036
anhagendorf@uiwtx.edu

Appendix B

Meeting Agendas

Meeting #1 April 22, 2015 at 4:20pm

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

What is writing?

Plan for data collection

Reflection

Meeting #2 May 13, 2015 at 4:20pm

Norms

Participate as writers- composition book.

Encourage creativity.

Support others' ideas.

Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

Who are you as a writer? As a reader? Why?

Reflection

Meeting #3 June 5, 2015

Norms

Participate as writers- composition book.

Encourage creativity.

Support others' ideas.

Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

Getting started

Goldberg- Fighting Tofu [chapter]

Cross-curricular writing

Next meeting(s)

Reflection

Meeting #4 July 28, 2015

Norms

Participate as writers- composition book.

Encourage creativity.

Support others' ideas.

Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

We discussed our projects currently in progress and how these resources are useful for classroom instruction.

Animoto visit <https://animoto.com/>

Pinterest visit <https://www.pinterest.com/>

Hstry timeline visit <https://www.hstry.co/>

Next meeting(s)- We did not discuss but how about meeting after school in September (perhaps once a week)? What time and day would work best for you? My suggestion is if we could meet one day a week Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday starting at 4:45. What are your thoughts? Reflection- I am interested to hear in our next meeting about your reflections. I am just curious about how the reflections are useful (or not).

Meeting #5 September 15, 2015 at 4:30pm

Norms

- Participate as writers.
- Encourage creativity.
- Support others' ideas.
- Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

We discussed how to help students especially students that are failing their classes.

Interventions

Reflection- How students can use writing to review and reflect.

Meeting #6 September 24, 2015 at 4:30pm

Norms

- Participate as writers.
- Encourage creativity.
- Support others' ideas.
- Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

We discussed

- The school year and the writing cycle.
- How to learn and learning styles
- Students participate as researchers

Reflection- For our next meeting we will discuss a six-week grade reflection survey.

Meeting #7 October 6, 2015 at 4:30pm

Norms

- Participate as writers.
- Encourage creativity.
- Support others' ideas.
- Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

Writing assessment from students' perspective and our professional development as teachers.

Discuss an article titled "Students Write Tabloid Tabulations in a Math Gossip Magazine" (p 1-5)

Reflection

Meeting #8 October 15, 2015 at 4:30pm

Norms

- Participate as writers.
- Encourage creativity.

Support others' ideas.
Timely communication

Purpose/Focus- Writing.

Reflection

I. What happened? Describe your experience.

Refer to your personal and community goals/objectives

II. What did you learn?

Best/Worst features, Likes/Dislikes, Strengths/Weaknesses

Challenges faced and responses to challenges

Questions to consider:

To what degree do you believe our community is improving teaching and learning?

What could have helped you learn better?

III. Align program and personal goals

How is this experience relevant to program and personal goals?

What competency (-ies) as a practitioner/teacher do you believe you developed by participating in this community?

Questions to consider:

What have you learned about yourself as a teacher?

What have you learned about your students?

What have you learned about the larger context of schools and schooling?

We will complete the "Vessel Activity."

IV. Implications

What changes might you make to your practice?

How can you use what we have practiced in your teaching or personal life?

What are the applications?

What new wonderings do you have?

Appendix C

List of Topics Compiled Using Spradley's DRS

reading	watching documentaries	changing technology	feedback	COP
revising lesson plans	student learning	student	inservice	coaching
reflecting	teacher learning	teacher	plan common periods	providing choice
sharing lesson ideas	accountability	researching	time/calendar	providing weird
sharing experiences	being aware	participating in a community	evaluation	starting with learners' interests
writing	being vulnerable	discussing ideas	PLC	teacher centered

Appendix D

Sample Domain Analysis Worksheet

DOMAIN= Reasons for professional development		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Reflecting	are reasons for →	professional development
Being accountable		
Learning		

Appendix E

List of Domains

X is a kind of Y	
DOMAINS	
kinds of	professional development
kinds of	learners

X is a way to Y	
DOMAINS	
ways to	participate in professional development
ways to	design professional development
ways to	engage learners

X is a reason for Y	
DOMAINS	
reason for	professional development
reason for	participating in a community

X is a part of Y	
DOMAINS	
parts of	learning

Appendix F

Resulting Domains with Structural Questions

DOMAIN= Ways to participate in professional development		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Participating in a community	is a way to →	participate in professional development
Sharing feedback		
Structural question: What are ways to participate in professional development?		

DOMAIN= Ways to design professional development		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Time, Flexibility	is a way to →	design professional development
Setting goals		
Structural question: What are ways to design professional development?		

DOMAIN= Ways to engage learners		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Professional choices	is a way to →	Engage learners
Learner centered activities		
Structural question: What are ways to engage learners?		

DOMAIN= Reasons for professional development		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Reflecting	is a reason for →	professional development
Teacher learning		
Accountability		
Structural question: What are reasons for professional development?		

DOMAIN= Reasons for participating in a community		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Sharing common experiences	is a reason for →	participating in a community
Making connections		
Structural question: What are reasons for participating in a community?		

DOMAIN= Kinds of professional development		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Reading and writing	is a kind of —————→	professional development
Revising lesson plans		
Reflecting		
Structural question: What are kinds of professional development?		

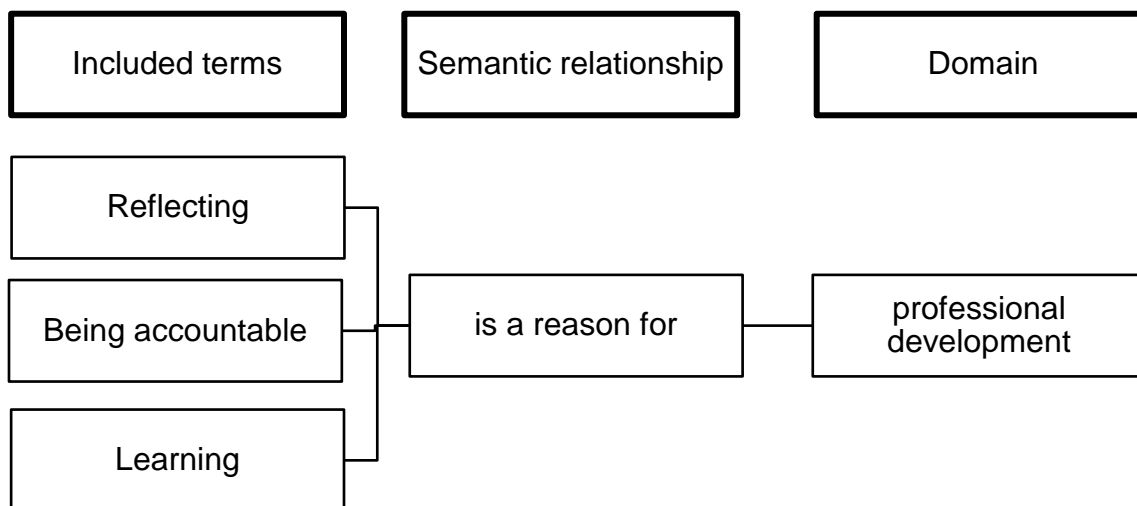
DOMAIN= Parts of learning		
INCLUDED TERMS	SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP	COVER TERM
Being vulnerable	is a part of —————→	Learning (= professional development)
Conflict		
Structural question: What are parts of learning?		

Appendix G

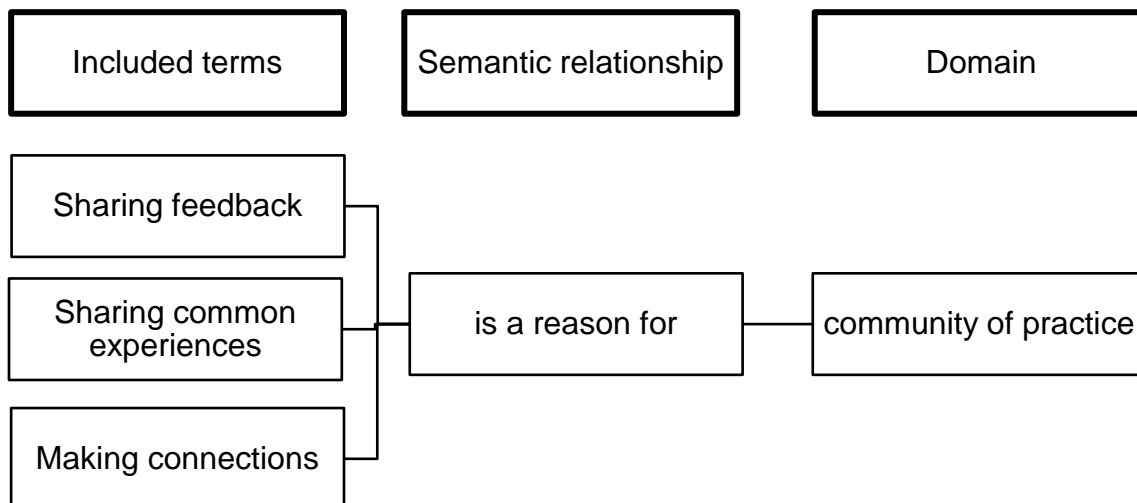
Summary of Taxonomies and Domains

Taxonomy One: Professional development in a community

Domain One: Reasons for professional development

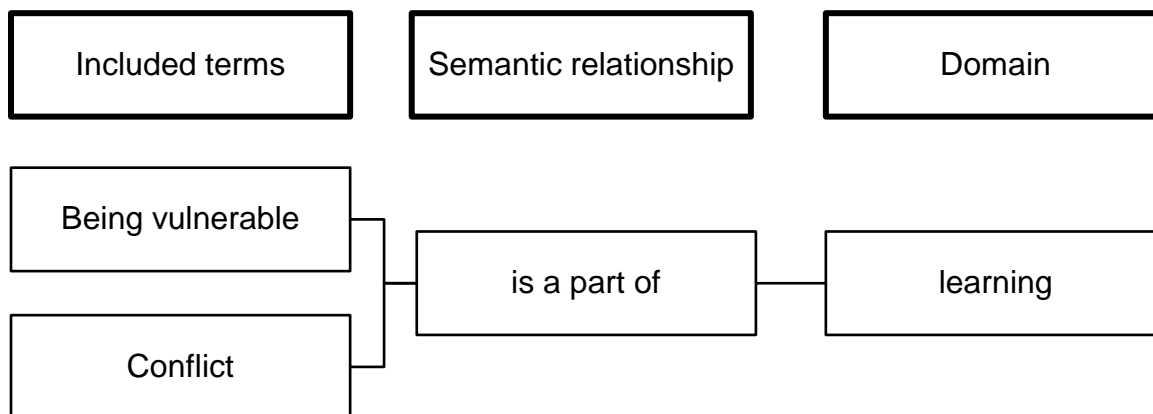


Domain Two: Reasons for a community of practice



Taxonomy Two: Engagement in professional development

Domain Three: Parts of learning



Domain Four: Ways to engage learners

