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A Phenomenological Study of Principals' Perceptions of Instructional Leadership in the Context of Mandated Teacher Evaluation

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A Phenomenological Study of Principals' Perceptions of Instructional Leadership in the Context
of Mandated Teacher Evaluation

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration

by

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M.Ed. Southeastern Louisiana University, 2015

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	viii
Abstract	ix
Chapter One	1
Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement	4
Purpose Statement.....	5
Research Question	6
Definition of Terms.....	6
Chapter Two.....	8
Literature Review.....	8
Instructional Leadership Models and Theories.....	8
Shared instructional leadership	9
Distributed leadership	11
Instructional Leadership as Educational Change.....	13
Supervising	15
Principals’ knowledge demands	18
Principals’ time demands.....	20
Impact of Instructional Leadership on Teaching and Achievement	21
Teacher Evaluation Processes.....	23
Components of teacher evaluation.....	23
Purposes of teacher evaluation.....	25
Classroom observations within teacher evaluation.....	27

Principals’ classroom observation expertise	28
Principals’ classroom observation feedback	30
Principals’ perceptions of teacher evaluation processes	32
Teachers’ perceptions of teacher evaluation processes	32
Principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of instructional leadership.....	34
Principals’ Sense-Making of Evaluation and Instructional Leadership.....	35
Instructional Management Framework	35
Development of Instructional Management Framework	41
Criticisms of Instructional Management Framework	43
Chapter Three.....	44
Research Design.....	44
Participant Selection	45
Research Context	48
Data Collection and Analysis	50
Trustworthiness.....	53
Researcher Identity	54
Conclusion	55
Chapter Four	57
Findings.....	57
The Complexity of Instructional Leadership	57
Characteristics of instructional leadership.....	57
Addressing teacher needs.....	58
Addressing student needs.....	61

Administrative Training in Instructional Leadership.....	62
Principals’ reliance on shared leadership and teacher collaboration	66
Summary	68
The Challenges of Accountability	69
Principals’ evaluation experiences as teachers	70
Principals conducting teacher evaluations	72
Fostering teacher self-reflection	74
Evaluation, instructional leadership, and relationships.....	77
Principals’ challenges with teacher evaluation	79
Summary	82
The Desire for More Time	82
Tasks absorbing principals’ time	83
Efforts to create more time	85
A principal’s place in the classroom.....	88
Summary	89
Conclusion	90
Chapter Five.....	91
Discussion.....	91
Discussion of Findings.....	91
Shared Leadership and School Growth.....	91
Informal Observations and Opportunities.....	94
The Principal-Teacher Relationship	96
Relation to Research Question.....	98

Connection to Framework.....	101
Implications for Future Research.....	104
Recommendations for Policy and Practice	105
Limitations and Delimitations.....	108
Summary and Conclusion.....	109
References.....	111
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	121
Vita.....	122

List of Tables

Table 1	47
Table 2	49

Abstract

The literature on instructional leadership includes the practices in which principals can engage (Stein & Nelson, 2003) and discusses how the principal's leadership practices can be mediated by the teacher observation tool within the teacher evaluation system (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). However, the literature includes less about how and why leaders enact those instructional leadership practices (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2006) and how the teacher evaluation tool might or might not be influencing that how and why. The purpose of this qualitative study is to produce a description of how principals perceive the instructional leadership they provide teachers in the context of mandated teacher evaluation. Ten participants from two school districts participated in individual, semi-structured interviews. Three themes emerged from the data: the complexity of instructional leadership, the challenges of accountability, and the desire for more time. These findings were connected to the literature and the Instructional Management Framework (1987).

Chapter One

Introduction

Instructional leadership has been defined as any leadership that impacts learning. According to Sheppard (1996), instructional leadership broadly defined is all leadership practices influencing student learning, and more narrowly defined, instructional leadership includes the leadership practices more closely connected to teaching and learning. Instructional leadership is focused on the improvement of that teaching and learning (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) described instructional improvement as a process involving creating a safe environment for risks and networking, sharing leadership so that the principal has more time for instructional focus, reinforcing the instructional improvement message through actions and events, and creating an accountability system for the instructional improvement.

In addition to improving teaching and learning, the principal is another component of instructional leadership. As a result of Race to the Top and the perceptions that student achievement can increase, the instructional leadership of the principal is again prevalent (Lavigne & Good, 2015). Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010) also mentioned the role of the principal in the definition of instructional leadership which is centered upon pedagogy, student achievement, and the principal who is leading by example. Jenkins (2009) makes mention of the principal in the definition of instructional leadership, as well, by stating the principal places learning at the forefront. While varying definitions of instructional leadership exist, Leithwood (2004) referred to instructional leadership as a slogan for leaders focusing on teaching and learning and stated there have been few attempts to more narrowly define instructional leadership. It is evident in the definitions of instructional leadership that the literature includes varying definitions of instructional leadership. How principals define instructional leadership

impacts the instructional leadership they provide. For example, if principals define instructional leadership as a process involving creating a safe environment for risks and networking similar to the instructional leadership definition from Supovitz and Poglinco (2001), principals could limit their instructional leadership to creating that safe, collaborative environment.

Many of the definitions provided in the literature on instructional leadership include the practices in which instructional leaders engage. Instructional leadership was once defined as what a principal did (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Researchers have begun to uncover more specific behaviors which principals enact to instructionally lead their organizations (Neumerski, 2012). Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins (2006) stated that leaders enact these behaviors or practices according to their contexts. The authors provide the example that the process for establishing a school vision looks differently in a school just beginning the turnaround process than a school that is already experiencing much success. Additional research includes the importance of the school's environment for instructional leadership. Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) found instructional leadership is dependent upon the principal's disposition, teachers' individual needs, and the school's environment. Instructional leadership involves fostering an environment where teaching and learning can improve (Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2007; Stein & Nelson, 2003) by providing the resources, motivation, and collaboration for teachers, as well as providing for teachers' needs (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Urick and Bowers (2014) commented on the environment instructional leaders create and stated that the positive climate is a result of the principal's focus on professional development and achieving instructional goals. The school's environment contributes to the instructional leadership principals provide, and the instructional leadership principals provide also affects the schools' environment.

Teacher Evaluation

Evaluating teachers' performances has evolved over time. According to Raudenbush and Rowan (2016), discussions of developing ratings for teacher performance began in the early 1900s; at this time, some teacher rating scales were developed. In the 1920s, discussions of teacher ratings made their way into scholarly journals, and researchers administered validity tests on some of the developed rating scales. This research made its way into the classroom in the 1930s with researchers observing teachers and comparing features of those observations with ratings. By the 1940s, rating scales and teacher observations became more widespread. As a result, in the next decade, teacher observations and rating scales became the primary teacher evaluation methods (Raudenbush & Rowan, 2016). In 1973, teacher evaluation was influenced by the use of clinical supervision practices, and thus teacher evaluation included goal setting for growth, as well as observation conferences that occurred before and after observations (Raudenbush & Rowan, 2016).

These developments in teacher evaluation and national policies influenced teacher evaluation across the nation. In 2002, No Child Left Behind was an update of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Klein, 2015). In March of 2010, there was a proposal to include teacher evaluations in the law which would be based partly on students' achievement. States were able to receive waivers which excused them from some of the No Child Left Behind mandates if the states had plans to redesign their educational systems. This redesign had to include teacher-evaluation systems which took into account student achievement measured by state standardized tests (Klein, 2015). More specifically, the waivers required states to implement teacher evaluation guidelines and to task school districts with making plans for teacher evaluation based on those guidelines by the end of three-year period (Sawchuck, 2011).

Since 2008, 32 states revised their teacher evaluation systems (Jacobs, 2011); however, in 2009, teacher evaluation policies varied across states (Jacobs, 2011). Teacher evaluation still varies across states and even within states today. The System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP) model and models based on the work of Charlotte Danielson are some of the most common evaluation systems, and this study includes both.

Federal funding has also influenced states' teacher evaluation systems. The United States' Race to the Top program announced in 2009 which supported innovative state reforms prompted many states to evaluate their teacher evaluation systems. Race to the Top awarded funding to states that were implementing successful reforms in four areas – one of which was building data systems that measured student growth and success and informing teachers and principals about how they could improve instruction according to the national department of education.

Problem Statement

The surge in teacher evaluation policies has undoubtedly shaped the way principals perceive and enact instructional leadership. Principals are obligated to carry out evaluation behaviors by state policies, but how does this set of behaviors interact with their larger understanding and enactment of instructional leadership in the school? Largely, we do not know how. We know the instructional leadership practices in which principals can engage (Stein & Nelson, 2003), and we know the principal's leadership practices can be mediated by the teacher observation tool within the teacher evaluation system (Spillane et al., 2001). However, we know less about *how* and *why* leaders enact those instructional leadership practices (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2006) and how the teacher evaluation tool might or might not be influencing that *how* and *why*. This study sought to fill this gap in our understanding.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to produce a description of how principals perceive the instructional leadership they provide teachers, as well as the instruments they utilize to observe classroom instruction. Much of the instructional leadership literature focuses on the *what* of instructional leadership. This study focused on the *why* and the *how* of instructional leadership. This study focused on principals of both elementary and secondary schools. Instructional leadership looks differently in elementary, middle, and high schools (Neumerski, 2012), and instructional leadership that is intended to increase student achievement seems more difficult in middle and high schools (Louis et al., 2010). As a result of the perceived varying levels of difficulty of instructionally leading different school levels, this study worked to understand that possible complexity through principals' perceptions.

This study centered upon the Instructional Management Framework (IMF) of Philip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy (1985) which outlines three dimensions of a principal's role: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting the school learning climate. While many researchers have focused on utilizing the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to compare teachers' perceptions to administrators' perceptions of the frequency of instructional support as the scale was designed to do (Hallinger, Wang, & Chen, 2013), there is a need for a qualitative study to look closely at principals' sense-making when they engage in instructional management. Particularly, there is a need to examine how principals view the job of instructional management and how that may be influenced by a particular teacher evaluation model using the information from the PIMRS.

It is a study of instructional leadership, but in the context of new, mandated teacher evaluation. This study recognizes that instructional leadership is much larger than simply teacher

evaluation, but also how the amount of time and energy put into multiple annual evaluation cycles for each teacher on their staff might push out other important components of instructional leadership. How principals manage these constraints is at the center of this study.

Research Question

How do principals perceive their instructional leadership in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation model?

Definition of Terms

Average-Performing School

Louisiana schools receive school report card grades which represent how they performed in a particular school year. For the purpose of this study, average-performing schools were schools which achieved a letter grade of a C for the 2018-2019 school year.

COMPASS

COMPASS, the Clear, Overall Measure of Performance to Analyze and Support Success, is one educator evaluation system used in Louisiana schools.

Distributed Leadership

In distributed leadership, principals distribute leadership practices (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina, 2007), roles, responsibilities, power, (Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Copland, 2003) vision, and decision making (Jambo & Hongde, 2020).

High-Performing School

High-performing schools were schools which achieved a letter grade of an A or B for the 2018-2019 school year.

Low-Performing School

Low-performing schools were schools which achieved a letter grade of a D or F for the 2018-2019 school year.

Shared Leadership

Shared instructional leadership is sought by principals engaging in instructional leadership and will not develop on its own. The principal solicits collaboration or help from teachers, and then the principal shares the responsibility of developing teachers, curriculum, and supervising instruction to improve the school (Marks and Printy, 2003).

TAP

TAP, the System for Teacher and Student Advancement, is one educator evaluation system used in Louisiana schools.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This literature review begins with definitions of instructional leadership. After the definitions of instructional leadership, shared instructional leadership and distributed leadership models are explored. Descriptions of what instructional leaders do follow. The section begins with a description of the physical environment where instructional leadership occurs. What follows are descriptions of principals' instructional leadership practices including facilitating change, agenda setting, supervising, and supporting teachers. The knowledge and skill demands of principals are then explored. The impact of instructional leadership on teaching and student achievement is next. Descriptions of teacher evaluation processes follow with a focus on classroom observations and the steps principals take after those evaluations. Then, principals' and teachers' perceptions of evaluation processes are reviewed. Lastly, principals' sense-making of evaluation and instructional leadership are included.

Instructional Leadership Models and Theories

Many scholars have defined instructional leadership as the tasks in which leaders engage. Definitions of instructional leadership include mention of tasks such as academic goals, curriculum, and teacher evaluation (Day et al., 2016; Jenkins, 2009), as well as resource allocation (Jenkins, 2009). Though leaders can engage in many tasks as instructional leaders, the purpose of instructional leadership is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Jenkins, 2009; Neumerski, 2012) and impact teaching (Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003; Day et al., 2016). Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) compared instructional leadership to a compass which guides decisions leaders make. The researchers found instructional leaders are visionaries who shift the focus of the school to instruction by prioritizing their own time and activities.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) recognized how important it is for leaders engaging in instructional leadership to understand how to improve teaching and learning.

Shared Instructional Leadership

Some researchers have defined instructional leadership in relation to the interactions among faculty and staff. Louis et al. (2010) distinguished between principals instructionally leading their organizations and principals sharing leadership within their organizations. While instructional leadership centers upon pedagogy, student achievement, and the principal's example, shared leadership focuses on collaboration among the faculty and leadership for learning; instructional leadership which could include practices such as coaching and modeling and shared leadership which could include teachers' involvement in planning professional development are not mutually exclusive, and both types of leadership could be needed in a school (Louis et al., 2010).

Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Management Framework (1987) does not make mention of this shared leadership. Their framework includes managing the instructional program and the following functions: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Hallinger's (2008) perception of the principal's role illuminates why shared leadership would not have been included in the framework. According to Hallinger (2008), the principal does not have to engage in these functions alone; however, the principal is ultimately responsible for managing the instructional program and overseeing these functions. Therefore, Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Management Framework does not include sharing responsibilities of the following functions in the framework: goal setting, overseeing teaching programs, and developing instructional focused culture (Robinson et al., 2008). As a result of the principal's responsibility and the possible disengagement that could result from

teachers not wishing to participate in shared leadership, it is evident why this shared leadership is not included in the framework.

Some researchers comment on how shared leadership develops and with whom the principal shares the leadership. According to Marks and Printy (2003), shared instructional leadership is sought by principals engaging in instructional leadership and will not develop on its own. The principal solicits collaboration or help from teachers, and then the principal shares the responsibility of developing teachers, curriculum, and supervising instruction to improve the school. Teachers who are selected to share this work are skilled and motivated teachers. Shared instructional leadership might also involve principals collaborating with assistant principals, department chairs, district support personnel, or other teachers to conduct classroom observations (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Shared instructional leadership has resulted in positive outcomes. Marks and Printy (2003) found committed teachers sharing instructional leadership responsibility with principals resulted in learning, growth, increased achievement, and synergy. Urick and Bowers (2014) also found shared instructional leadership to assist with teachers' professional growth as it created a community of learners focused on a mission. Supovitz and Poglino (2001) found shared instructional leadership to result in sustainability and more focused efforts with instructional improvement. The authors also found shared instructional leadership to lessen the load for principals, which in turn maximized principals' time to engage in instructional tasks. One positive effect of collaborative observations within a shared leadership model could be observation reliability (Lavigne & Good, 2015), and another positive effect could be shared responsibility for supporting the teacher after the observation. Sharing instructional leadership with faculty and staff does not remove the instructional leadership responsibility from principals

as they are still tasked with implementing, participating, and monitoring the work. It is evident that shared instructional leadership could produce positive results; however, it is less clear that principals view their instructional leadership work in this way. Principals who are focused on managerial responsibilities (such as completing the mandatory number of state-classroom observations) might not have time to implement this shared instructional leadership. Similarly, principals who are unsure of how to provide effective instructional supports might be unwilling to share their leadership with staff members- for fear of being *outed* as a weak instructional leader.

Distributed Leadership

Researchers have differentiated between shared instructional leadership and distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is not merely leaders sharing tasks (Spillane, 2006; Timperley, 2005); it is the interactions among the stakeholders and their situations such as the school's data review routines (Spillane, 2006; Börü, 2020). In distributed leadership, principals distribute leadership practices (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina, 2007), roles, responsibilities, power, (Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Copland, 2003) vision, and decision making (Jambo & Hongde, 2020). These tasks are distributed according to stakeholders' expertise more so than their positions (Copland, 2003). The principal seems to have less control in the execution of these tasks.

In order for the informal leaders or non-administrators to execute the distributed tasks effectively, the informal leaders need capacity, autonomy, and time (Leithwood et al., 2007). Timperley (2005) argued that distributing leadership practices to teachers does not necessarily build those teachers' capacity to engage in instructional leadership. Timperley (2005) also found developing leadership in teachers was challenging because teachers viewed as leaders by other

teachers do not necessarily have the knowledge and skills required to lead. Regarding the selection of who does the distributed leadership work, Leithwood et al. (2007) found that the teachers who engaged in the distributed leadership had similar traits and dispositions to the formal school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2007). Selecting teachers with similar traits and dispositions as the principal could be beneficial if those principals were effective instructional leaders. On the other hand, if the principal is an ineffective instructional leader, this distributed leadership could be more damaging than helpful for teachers.

Like shared instructional leadership, distributed leadership has shown to provide some positive outcomes in a school. According to Copland (2003), distributed leadership is more effective than principals operating in isolation. Additionally, research has found that distributed leadership positively and indirectly affects student achievement (Jambo & Hongde, 2020) and teachers' job satisfaction (Samancioglu, Baglibel, & Erwin, 2020). However, distributed leadership could also negatively affect schools and stakeholders. Distributed leadership might cause teachers to become competitive, cautious, or insecure, and distributed leadership might also result in uncomfortable vulnerability among principals (Börü, 2020). Principals may not have the expertise of the faculty or staff member with whom he or she is distributing tasks. However, the competition, caution, and insecurities can possibly be avoided through building informal leaders' capacity as Leithwood et al. (2007) suggest. Distributed leadership can be challenging to effectively implement in schools. Distributed leadership could be particularly difficult in secondary schools where teachers teach different contents (Börü, 2020). This could be a result of the expertise required or the time demands. Distributed leadership seems easier to implement with high-priority tasks than any others. Leithwood et al. (2007) found that high-priority school initiatives had coordinated patterns of distributed leadership, but other initiatives

did not have such structure. One negative effect of this challenge could be the types of responsibilities that are being distributed. For example, Leithwood et al. (2007) found that when distributed leadership was in place, the formal leaders or administrators engaged in the leadership practices while the informal leaders or non-administrators engaged in managerial tasks. Timperley (2005) found the middle-managers in distributed leadership had difficulty translating principals' macro-task artifacts such as student achievement data into the micro-tasks of teachers.

While principals influence teachers to take on distributed tasks, the principal's control of the task could limit the participation of those teachers (Gómez-Hurtado, González-Falcón, Coronel-Llamas and García-Rodríguez, 2020). How much power the principal is willing to give up could also limit the participation of teachers in distributed leadership. To illustrate, principals in one study felt that their subordinates were assistant leaders, not leaders, so that one voice could permeate through the school; principals also held this view to avoid competition and jealousy among teachers (Börü, 2020). The anticipated challenges of distributed leadership could deter principals from engaging in this work. While some definitions of instructional leadership focus on principals creating and fostering safe, collaborative environments, the work of distributed leadership, if not done correctly, could counteract that environment.

Instructional Leadership as Educational Change

Researchers have found the school's environment to affect an instructional leader's ability to facilitate change, and facilitating change in an organization is another theme present in the literature on instructional leadership. While school leaders may fully understand instructional leadership- and may even be able to teach these practices to classroom teachers- ultimately instructional leadership is about changing what happens in schools and classrooms when no one

is watching. New practices become institutionalized and broadly agreed upon as simply how things should be done. A safe environment where teachers are comfortable taking risks helped principals in one study facilitate change as they focused on instructional improvement (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found the stable environment leaders created through the management of the instructional program helped create the environment necessary for change. When describing instructional leadership practices, Sebastian, Camburn, and Spillane (2018) included this change or restructuring as an instructional leadership practice. Some researchers' definitions of instructional leadership include a focus on instructional improvement, and facilitating change in an organization could lead to that improvement.

Principals also facilitate change through the following instructional leadership practices: creating and focusing on the school's vision, setting and monitoring goals, and agenda setting. Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) found that the school's vision was powerful when faculty and staff bought into the vision of improving instruction. The authors found the leaders in the study had a vision of quality instruction including planning and instructing or an assessment criteria they used to focus on improving teaching and learning. The vision also included classroom expectations so that teachers could live by the vision in their classrooms and so that there was consistent implementation of the vision across the school's campus.

With a clear vision of quality instructional improvement, instructional leaders are able to establish and monitor goals thus helping them to improve. The principal engaging in goal setting (Robinson et al., 2008), establishing clear goals (Jenkins, 2009), and achieving those goals for learning (Day et al., 2016; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 2004) are considered instructional leadership practices. Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010) found that goals and mission were related to improved teaching and learning. An additional way for principals to remain focused

on their vision and goals is to engage in agenda setting. Jenkins (2009) defined agenda setting as putting learning at the forefront. Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) provided a literal example of putting learning at the forefront – principals maximizing instructional time by eliminating school functions such as pep rallies.

Understanding teachers' needs is a way principals are able to place this focus on learning (Stein & Nelson, 2003). This agenda setting practice within instructional leadership also includes data analysis. Young (2006) found this data analysis to include instructional leaders being transparent about why and how teachers would interact with particular data forms, leaders modeling using the data, and leaders creating time for collaboration during data analysis such as time for teachers to analyze student work samples together. Creating and focusing on the school's vision, setting and monitoring goals, and agenda setting are all instructional leadership practices which have been linked to instructional improvement, but they have more to do with school-level activity than classroom-level activity.

Supervising

Supervising is an additional instructional leadership practice which has been found to impact improvement at a school. According to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998), supervision is designed to improve instruction through supporting teachers directly through assisting with development in curriculum, staff, and group, as well as action research. Principals who engage in instructional leadership are responsible for supervising (Hazi & Arredondo Rucinski, 2009; Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Robinson et al., 2008), and the principals supervise teachers, the curriculum, and teachers' delivery of that curriculum. Supervising might include a principal planning and monitoring curriculum and lesson plans (Day et al., 2016; Jenkins, 2009), developing curriculum (Marks & Printy, 2003), evaluating teachers (Day et al., 2016; Jenkins,

2009; Hazi & Arredondo Rucinski, 2009) by monitoring and observing instruction (Sebastian, Camburn, & Spillane, 2018) and/or by monitoring assessment and student progress (Marks & Printy, 2003). The monitoring assessment and student progress could be in the form of a principal analyzing student work (Sebastian et al., 2018). Instructional leaders are often in classrooms speaking with students and analyzing students' work (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). In turn, principals are able to better lead and support teachers because they have knowledge of how the students are progressing. The instructional leadership practice of supervising impacts school improvement.

With the knowledge principals have from supervising teachers, content, and pedagogy, principals can be better prepared to support teachers. Supporting teaching is an instructional leadership practice that materializes as principals supporting teachers' social and emotional wellness, growth, and instructional needs. Instructional leadership could come in the form of principals supporting teachers and helping them improve their instruction through encouragement and counseling (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Support might also come in the form of a principal motivating a teacher. Spillane et al. (2003) also mentioned this motivation and defined instructional leadership as leaders motivating teachers to reflect on and change their instruction. Stein and Nelson (2003) found that instructional leadership motivated teachers to learn. This learning and teacher growth is another form support instructional leaders might provide. Principals supporting this growth might engage in coaching teachers (Neumerski, 2012), supporting teachers' professional development, or modeling by teaching a class (Sebastian et al., 2018) thus developing their faculty (Marks & Printy, 2003). Principals engaging in instructional leadership might also support teachers through providing instructional resources (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Jenkins, 2009). Active support of

instructional improvement has been found to improve teaching and learning (Supovitz et al., 2010).

Instructional leaders may also support teachers by providing opportunities for them to collaborate with their colleagues. Hargreaves (1994) distinguished between collaborative cultures and “contrived collegiality.” While collaborative cultures involve teachers who recognize the benefits of collaboration and maximize those benefits by engaging in collaborative work, contrived collegiality involves requirements from administration for teachers to work together with administrative control over the collaborative meeting agendas. Instructional leaders create opportunities for this collaboration by mixing ability levels and designing tasks to lead to learning (Stein & Nelson, 2003), and instructional leaders recognize the potential for this collaboration to support teachers in implementing policy changes and support teachers in their professional growth (Datnow, 2020). Creating the space and opportunities for this collaboration led to improved teaching and learning in one study (Supovitz et al., 2010). Additional positive outcomes have surfaced in schools engaging in this collaboration among teachers. In one study, teacher collaboration helped with the school’s culture of improving instruction (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The collaboration led to involvement, buy in, and teachers learning from one another. The collaboration and communication helped the school’s focus on instructional leadership to permeate through the organization. These interpersonal activities ultimately led to greater student achievement (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Hargreaves (2019) found collaboration to increase teacher motivation and engagement, as well as student achievement. Hargreaves (2017) also concluded that the trust from collaborative school cultures is important to a school’s academic success. Supovitz et al. (2010) defined instructional leadership of a principal as one who focuses on the school’s mission, instruction, and trust and found principals who were

instructional leaders fostered an environment of collaboration among faculty, which in turn fostered teacher peer influence. Teacher peer influence impacted teachers' pedagogy.

As noted above, instructional leadership could involve many different practices, and many of the definitions of instructional leadership in the literature make mention these practices. Though these practices identify what instructional leaders do, these practices do not identify how instructional leaders carry out these tasks. It is also not clear from the literature which instructional leadership practices are most worthy of principals' time due to their anticipated impact on teacher learning and student achievement.

Principals' Knowledge Demands

Principals operating as instructional leaders who are not confident in their own content knowledge might rely more on shared instructional leadership or distributed leadership than other principals. Printy (2008) found high school teachers, due to their subject specialization, mostly interact through their content departments, but principals can help to create an environment for other collaborative relationships among teachers. High school teachers' relationships in content departments could be a result of the need of instructional support from colleagues due to the support not coming from administrators. Spillane (2005) found principals were more likely to engage in instructionally leading English Language Arts teachers followed by math and then science. Supovitz et al. (2010) analyzed the impact principals and teachers had on other teachers. The authors found the impact of principal leadership and peer influence was similar for English Language Arts teachers; however, peer influence was twice as impactful in math as was principal leadership. The authors stated this could be due to principals not having math content knowledge. This also points to the need for principals to be strategic in their actions- using their content expertise when they have it, and building systems of peer supports

when they do not. These systems can be built over time, and this process could be impacted by mandated teacher evaluation activities.

Principals who are instructional leaders have knowledge of the contents and best practices for teaching and learning. Principals serving as instructional leaders are equipped to provide professional development for teachers (Stein & Nelson, 2003), and they are also equipped to facilitate change in their organizations based on data analysis and improvement (Young, 2006). Principals operating as instructional leaders have knowledge of the content, knowledge of how students learn that content (Stein & Nelson, 2003; Printy, 2008) and knowledge of how to teach that content (Printy, 2008). Additionally, principals have content knowledge which requires that they recognize, motivate, and create the environment for effective teaching since principals do not know all contents at the expert level (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Principals' perceptions of how much content knowledge they need to lead teachers instructionally differs. Principals in one study disagreed on whether or not they needed to be experts in all content areas but agreed that literacy expertise was important for their support of teachers (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The principals in this study might have felt that only literacy content knowledge was critical as a result of the infusion of literacy in all content areas.

Teaching is not enough training for the principal needing to engage in instructional leadership. Because principals were usually once teachers does not mean principals have the expertise to lead teachers with best practices, models, effective assessments, and coaching (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). However, professional development for principals has been found to impact the instructional leadership principals provide. Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) found the amount of professional development leaders received, as well as leaders' reflections on their professional learning experiences influenced the instructional leadership they provided.

Additionally, the authors found this professional learning and reflection results in more instructional leadership than defining and sharing leadership roles among the faculty.

Professional learning and the ability to reflect are important for principals to have and be able to do, but not all principals are receiving the professional development they need to be effective instructional leaders.

Principals' Time Demands

Engaging in instructional leadership practices including developing content knowledge is time consuming for principals. One study found principals in one school district spent ten percent of time on instructional leadership, thirty percent of time on administrative tasks like scheduling and supervising students, and twenty percent of time on managerial tasks like hiring and the school's budget (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). When principals spent more time supervising instruction in the study, parents and teachers did not identify the school climate as positive or focused on student achievement, though. This somewhat counter-intuitive finding could be due to the principal emphasizing instructional leadership but not tending to managerial tasks to run the school, which tend to be more widely visible actions within the school community. However, the author did find the principals' focus on instructional leadership positively impacted teachers' perceptions of their jobs and their environments. This illustrates that the instructional leadership focus cannot be on observing teachers alone; the focus must also be on the instructional program (Horng et al., 2010). Research supports how little time principals have for instructional leadership activities. For example, Lavigne and Good (2015) reported that the research they collected on how principals managed their time illuminated the little time principals had to focus on tasks. To illustrate, when observing activities, fifty percent of those activities were interrupted. Additionally, eighty-one and four tenths percent of

principals' activities took between one and four minutes (Lavigne & Good, 2015). Effective instructional leadership tasks require time and thought. Principals who are constantly interrupted while engaging in instructional leadership cannot have the focus they need to effectively engage in and execute those tasks.

Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) commented on principals' time management and stated their time management is like a tug of war between managerial, political, and instructional tasks, but the authors also found principals who recognized the difference between managerial and instructional tasks prioritized instruction. As a result, these principals were able to focus on instruction for more of their time. The authors found principals who increased the time they spent on instructional leadership engaged in the following activities: observing instruction and analyzing student work, providing services to teachers, and developing their content knowledge while recognizing the importance of supporting teachers as teachers developed their content and pedagogical knowledge.

Principals' time and content knowledge affect the instructional leadership they provide, and principals continue to be torn between their managerial and instructional tasks. Principals not confident in the content they supervise might devote additional time to learning that content, and that additional time spent learning could absorb more of their time away from providing instructional leadership to teachers. Principals supervising the content they taught seem to have an easier job at providing instructional leadership; however, the literature reminds educators that not all principals were effective teachers.

Impact of Instructional Leadership on Teaching and Achievement

Instructional leadership has been found to impact teacher improvement and student achievement. Louis et al. (2010) found impacting student achievement was easier for elementary

school principals than secondary school principals as a result of schools' sizes, limited time, and the multiple content departments within secondary schools. Robinson et al. (2008) found that more positive student outcomes result when instructional leaders focus on both teaching and learning. Principals in one study had an impact on improving the school when they focused their schools on an instructional vision, created a community of collaboration, and prioritized instructional improvement (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The instructional leadership practices which have had the most impact on student achievement include involvement in setting goals, providing resources, teacher planning, classroom observations, analyzing student work, and teacher professional development (Robinson et al., 2008). Administrators play an important role in helping teachers establish, monitor, and reach their goals. Leaders supporting teachers in their growth had the most positive student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). These positive outcomes are a result of the principal's focus on instructional leadership.

In addition to the content knowledge and time demands of instructionally leading, instructional leadership can also be challenging for principals due to established norms and routines at their schools such as teachers avoiding collaboration or the dynamics of professional learning communities that are not aligned with instructional improvement (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015). However, in the absence of instructional leadership, student achievement may suffer. Without instructional leadership, content varies, quality instruction varies, and the school's instructional culture suffers (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Moreover, teachers have to interpret policy messages on their own without the instructional support of principals leading to inconsistency and stability even when change was the intent (Coburn, 2001). These challenges illuminate the need for a principal to be focused on instructional leadership.

The research emphasizes including both teaching and learning in the instructional leadership process, and the practices many researchers use to define instructional leadership focus on both teaching and learning. For example, the practices of observing teachers and analyzing student work involved both teaching and learning. The research also includes what occurs when instructional leadership is and is not in place. However, what is not evident is exactly how principals are carrying out the instructional leadership practices producing the best teacher and student outcomes.

Teacher Evaluation Processes

Components of Teacher Evaluation

The components of an evaluation system vary by state and district policy. Those mandatory components are then implemented differently by building leaders with various perspectives and skill sets. For example, teacher evaluation systems include observations and other data (Marshall, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2014) including student growth through goals or targets set by teachers (Donaldson & Papay, 2014) and how teachers utilize student feedback (Marshall, 2012). Taylor and Tyler (2012) argued that teacher evaluations need to include accurate, actionable feedback, as well as a support system for implementing that feedback (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). One example of such a support system is a coaching plan the leader creates alongside the teacher outlining the next steps the teacher and leader will complete, the timelines for those steps, and the resources needed. Teacher evaluation systems allow teachers to work alongside those creating their evaluation systems before and during implementation and evaluation stages (Simon, 2012). Self-assessment and teacher growth (Mielke & Frontier, 2012), as well as teacher-selected evidence of student achievement such as samples of students' constructed responses or students' pre-assessment results compared to

students' post-assessment results (Darling-Hammond, 2014) are also included in some teacher evaluation systems. While some disagree that standardized test scores should be included in teacher's evaluations (Marshall, 2012), some evaluation systems include test scores in a value-added model which evaluates how the teacher has intervened or added value to each student (Briggs and Domingue, 2011; Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013). In 2014, 80% of new teacher evaluation systems required teacher evaluations to consider student achievement (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). Some evaluation systems also include filmed classroom instruction and surveys by students and teachers (Murphy et al., 2013). Though principals could engage in instructional leadership through some of these evaluation tasks such as analyzing student data and developing support systems for teachers to implement feedback, the evaluation alone is not sufficient for instructionally supporting teachers. Principals' use of the data from these evaluation components could assist principals with instructional leadership. However, the data alone is not enough to facilitate change.

The information from teacher evaluations does not always lead to improved instruction as evaluation systems have not always led to specific, actionable feedback (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). Given the right components and the right environment, principals can help teachers improve their effectiveness through teacher evaluations (Donaldson, 2013; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Specifically, effective observation systems can foster teacher growth (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016), and accurate teacher evaluations can impact teacher effectiveness, as well as student achievement (Donaldson & Peske, 2010). Because of this potential impact, it is necessary to study teacher evaluation and principals' instructional leadership together. Scores and feedback, the most common components of teacher evaluation systems, are not enough to prompt sustained improvement in instruction. How to support teacher growth along with the

scores and feedback needs to be considered when implementing a teacher evaluation system as lack of support does not foster continuous improvement (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). The observation tool or rubric itself also does not foster teacher growth; the support the principal receives, as well as the principal's understanding of and buy in to the tool matter (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015; Sartain et al., 2011). Evaluation scores and state mandates are a non-negotiable part of most public schools in the US. While this guarantees ratings assigned to teachers every year, these policies do not guarantee improved classroom instruction. Viewing evaluation within a larger system of instructional leadership may be useful if improved teaching, rather than simply creating ranked lists of teachers, is the goal. Learning how school principals make sense of both fulfilling their teacher evaluation roles and at the same time building systems of sustained instructional improvement may be a first step to realizing the often-touted, but only seldomly realized potential of teacher evaluation to drive improved instruction and more effective learning for students. Undoubtedly, though, teacher evaluation systems that provide support for teachers as they work to improve based on their results look differently than those who leave them to their devices (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). This is not to say that instructional improvement is the only legitimate goal of teacher evaluations. The goals of teacher evaluation vary (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). While some principals view the teacher evaluation tool as a means for providing teachers with support, others do not. When principals do not see value in the teacher evaluation tool, the evaluation becomes a means of measurement, instead of an opportunity for growth.

Purposes of Teacher Evaluation

Leaders and scholars alike have identified different purposes or goals of teacher evaluation. Teacher evaluation systems can serve as accountability measures due to the monitoring involved (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). Measurement and development are two

purposes of teacher evaluation (Donaldson & Papay, 2014; Marzano, 2012b; Sartain et al., 2011), and school systems can have teacher evaluation serve both purposes (Curtis & Wiener, 2012; Donaldson & Paypay, 2014). Teacher evaluation can help guide a teacher's growth (Curtis & Wiener, 2012; Mielke & Frontier, 2012). However, it is evident in the discrepancy between teachers' high evaluation scores and students' lack of achievement growth that teacher evaluation might not always be guiding teacher improvement. Teacher evaluation is not just a summative assessment without next steps (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Evaluation systems that focus much of the leaders' attention on accountability often are not systems that support teacher improvement effectively (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). While accountability is one reason teacher evaluation matters, helping teachers develop is the most important purpose of teacher evaluation (Marzano, 2012b). To re-state this point, school leaders see teacher *development* as more important than teacher *evaluation*. This approach seems justified, but present-day leaders are awash in regulations governing how they will evaluate their teachers, yet largely left to their own devices as they seek to improve the teachers' skill and practice.

Principals have differing opinions on how teacher evaluation should be used. While most would agree that evaluations have a role to play in teacher development, leaders have differing views on how to use teacher evaluations to help teachers improve including providing feedback, engaging teachers in self-reflection, monitoring teachers, and holding teachers accountable (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Though the primary purpose of teacher evaluation is not to get rid of ineffective teachers (Simon, 2012), some principals view evaluation in this manner (Curtis & Wiener, 2012; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Goals of teacher evaluation could also include rewarding effective teachers and supporting system-wide improvement (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). The goals of teacher evaluation set the purpose for teacher evaluation and dictate how school

leaders spend their time and resources (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). The different perceptions leaders have of teacher evaluation systems impact the components of the systems, as well as the instructional leadership provided by leaders in the context of the evaluation system.

Classroom Observations within Teacher Evaluation

Classroom observations are included in all districts' teacher evaluation models.

Observing teachers is the component of teacher evaluation systems that is required by every state's teacher evaluation system as of 2014 (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching is the teacher evaluation model many states and districts have utilized and at times revised to evaluate their teachers; according to the Danielson Group (2021), it has worked in forty-nine states and U.S. territories, as well as fifteen other countries. It is common for states to adopt existing models and revise them to evaluate their teachers (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). Teacher evaluations often include teacher observations, and these observations involve teachers engaging in self-assessment (Danielson, 2012; Marzano, 2012a), reflecting (Danielson, 2012), evaluating themselves, engaging in discussions based on their performance, and even challenging their evaluation ratings (Marzano, 2012a). Post-observation conferences which include this reflection and goal-setting allow for that growth and might even help to intrinsically motivate teachers to grow professionally (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Observations that are shorter and occur throughout different components of the lesson can occur more frequently and are more effective in evaluating teachers (Marshall, 2012). These short observations can be paired with longer observations throughout the school year to evaluate teachers (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). Principals' time is limited, and the paired short-long strategy could give principals an opportunity to observe different portions of the lesson throughout the year providing the principal with a better picture of the day-to-day life in a

particular classroom. Though the all states require teacher observations, the requirements vary which implies that principals' instructional leadership in the context of teacher observation might vary as well.

The focus of the observation is often the teaching rubric that defines what effective teaching should look like for that school or district. Many teacher evaluation models include teacher observation rubrics, and many of those rubrics include effectiveness of lesson objectives, teaching strategies, student engagement, and evidence of student learning (Donaldson & Papay, 2014; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). The teacher evaluation rubric helps the principal establish common language that both the principal and teacher understand (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Some teacher evaluation tools can be considered subjective (Sartain et al., 2011); however, explicit rubrics could make for a more objective evaluation (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009). If principals are not adequately trained in using the rubric, or if the rubric itself is of poor quality, observations and teacher ratings can be affected.

Principals' Classroom Observation Expertise

The training principals have received on evaluation tools inevitably varies. Some evaluators have not been trained at all on using the tools they are assigned to use (Sartain et al., 2011) and sorely need training (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009). Training evaluators is important (Donaldson & Papay, 2014). The possible subjectivity of teacher observations could be minimized with evaluators who have been sufficiently trained and who are qualified to conduct those observations (Donaldson & Papay, 2014), and trained evaluators could also prevent errors in observation scores from leaders who do not know how to use the evaluation system (Marzano, 2012a). One study on evaluator training in Cincinnati involved observing four lessons for the entirety of each lesson before scoring, completing a training program and earning certification to

evaluate, as well as continuing professional development for evaluating (Johnson, Papay, Fiarman, Munger, & Qazilbash, 2010). What is unique about his professional development is that it is ongoing, not an annual to-do list check off. Training at the beginning of implementing the teacher observation tool is not enough for school leaders to make an impact on student achievement through teacher evaluation scores (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009); principals need support throughout the teacher evaluation process to help teachers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). In addition to providing training, districts can also guide their work in supporting evaluators by considering how they are monitoring evaluators' work (Sartain et al., 2011). In one school district examined by Sartain and colleagues, evaluators entered their evaluation scores into a database. Their evaluation scores were compared to other evaluators' scores, and they were given feedback on the evaluation scores they provided teachers. Part of this feedback included how they compared to external evaluator ratings on a scale from too lenient to too severe. Principals who are not receiving adequate support in utilizing the teacher observation rubrics might not be providing effective instructional leadership based on those observation ratings.

In addition to possibly not understanding the constructs of teacher observation rubrics, some evidence suggests principals also lack the knowledge needed to engage in next steps following those observations. Providing feedback requires expertise that some principals do not have (Donaldson & Papay, 2014; Donaldson & Peske, 2010). A lack of meaningful feedback can impede a teacher's ability to improve (Donaldson & Peske, 2010). Meaningful feedback allows teachers to receive information about their improvement and improve their self-reflections (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Taylor & Tyler, 2012), as well as set goals (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Though conversations about next steps and plans typically follow observations of teachers (Marshall, 2012), many leaders do not know which next steps to take after observing

a teacher (Danielson, 2012). This also impacts the instructional leadership principals can provide in the context of those observations.

Principals' Classroom Observation Feedback

There have been evaluation programs, however, that have helped leaders with next steps for discussions to have with teachers after observing teachers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Principals do not receive much instruction on improving how they observe and provide feedback in their preparation programs (Lavigne & Good, 2015). In one study of twenty-two states, all states required that evaluators be trained, but those providing the training and the focus of the training varied from state to state. Additionally, only six out of the twenty-two states included a focus on evaluator feedback to teachers in that training. For example, Florida focused on how to provide “specific, actionable, and timely feedback,” while Georgia focused on “best practices for providing ongoing and end-of-year feedback to teachers” (Herlihy, Karger, Pollard, Hill, Kraft, Williams, & Howard, 2014, p. 22). Having little time to provide feedback to multiple teachers teaching multiple content areas has caused evaluators to resort to providing feedback centered upon their own experiences or not spending adequate time providing teachers with feedback (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). According to Kraft and Gilmour (2016), principals need support in learning how to manage their time, training on conducting observations and providing feedback, and support on how to use classroom observation feedback to drive instructional improvement. The need for this training and support was evident in the principals' interview responses in the study by Kraft and Gilmour (2016). Some principals provide feedback that is specific to the lesson itself including what the teacher did effectively, instead of including a discussion on opportunities for teachers to grow. Principals in this study by Kraft and Gilmour (2016) who observed teachers outside of their grade level or content expertise focused on instructional

feedback that did not take into account the teacher's content. This seems to be a result of the principal's lack of content knowledge.

Principals have expressed needing assistance with supporting teachers. Some principals in the study by Kraft and Gilmour (2016) suggested this support be in the form of receiving feedback from district personnel on the feedback they provided teachers after classroom observations. In this study, principals who struggled with the next steps after the observations advocated for and even hired instructional coaches. Some also put peer observation and feedback cycles in place in their schools because they felt these interactions would be more impactful than the teachers relying on them for observation feedback. Danielson (2012) made recommendations for how leaders can structure feedback conversations: allow the teacher to reflect at the beginning of the conversation, and do not allow the teacher to merely sit back and listen to the feedback. Another recommendation for improving the feedback teachers receive is allowing feedback to come through other means including surveys by students, self-assessments through the filming of the teacher's lesson, colleagues' observations of their instruction, and classroom visits to their colleague's classes (Mielke & Frontier, 2012), as well as hiring instructional leaders to support teachers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Distributed leadership was a means to make up for principals' perceived weaknesses in providing feedback to teachers.

Though this support may be necessary, principals' perceptions of the purpose of the evaluation affect their evaluation practices (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). For example, training for a principal who views teacher evaluation as a means of getting rid of ineffective teachers may not benefit from training like the principal who uses teacher evaluation for growth would benefit. Therefore, training on providing feedback to a principal focused on using classroom observations to remove ineffective teachers will not necessarily change that principal's feedback practices.

Principals' Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Processes

Not much focus has been on principals' perceptions of the teacher evaluation process. Principals' perceptions of teacher evaluation models has gone understudied (Paufler, 2018). Principals' perceptions can affect how teachers perceive the policy implementation (Steffen & Villaverde, 2017). When principals' perceptions of the implementation are positive and visibly in support of the implementation, principals can create teacher buy in for the implementation (Steffen & Villaverde, 2017). One example of a case where positive principal participation led to successful implementation was in a study of three high-performing, low SES schools. Habegger (2008) found that a positive school culture was positively impacting the school, its students, and its teachers. For example, a principal looking to increase reading comprehension relied on teachers' input and valued teachers' ideas. This resulted in an action plan that was implemented to support reading comprehension growth, a focus on continuous improvement by the teachers, and the fostering of a safe environment where risks were welcomed. Moreover, principals can evaluate teachers' perceptions and success with implementation through surveys or self-assessment throughout the process in order to provide ongoing professional development for teachers (Steffen & Villaverde, 2017). That constant work alongside teachers and the efforts to assess teachers' in their implementation could also help to build and sustain trust between teachers and principals as the stakeholders work together to implement the policies. This can apply to teacher evaluation. Principals visibly in support of teacher evaluation as an opportunity for growth might foster more buy in for teacher evaluation. All of this trust could be beneficial as educators have historically lacked trust in the often politically-mandated teacher evaluation systems.

Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Processes

Teacher evaluation is mostly perceived negatively by teachers. According to Kimball and Milanowski (2009), some teachers fear classroom observations as a result of the possible consequences including poor evaluations or termination. A negative evaluation can also impact a teacher's perception of the work environment. For example, they may view their environment as hostile which could result in stress, fear, and distrust in the organization. The distrust in principals' ability to serve as instructional leaders is evident in teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership. Teachers have not always had positive perceptions of the feedback they have received (Darling-Hammond, 2014) or the evaluation itself (Donaldson & Peske, 2010). Teachers would prefer actionable feedback, instead of "superficial" feedback (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Raudenbush & Rowan, 2016). Also, teachers' perceptions of the conferences they have with their principals during the teacher evaluation process are also negative (Raudenbush & Rowan, 2016). Specifically, the conversations and goal-setting processes in these meetings are not positively perceived (Raudenbush & Rowan, 2016). While this study does not aim to understand teachers' perceptions of evaluation systems and instructional leadership, it does seek to understand how principals perceive the evaluation system and the instructional leadership they provide; principals' perceptions could be influencing teachers' perceptions.

There is also distrust nationally in the teacher evaluation systems that were quickly put into place as states sought a part of the federal Race to the Top grant program, which was created in 2009. Nationally, the teaching evaluation system is not considered a part of a learning system that is focused on continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Focus on teacher observations in the teacher evaluation system can shift the perspective of the teacher evaluation system to one of professional development (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Principals can use the

teacher observation to design tailored professional development for teachers. Though the topic of instructional leadership is prominent in discussions of school performance, accountability, and student achievement, principals' involvement in accountability measures is understudied (Spillane, 2002), and the possible relationship between teacher evaluation systems and instructional leadership is also understudied (Neumerski, 2012). Principals' perceptions of teacher evaluation models is also understudied (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Paufler, 2018). In order to improve teachers' perceptions of their evaluation systems and in order for teacher evaluation systems to result in continuous improvement of teaching and learning, an understanding of principal's sense-making when it comes to instructional leadership is needed. This study particularly seeks to uncover how principals view the job of instructional leadership and how that might be influenced by teacher evaluation models.

Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Leadership

Teachers' perceptions of the instructional leadership their principals provide may impact the extent to which teachers' instructional practices change. Teacher practices when they are *not* being observed by their supervisors is the true test of changed practice. Teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership varies, however. In one study of eighty-four teachers, only seven teachers found that the principal's position was influential. Other teachers did not find the principal to be an instructional leader or a leader who could assist with their instruction (Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Dart, 1993). Teachers view principals as legitimate based upon the principal's classroom experience and knowledge, not the principal's position as the leader (Leithwood et al., 1993). The authors found that cultural capital or the principal's interactive style was what teachers used to construct principals as influential leaders more so than human capital or expertise and economic capital or resource access. Principals who are transparent in

their development as instructional leaders are more likely to be viewed by teachers as legitimate and are more likely to participate in teachers' professional learning communities (Printy, 2008). Therefore, the potential impact of the teacher evaluation system on the teacher's practice is dependent upon how the teacher views the principal or evaluator.

Researchers have conducted studies on principals' perceptions of their effectiveness. Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, & Dozier (2016) compared the self-perceptions of principals to the perceptions teachers had of those principals' actions within one school district in regards to defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate and found no significant difference between the teachers' perceptions and principals' perceptions. However, Fullan (2006) reported that when asked about their perceptions of their effectiveness throughout the past five years, sixty-one percent of principals said their effectiveness decreased, and twenty-six percent said it increased. This fact bears repeating. As they gained experience, these principals saw themselves as being less and less effective over time. Teachers' and principals' negative perceptions of the instructional leadership the principals provide combined with teachers' negative perceptions of teacher evaluations seem to make the job of the instructional leader more challenging. In addition to having the time and content knowledge to be an effective instructional leader, instructional leaders have to establish themselves as legitimate and create positive perceptions of instructional leadership for their teachers.

Principals' Sense-Making of Evaluation and Instructional Leadership

Perceptions of instructional leadership impact principals' sense-making when it comes to instructional leadership. Analyzing principals' perceptions of their leadership sheds light on the sense-making in which principals engage when they instructionally lead (Urlick & Bowers,

2014). Because local school districts have control of instructional content, and because teachers often have control of how to deliver that content, varying definitions of effective instruction exist (Neumerski, 2012). Neumerski (2012) argued that because it is difficult to define effective instruction, it is also difficult to define effective instructional leadership sense-making without having established the goal of that leadership. Neumerski (2012) also argued that because instructional leadership literature is categorized by principals, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches, the focus of that research is unfortunately on *who* is leading, instead of *how*. This could be a result of the beginnings of instructional leadership, which focused solely on the principal and not on a shared leadership approach (Hallinger, 2008). However, the shared instructional leadership and distributed leadership models also focus on the *who* and *what* more so than the *how*.

Researching how leaders influence important teaching practices would contribute to the research on how leaders impact student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). Most of the research focuses on principals' practices, instead of their sense-making (Stein & Nelson, 2003). In order to completely understand instructional leadership, attention is focused on how and why leaders execute the practices they do (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2006). In order to shift from analyzing what principals do to instructionally lead to how principals instructionally lead, research would focus on principals' execution of and their definitions of their micro-tasks. For example, the micro-tasks principals execute when defining a school vision would be considered (Spillane et al., 2001). In addition to understanding the instructional leadership micro-tasks, principals' perspectives of how that micro-task is executed is critical to understanding instructional leadership, as well as the knowledge and skill demands of the principal executing that micro-task (Spillane et al., 2001). The sense-making of principals engaging in instructional

leadership will investigate the why. The why of instructional leadership is left out more often than the how of instructional leadership. Both will be studied in this research.

When considering principals' sense-making as they engage in instructional leadership, it is also necessary to understand principals' sense-making in regards to the teacher evaluation tool being utilized when evaluating teachers. The evaluation tool is an important component of teacher evaluation research as the evaluation tool focuses the principal's attention on particular aspects of teaching and learning during the classroom observation; the principals' leadership practices are mediated by the teacher observation tool (Spillane et al., 2001). These observation instruments come with their challenges, though. Some researchers feel principals do not understand the best practices literature, and policy makers seem to believe an observation tool that eliminates the need for principals to think can make up for principals' lack of knowledge; however, observation tools provide results that are inconsistent, do not provide the information needed to improve teachers' instruction, do not predict how well students will do, and do not tell much about how teachers interact with each student (Lavigne & Good, 2015). Principals utilizing these instruments desire more support with providing feedback and engaging in post-observation conferences with teachers (Lavigne & Good, 2015). Since the observation instrument helps principals frame the observation, the observation instrument might or might not be assisting principals with the why and how or the plan for support for teachers following the observation.

The principals' sense-making after a classroom observation is also important in understanding instructional leadership. Principals wanting to improve teaching and learning understand the best practices for improving teaching and learning (LeFevre & Robinson, 2015). When principals understand the processes required to achieve the goal, principals are more likely

to be able to create the conditions needed for those desired outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). The sense-making process principals engage in when implementing policies is affected by the context in which they are operating, and the context affects how the principals implement the policies (Spillane et al., 2001). This context could include where the school is in the implementation process, the students the school services and how stakeholders perceive those students, how teachers and leaders perceive teachers, the networks in which the leaders are involved (Spillane et al., 2001), as well as principals' perspectives on implementing the policies such as teacher evaluation systems (Paufler, 2018). These policies also include the evaluation requirements of principals and the observation instrument.

Instructional Management Framework

The Instructional Management Framework includes three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate, and within each dimension are job functions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The job functions within defining the school mission include framing the school goals and communicating school goals. Within managing the instructional program are the following functions: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The principal alone does not need to be tasked with developed the mission of the school; however, the principal is tasked with ensuring that the mission exists and that the mission is communicated to stakeholders (Hallinger, 2008). Moreover, principals have to ensure that stakeholders are clear on how the mission connects to classroom activities, and they have to ensure that the communication of the mission also involves communication of a shared purpose (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). According to the framework, the school's goals include a focus on increasing student achievement and are few in number; the goals are based on student performance data and

include the specific responsibilities of stakeholders in order to achieve the goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Within managing the instructional program are the following functions: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The principal does not need to engage in these functions alone; however, the principal is ultimately responsible for managing the instructional program and overseeing these functions (Hallinger, 2008). These functions involve overseeing the goals from managing the instructional program into practice (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Coordinating the curriculum involves making sure the curriculum aligns with teacher's lessons and students' assessments (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Monitoring student progress includes disseminating student assessment results and helping teachers make sense of that information (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This dimension most closely relates to the research question for this study as it directly relates to teacher evaluation.

Promoting school climate includes the functions of protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). All of these functions are related to the principal's ability to develop a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement (Hallinger, 2008). Protecting the instructional time involves principals ensuring instruction goes uninterrupted by factors the school can control such as office requests (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Promoting professional development requires principals to include the school's goals to help teachers improve. Some principals promote professional development based on their evaluations of teachers. Maintaining high visibility allows principals to interact with stakeholders and communicate the goals of the school.

Incentives for teachers could include praise, recognition, and awards. Students can also be given such awards.

Within framing the school's goals on the teacher form are the following behavior statements: develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals; frame the school's goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them; use needs assessment or other systematic methods to secure staff input on goal development; use data on student academic performance when developing the school's academic goals; develop goals that are easily translated into classroom objectives by teachers (Hallinger, 2008). Principals might also use teacher evaluations to determine how to engage in the behaviors included in framing the school's goals. As with all other behavior statements included on all three versions of the PIMRS, teachers on this survey are asked how often principals engage in these behaviors on a scale of 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) (Hallinger, 2008). Behavior statements such as these are included in the interview questions as open-ended questions to seek principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership they provide. Instead of administering this survey to principals, I posed qualitative questions in order to understand principals' sense-making and the how they instructionally lead. Each job function also includes direct and indirect activities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Indirect activities such as ensuring instructional practices align with the school's goals are advantageous because they require less supervision by the principal but are also challenging in that the principal has to rely heavily on teacher commitment to policies (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Direct activities such as conducting observations are advantageous because they allow principals to individualize attention to teachers but could require more time from principals than indirect activities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These functions, behaviors, and then activities within each behavior define instructional leadership.

Development of Instructional Management Framework

The instructional management framework itself has assisted educators with defining instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). One of the challenges with instructional leadership is assessing principals on instructional leadership behaviors that are not clearly defined (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). After using research and interviews to create the dimensions, Hallinger and Murphy used literature to create the job functions which accompany each dimension (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Hallinger and Murphy (2012) also interviewed school administrators. The authors then turned the job functions into behavior statements placed on a Likert scale with a score of 1 representing almost never and a score of 5 representing almost always (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). It is important to note principals' role in the development of this framework and the work to define instructional leadership since this study seeks to understand principals' instructional leadership. The scale has been developed for teachers, principals, and principals' supervisors (Hallinger, 2011). There have been improvements made to the scale since its inception. While the PIMRS is not the focus of this qualitative study, the interview questions are based on the behavior statements from the PIMRS. The revision of the 10 subscales and 40 items on the PIMRS assisted with defining instructional leadership for this study and resulted in more focused interview questions.

In addition to helping define instructional leadership, utilizing the Instructional Management Framework to frame this research could help improve principals' instructional leadership. Hallinger and Wang (2015) suggested that more mixed methods research be conducted with the PIMRS to get more information that could help improve instructional leadership. The data gathered through analyzing how principals view the job of instructional leadership and how that may be influenced by a particular teacher evaluation model using the

information from the framework could be used to inform decisions about teacher evaluation models and instructional leadership expectations for principals which are included in those models. The data could be used to analyze patterns among an administration and could be used for research or to evaluate programs, policies, or needs (Hallinger, 2008; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The framework can provide principals and their supervisors with information for professional growth and school programs (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The framework was developed as an instrument to analyze how principals' leadership impacts student achievement (Hallinger et al., 2013). Teacher performance has been found to have the greatest in-school impact on student learning, and school leadership has been found to have the second greatest in-school impact on student learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). A qualitative study seeking principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership could provide more information on how the leadership perceives they are working to improve teacher performance and student achievement, as well as assisting the leaders with examining barriers to effective instructional leadership.

The Reflection-Growth Model by Blase and Blase (1999) could also be used to analyze principals' instructional leadership. The Reflection-Growth Model focuses on promoting reflection and professional growth and was compiled based on studies of teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999). The researchers posed two questions to inform the model: What characteristics of school principals positively influence classroom teaching, and what characteristics of school principals adversely affect classroom teaching? While each theme encompasses related strategies for instructional leadership, those strategies are specific to promoting reflection and professional growth only. Promoting continuous improvement through reflection and professional growth are included in the developing the

school learning climate dimension. That dimension's functions also include behavior statements in the Instructional Management Framework; therefore, because the Instructional Management Framework already includes promoting reflection and professional growth and because the Instructional Management Framework includes more dimensions, which define instructional leadership, the Instructional Management Framework is more appropriate for this study.

Criticisms of Instructional Management Framework

Though the Instructional Management Framework is better suited for this study rather than the Reflection-Growth Model by Blase and Blase (1999), the Instructional Management Framework still has its criticisms. Hallinger (2011) cautioned researchers to avoid analyzing one set of data from teachers, principals, or principals' supervisors; however, the researcher could analyze that one group's data in an attempt to answer a question other than how the effective the principal's instructional leadership is. This study focused on more than perceptions of effectiveness; instead, it included the Instructional Management Framework in the interview to understand principals' perceptions of their leadership and their sense-making. Additionally, while the IMF measures the presence (or lack of) various leadership activities, it does not provide a roadmap for improvement. If principals are engaged in conversation about those same activities, potential barriers and specific behavior changes may become more apparent. Lastly, the framework was designed to analyze the relationship between leadership and learning. This study does not seek to highlight how leadership is impacting learning; however, it seeks to understand principals' sense-making when evaluating teachers with the goal of teacher evaluation being to positively impact student learning.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

The research methods section begins with a review of the research design: a qualitative, phenomenological study. Following the research design is a discussion of participant selection, which involves ten school principals from two school districts. The discussion of research context includes information about the participants' school districts and individual schools. The data collection and analysis sections explore the participant interviews and the coding and analysis of that data for the research question: How do principals perceive their instructional leadership in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation model? Trustworthiness and researcher identity are included last in this chapter.

Research Design

This is a qualitative study. In qualitative research, researchers look closely at human experiences and behavior and how the individuals understand their experiences (Lichtman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher in qualitative research interviews and observes humans as a means of understanding the experiences (Lichtman, 2013). A qualitative study is fitting for this research because this research seeks to understand humans' experiences and how humans interpret those experiences. This study seeks to analyze principals' experiences with instructional leadership. In particular, this study seeks to understand how principals perceive teacher evaluation systems and how they perceive their instructional leadership in relation to particular evaluation tools. This study also seeks to understand if and how principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership varies dependent upon the evaluation tool being utilized.

This qualitative study is a phenomenological study that looks closely at principals' lived experiences with instructional leadership. Phenomenology is concerned with descriptions and meanings humans attach to specific phenomena (Moustakas, 1994; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The specific phenomena here was instructional leadership in the context of mandated teacher evaluation. The first few interview questions asked participants to recall their experiences with teacher evaluation as a teacher. Participants were able to recall positive and negative experiences with teacher evaluation. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), "A phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation" (p. 141). I further explored participants' experiences as principals with instructional leadership in the context of teacher evaluation when I asked principals to describe their involvement with instructional leadership at their school and teacher evaluation at their school, and then I asked participants to describe their experiences with instructional leadership and teacher evaluation. Phenomenology considers the lived experiences of individuals, and the lived experience is typically a certain experience on which the researcher focuses (Lichtman, 2013). In phenomenological research, researchers "question the way we experience the world" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19). I explored whether principals' experiences as teachers shaped their instructional leadership as principals. This study sought to understand principals' perceptions of their everyday experiences with instructional leadership in the context of mandated teacher evaluation.

Participant Selection

Because instructional leadership that is intended to increase student achievement seems more difficult in middle and high schools (Louis et al., 2010), I initially sought to include secondary principals in this study. I was also initially interested in principals at high-performing

schools, which I identified as a school with a letter grade of an A or B on the 2018-2019 Louisiana state-issued school report, because I hoped to understand how principals at high-performing schools perceived the instructional leadership they provided in the context of mandated teacher evaluation. In July and the start of August of 2021, I sent participant recruitment emails to thirteen secondary principals of high-performing schools in one school district. By mid-August, I heard from two of those principals; one agreed to participate, and one declined participation. On August 24, 2021, I conducted an interview with the first participant, who was principal at a high-performing, secondary school. On August 24, 2021, I heard from two principals who received word of my study and agreed to participate, but they were not within the criteria of secondary schools. Unfortunately, on August 26, 2021, Hurricane Ida devastated my community and some surrounding communities. The two principals who agreed to participate pre-Hurricane Ida had to decline participation in October when I resumed interviews.

In October, I resorted to loosening the participant criteria due to the little interest I received in July and August from principals and because of the devastation of Hurricane Ida. I sought principal participants from low-performing, average-performing, and high-performing elementary and secondary schools. I had to rely on network sampling to gather the ten participants for my study. Network sampling involves asking participants for contact information for other participants who meet the criteria and purpose of the study (Lichtman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The ten participants were currently employed in one of two different parishes and were currently serving as principals of public or charter schools within those districts at the time of this study. Some participants also had experience in parochial schools though current parochial school principals were not included in this study. Each public or charter school

principal interviewed was employed at a school following a teacher evaluation model: TAP, COMPASS, or the school’s version of one of those evaluation instruments.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Years in Education	Years as Principal at Current School	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Band	Roles
Anna	12	6	Female	White	High	Teacher; Counselor; Assistant Principal; Principal
Betty	28	7	Female	White	Elementary	Teacher; Assistant Principal; Principal
Charles	13	3	Male	White	Elementary	Teacher; Interventionist; Assistant Principal; Principal
Dan	14	3	Male	White	Elementary/ Middle	Teacher; Assistant Principal; Principal
Emily	18	4	Female	White	Elementary	Teacher; Principal
Felicity	17	3	Female	White	Elementary/ Middle	Teacher; Assistant Principal; Principal
Gloria	18+	9	Female	White	Middle/High	Teacher; Assistant Principal; Principal
Hannah	23	1	Female	African-American	Elementary	Teacher; Assistant Principal; Principal
Isaac	16	1	Male	Hispanic	Elementary	Teacher; Dean; Principal

Jennifer	40	7	Female	White	Elementary	Teacher; Interventionist; Principal
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Research Context

Nine of the ten participants worked for a suburban school district with approximately 50,000 students at 80 schools: 50 elementary; eight middle; ten high; seven combination; and five charter. That district’s student body was comprised of 39% African American, 31% Hispanic, 25% Caucasian, 4% Asian, and 1% other. The students were comprised of 82% economically disadvantaged; 17% with exceptionalities; and 17% with limited English proficiency with the majority being Spanish-speaking. One of the ten participants worked for a suburban school district with approximately 6,000 students at eleven schools, seven of which include elementary school, eight of which include middle school, and three of which include high school. That district’s student body was comprised of 56% African American, 36% Hispanic, 34% White, 1% Asian, and 1% other. The students were comprised of 4.3% with a disability and 26.5% of families with income below the poverty level. English only is spoken in 93.8% of homes in this district.

Before the participant selection and interviews for this study, the last Louisiana state-issued school report card was for the 2018-2019 school year. The Louisiana Department of Education school report card demographic information for each school included in this study is listed below in random order. Though ten principals participated in this study, three principals represented grade-level bands from one K-12 school included in the study; that school is represented once in the table below. For the purpose of anonymity in this study, schools are identified in the table below as low-performing: D or F on 2018-2019 school report card; average-performing: C on 2018-2019 school report card; and high-performing: A or B on 2018-

2019 school report card. On the 2018-2019 school report cards, one school received a low-performing score, four schools received average-performing scores, and three schools received high-performing scores.

Table 2

School Demographics

School	2018-2019 School Report Card	School Demographics	Students with Disabilities	English Language Learners	Economically Disadvantaged
1	Average-performing	62% Hispanic, 1% Native American, 9% White, 3% Asian, 21% African American, 4% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	10%	36%	90%
2	Low-performing	54% Hispanic, 8% White, 2% Asian, 34% African American, 1% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	11%	31%	92%
3	High-performing	31% Hispanic, 44% White, 5% Asian, 16% African American, 4% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	15%	4%	71%
4	Average-performing	44% Hispanic, 37% White, 2% Asian, 14% African American, 3% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	11%	23%	82%
5	High-performing	6% Hispanic, 64% White, 20% Asian, 5% African American, 4% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	10%	1%	22%
6	High-performing	14% Hispanic, 58% White, 18% Asian,	<5%	0%	44%

7	Average-performing	5% African American, 5% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic) 11% Hispanic, 14% White, 5% Asian, 66% African American, 3% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	14%	4%	95%
8	Average-performing	15% Hispanic, 4% White, 79% African American, 1% Multiple Races (non-Hispanic)	14%	7%	85%

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews

I collected data for this study through individual, semi-structured interviews. Interviews are the typical method of data collection for phenomenological studies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Individual interviewing allowed me to speak to one participant at a time (Lichtman, 2013) so that I could focus on the participant's individual experience with the phenomenon. The semi-structured interview allowed me to operate with a set of questions for all participants and the opportunity to alter or add to the questions when needed with individual participants (Lichtman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The ability to alter the open-ended questions is important in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). This loose structure gave me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to clarify and continue to seek an understanding of the experience and the meanings associated with the experience of instructional leadership in the context of mandated teacher evaluation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked the participants questions in four categories: introductory, instructional leadership, teacher evaluation, and principals' sense-making. I included some

broad questions in the interviews which allowed for the descriptions needed in phenomenological studies (Moustakas, 1994). I also used the PIMRS as a guide for the interview questions; I tailored the questions to make them more conversational and open-ended during the interview.

Data Analysis

I conducted the interviews through an online video communication platform. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them (Lichtman, 2013; Moustakas, 1994) by setting up the program to transcribe the interview and display closed captions for the participant and me during the interview. After the interview, I returned to the transcript the program generated to analyze the data by editing the transcription errors as I listened to the audio recordings of the interviews. After I edited the transcriptions, I printed a hard copy of each interview, so I could interact with the data by hand (Saldana, 2021).

I created a one-page document of my research questions, rationale, and theoretical framework; I kept that one-pager in front of me as I engaged in the analysis, so I could stay rooted in what was relevant to my research concern as Saldana (2021) suggests. Before analyzing the interview transcriptions, I determined I would engage in In Vivo coding, a popular coding method for both novice qualitative researchers and researchers analyzing interview transcriptions. Before analyzing, I also determined I would code as lumper, not splitter which would allow me to focus on sections of the data at a time, instead of individual lines as In Vivo coding does not have to occur line-by-line. As Saldana (2021) suggests, I drew a line break on the interview transcription each time the topic changed, and then I recorded the In Vivo code next to that section of data. After transcribing the data, I engaged in first-round coding which

also involved recording notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When I was surprised by, agreed with, questioned, or otherwise felt the need to comment on the data, I engaged in analytic memoing.

After I coded the second interview, I returned to review the first interview's codes to determine any developing patterns. I added notes to my memoing of the first and second interviews at that time. As I continued analyzing, I repeatedly returned to the previously coded interviews to continue analyzing developing patterns. When I completed first round coding, I typed all of the In Vivo codes into a document as a management strategy for analysis later (Saldana, 2021). After I completed first-round coding for all interview transcripts, I began second-round coding since coding is "cyclical" and requires more than one round of coding (Saldana, 2021, p. 12). I used both inductive and deductive coding throughout my analysis as I used In Vivo codes for first-round coding and codes I generated during second-round coding. I did not use In Vivo coding to code during the second round as researchers often do not use the same coding methods during rounds of coding (Saldana, 2021). Instead, I generated my own codes for second-round coding, including using parts of the first-round In Vivo codes as the second round codes. Once I had the second round codes, I typed those on the same document as the first round codes, and I completed axial coding to narrow the codes (Boeije, 2010). From the second round codes, the categories began to emerge. Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Management Framework influenced some of the categories such as visibility, professional development, student progress, and evaluating instruction. I considered whether to engage in Saldana's (2021) tabletop categories exercise, but I engaged in a modified version of that activity by doing the sorting on the document where the codes lived. I concluded with four concepts: instructional leadership, accountability, time, and collaboration.

I planned to gather documents to analyze for the study including an online journal with participants detailing scenarios they experiences with teacher evaluation and instructional leadership. After considering the many responsibilities and little time principals have, I decided to capture these journal questions as questions in my interview protocol, instead. Though I planned for up to 75-minute interviews, some interviews lasted up to two hours as a result of the storytelling involved in the scenario interview questions and the follow-up questions.

Trustworthiness

As the researcher is the primary research instrument in qualitative studies, some care is to be taken in ensuring that the findings are of high quality. I engaged in triangulation to strengthen the credibility of the research (Lichtman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation involves collecting and comparing multiple sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I intended to accomplish this triangulation through individual interviews and journal entries. I decided to embed the journal entry questions into the individual interviews, so I could save participants time. These journal entry questions also took the place of conducting observations of principals' formal and informal observations, which would have been inappropriate to observe. The interview protocol included the following questions: Tell me about the most recent teacher evaluation cycle in which you participated. Tell me about the best teacher evaluation cycle in which you participated, and tell me about the worst teacher evaluation cycle in which you participated. Describe your most impactful informal classroom evaluation and the steps in which you engaged. Describe your most recent informal classroom evaluation and the steps in which you engaged.

To ensure honesty, researchers should remind participants they can choose to decline participation at any point, and researchers should aim to develop rapport with the participant at

the beginning of each interview (Shenton, 2004). Though I received consent for participation prior to the interviews, at the beginning of each interview, I asked each participant if they would still like to participate. In an attempt to “establish a rapport” and make each participant comfortable in the interview, I asked introductory questions such as, “Can you tell me about your career path to principalship?” I also included, “Describe this school and the community you serve,” and, “Tell me about your experiences with instructional leadership when you were a teacher.” Though I intended to interview principals of high-performing, secondary schools, I resorted to the snowballing sampling technique, which resulted in me using a “wide range of informants” and further triangulating the data (Shenton, 2004).

I worked to eliminate my own feelings through bracketing. Bracketing required me to bracket or set aside what I thought about the topic from the research (Lichtman, 2013). This bracketing materialized as annotations on printed copies of the ten interview transcripts. Moreover, to strengthen credibility, I provided rich, thick description of the participants and their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I especially ensured this rich, thick description existed when I revised my work post-defense to include more block quotes by participants. I maintained confidentiality by providing pseudonyms for participants and schools. I retrieved informed consent, and I did not include information that could identify participants (Lichtman, 2013). I also displayed closed captions during the ten virtual participant interviews and produced a running transcript during the interview; participants were privy to these captions and transcriptions. These measures strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

Researcher Identity

I was enrolled in public institutions for my elementary and secondary education in one public school district. I have spent twelve years as an educator in two schools within that same

public school district; I served as a teacher for six and a half of those years, and I am currently an assistant principal at a middle school. Though I am in the administrative setting, recruiting principal participants for this study was challenging. Principals, who already have full plates, were tasked with additional challenges this school year including Covid-19 policies and procedures, virtual learners, and impacts of Hurricane Ida. Participants who initially agreed to participate in this study at the beginning of August 2021, had no choice but to back out of the study weeks later when their interviews were scheduled. As a result, I had to rely on network sampling to gather participants. I am aware that being a white woman played a part in this networking and influenced the principals I recruited for this study. When principals did not respond to my recruitment email, I resorted to calling upon family members, University cohort members, current colleagues and previous colleagues to help me recruit participants, instead of the purposeful sampling I planned to utilize for this study. Being a Louisiana native who has only worked in one school district also influenced my analysis as my educational experiences as a student and educator are limited to one school district in south Louisiana. I learned from participants who spoke of teaching experiences in Texas.

Conclusion

This qualitative study is a phenomenological study. The phenomenon studied is principals' experiences with instructional leadership while utilizing teacher observation tools. I sought to understand if and how the teacher observation tools impacts principals' experiences with instructional leadership and their sense-making when engaging in instructional leadership. Because I was involved in the research as the researcher, I made attempts to strengthen the credibility of the information I collected. This study was also limited to two school districts and

thus only some schools and some principals who are experiencing the phenomenon of instructional leadership with particular teacher observation tools at play.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to produce a description of how principals perceive the instructional leadership they provide teachers, as well as the instruments they utilize to observe classroom instruction. Ten participants from two school districts participated in interviews based on the research question: How do principals perceive their instructional leadership in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation model? Three themes emerged from the data: the complexity of instructional leadership, the challenges of accountability, and the desire for more time. This chapter provides evidence and explanation of those themes.

The Complexity of Instructional Leadership

Part of the complexity of instructional leadership is many definitions of effective instructional leadership exist. Different interpretations of effective instructional leadership exist in the literature (Leithwood, 2004) and in practice. During their discussions of instructional leadership, participants described the goal of instructional leadership: to impact teaching and learning (Day et al., 2016; Jenkins, 2009; Neumerski, 2012; Spillane et al., 2003; Supovitz & Pogliinco, 2001). Participants believed in order to achieve this impact, principals must understand student and teacher needs (Stein & Nelson, 2003). When discussing instructional leadership, principals in this study also elaborated on their lack of training in instructional leadership and teacher evaluation (Sartain et al., 2011), and they discussed the benefits of shared leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003) and teacher collaboration.

Characteristics of Instructional Leadership

Principals must be both emotionally and physically present to be effective instructional leaders. The ability to lead based on what is happening in the classroom requires principals to be

visible. Hannah commented on this visibility in teachers' planning sessions and in the classroom:

An instructional leader cannot focus on the custodians. You cannot focus on managing the cafeteria personnel. Your focus is on content curriculum and what's happening in your building with instruction. You're in those classrooms, looking to see what students are learning, and asking questions about the learning to ensure that students are learning.

Hannah highlighted how easy it could be for principals to lose sight of instructional leadership because of their other responsibilities. Hannah defined instructional leadership here by stating what instructional leadership is and is not; however, principals who are bogged down with managerial tasks might not ever get to instructional leadership.

Addressing Teacher Needs

One component of instructional leadership is addressing teachers' needs. Principals at high- and average-performing schools discussed being aware of teachers' needs.. Participants also discussed teacher growth and the leadership team determining the appropriate setting to support teachers. Principals assisting teachers with individual growth spoke of doing so through the teacher evaluation process. Gloria discussed how she goes about those observations to address teachers' needs; she said she conducts struggling teachers' observations so that she can be the one to provide the best feedback to that individual teacher. In this case, Gloria is asserting feedback as a form of support she uses to assist individual teachers:

Now I may not be doing all their walkthroughs, but when it comes to the formal observation, I want to make sure that it's recorded that they're getting the best feedback. So the easier people, I'm giving to my administrators that maybe aren't as strong as an evaluator as I would perceive myself to be.

Another way principals supported teachers' needs was through whole-school professional development. Gloria mentioned she collects data from her informal evaluation walkthroughs and approaches her leadership team with that data to determine what content is most appropriate and relevant for clusters or professional development: "We meet every week, and we will look at different forms of data, whether it's walkthrough, or student work or benchmark data. And we'll use that to determine the needs for our cluster meetings, which we have every week." Gloria also mentioned that the school's year-long goal helps guide cluster work; this high-performing school uses its school goals to drive professional development for teachers. Isaac said he wishes whole-school professional development was not so "cookie cutter" and could focus on the individual teacher's needs:

[With more time, I would be] using that information [from informal teacher observations] to develop professional development for the teachers, not just a cookie cutter PD where everybody has to do this one PD. We develop these different tracks ... a brand new teacher that needs a lot of support is going to probably need a lot more classroom management PD, a lot more time with, looking at the state standards, versus a staff member that's been in been teaching for 20 years, their classroom management is ... They got it down. So maybe their focus is on ... new programs, new curriculum, or maybe working on differentiated instruction ... small group instruction.

Gloria also alluded to the challenges of whole-school, cookie-cutter professional development by describing having to get buy in from a "room full of teachers." This buy in is difficult to achieve when teachers of varying levels of expertise are all present for the same professional development; however, as Isaac described, these two types of professional learning (whole-school and small group or individual) can co-exist. This co-existence could look like

leadership teams identifying a whole-school professional learning focus and then dividing teachers into small groups for differentiated content on that focus during the professional development session. This structure could mimic what evaluators would expect of teachers differentiating instruction for their students.

The participants spoke of their roles in whole-school professional development. Hannah, who discussed the importance of visibility in the classroom, discussed the importance of the principal's visibility in clusters:

I'm in cluster meetings all day on Wednesday with my teachers ... They come in. I'm making sure I'm in there and that the message is being communicated by the master teacher, the message that she and I discussed and what she's bringing forward. Making sure that teachers are bringing in data so that we can look at scholar data ..., so it's all about what's happening in the classroom between the two important pieces in the school, the teacher and the scholar.

Hannah emphasized her role as the principal is to oversee professional learning after planning with her leadership team. The professional development occurring within clusters is important, but two principals stated how what happens after clusters is important, too. Betty and Dan described the transfer they hope to see from cluster to teaching and learning including teachers' informal and formal observations. Betty described what she has seen with this transfer: "The other thing that I'm seeing this year is transfer from clusters ...building critical thinking through writing and assessments, specifically looking at how we at how we ask students to give us evidence of their learning." This evidence of transfer from clusters to the classroom is not surprising; because the purpose of professional development is improvement of teaching and

learning, principals should expect teaching and learning to improve when teachers leave cluster meetings.

Principals have to determine the appropriate setting for supporting teacher growth, whether they choose to support in a more private setting like a post-observation conference or during whole-school professional development. With the little time they have, participants supported teachers with specific needs through the teacher evaluation process, and participants supported teachers with “common needs” through their professional development sessions or clusters.

Addressing Student Needs

Principal visibility can help identify teacher and student needs. This idea of instructional leadership focusing on the needs of people in the building (as opposed to a teaching rubric or best-practice guide) was a salient finding. The majority of the participants mentioned students in their descriptions of instructional leadership as a reminder that the purpose of instructional leadership is to impact students. Dan discussed student work and school growth:

Instructional leadership ... is students ... a principal or a leader who's in the ... space and knows what's happening in the classroom ... is constantly taking a pulse on what's happening in in the school, and ... that's through observations ... walk throughs and also student work ... using student work and data to then drive the need. Let the need then drive the decisions on what you're going to do with the staff for professional development. And then once you kind of reach that goal, moving on to the next one.

Dan explained the need to support teachers with identifying success criteria in student work. He said often times, teachers “don’t know what they’re sorting [the data] for.” The

analysis of student work was one approach to instructional leadership that principals used in professional development.

The use of student performance data should prompt student growth. Four participants discussed student growth. The transformative nature of instructional leadership, which some participants discussed when defining effective instructional leadership, was mentioned by Hannah when she discussed student and teacher growth. She explained when teachers effectively change their practices, those changes should result in student growth. Gloria mentioned her leadership team's strategic approach to analyzing student work, which she hopes will result in student growth: tracking one particular student's growth at a time and his or her growth. In this example, Gloria is maximizing her informal observations of teachers and creating opportunities for instructional leadership. She said during an observation, she also pays close attention to the struggling students the leadership team is tracking. Then, she uses that observation data to consider next steps to support her teachers. She said she wants her teachers to also look closely at struggling students. In this case, Gloria is modeling a best practice she wants her teachers to emulate. She is engaging in the work alongside the teacher, so she can support the teacher as the teacher works to support the students.

Administrative Training in Instructional Leadership

Though principals are tasked with facilitating quality cluster meetings and other forms of professional development that directly impact teaching and learning, principals in this study mostly spoke negatively about the training they received on instructionally leading teachers. Many principals commented on the work they had to do on their own to learn about instructional leadership. Half of the principals discussed the day-to-day learning in which they engage that helps them be effective instructional leaders: observing teachers (Charles); scoring practice

observation videos (Jennifer); and researching best practices (Gloria and Hannah). Three participants commended their Master's programs. Gloria spoke of her Master's program:

In my Master's program, I took a class on ... supervision of teachers, which I was able to learn a lot about ... adult learner behavior, ... different types of observations you can do with teachers, and how to structure ... a feedback conference.

It seems typical for state- or district-initiated evaluator support to focus on different types of observations and providing teachers with feedback; it seems less typical for school districts to teach teacher evaluators how to structure feedback conferences, and it seems less typical for districts to expose evaluators and instructional leaders to adult learner behaviors. This principal is at a high-performing school and seems to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to facilitate instructional improvement at her school as a result of the training she received in her Master's programs. Not all instructional leaders are privy to the same Master's program, though. Two participants credited their district-level support in Texas for their instructional leadership training being "light years ahead" and having a "huge focus" on instructional leadership they said unlike Louisiana. These principals were in two different schools in Texas and both felt they were prepared to instructionally lead their faculties.

Though principals described having to strengthen their own instructional leadership skills, the participants described what training they feel they still need in instructional leadership. This illustrates the need principals have for instructional leadership support at the district and state levels. They do not feel their own professional development has prepared them to be effective instructional leaders. Gloria shared her thoughts on her school district's training: "We don't have a lot of ongoing PD in how to be an instructional leader. We have an ever-growing list of things to do related to being an instructional leader but no training." Her school district either

assumes principals understand how to engage in these tasks as instructional leaders, or her school district does not have the time or expertise to support principals in engaging in these tasks. While they have established the expectation for principals to be instructional leaders, they have not supported principals with meeting those expectations. Dan said he does not feel he is “the best at coaching” while Emily said she feels pretty strongly about her ability to coach, illustrating that principals, like teachers, are at varying levels in their knowledge and understanding of instructional leadership. Hannah also commented on the district training she received. Though she participated in trainings alongside teachers about curriculum, Hannah said the training she received was on “content knowledge, not how to be an instructional leader.” The facilitators of the curriculum training seemed to be under the impression that the principals knew what to do with their learning from that curriculum professional development since they did not provide additional training to the principals in attendance. Perhaps the facilitators trusted the principals’ capacity to instructionally lead, so they felt training only needed to focus on the curriculum. Perhaps the facilitators were more trained in the curriculum than how to provide principals with the support they need to assist their teachers with the curriculum. It is evident this principal felt she needed to be supported with how to instructionally lead teachers based on the knowledge she gained from those curriculum meetings.

Participants also mentioned the importance of curriculum and instruction in a principal’s instructional leadership role. With more time, Hannah wanted to “understand what’s happening in K-8 [curriculum].” She emphasized the desire to learn more about the content, which illustrated her desire to be a more effective instructional leader. This means any professional development their district provided did not support principals as content leaders. Based on their responses, it appears some principals prioritize other instructional leadership tasks before the

task of delving into and understanding grade-level content and standards. Perhaps grade-level content and standards take a back seat in a leader's pursuit of instructional leadership as a result of the shared leadership in which principals engage. The time demands of the district's teacher evaluation model might also absorb the time principals have to engage in instructional leadership tasks. One principal said she never received training on how to be a mentor to teachers and that she would like to learn more about how to support teacher growth. Teacher growth is at the center of instructional leadership as both the principals and literature describe; it is alarming that this veteran principal feels she has not received adequate training on a critical component of instructional leadership. Perhaps like the curriculum professional development Hannah described, district staff feel they did provide her with training on supporting teacher growth, but Hannah feels the training was inadequate.

Participants described not receiving adequate training on their schools' teacher evaluation model. Gloria described the district's evaluation training as "horrible." She said she did not gain anything from the evaluation training in her first years as a principal; however, she said in the past three years, the evaluator training has improved because of the modeling the district did for principals. The district provided Dan with evaluation training but was also preoccupied with appointing him as principal to another school that they constantly pulled him out of the evaluation training. He said because of being pulled out often from that training, he "didn't get an understanding of what [he] should be doing [as an evaluator]." This further illustrates the complexity of a principal's job while it also highlights the school district's challenge of supporting principals as both building managers and instructional leaders. What was most interesting about the participants' descriptions of their training on instructional leadership and their teacher evaluation model was one participant's perception of the TAP evaluation system.

Hannah described the resource: “My big pink TAP booklet [is what] helped me understand what public school teaching and learning is really about.” It is interesting that Hannah described a resource as providing her with more knowledge and training than anything or anyone else.

In addition to the lack of clarity in the definition of instructional leadership, what also seems to present challenges in instructional leadership is the lack of clarity in who is supporting principals with being instructional leaders: University programs, curriculum companies, the state’s department of education, school districts, principals themselves, principals’ peers, or all of these entities. If principals are tasked with supporting teachers to improve instruction, it would seem that school districts are responsible for supporting principals in being instructional leaders. As evidenced by the participants’ testimonies, these principals perceive their school districts are not providing them with adequate training and support in instructional leadership or teacher evaluation.

Principals’ Reliance on Shared Leadership and Teacher Collaboration

While principals did not describe relying on their district staff for support in their pursuits to be instructional leaders, they did describe relying on their peers to support them as instructional leaders. All principals mentioned sharing responsibilities with their leadership teams or creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate with their peers. Dan described his leadership team: “Just three solid individuals that know what we're talking about ... and I think that that's really pushed me and my thinking.” This principal’s emphasis on his team being knowledgeable could insinuate others outside of his school-level leadership team are not knowledgeable enough to grow him as an instructional leader. Emily embraced shared leadership like Dan; however, she tailored shared leadership based on previous experiences. She described desires to keep her leadership team small because her larger leadership teams in the

past “didn’t work,” which illustrates the challenges of sharing leadership with too many adults. Felicity also cautioned about principals sharing leadership. Based on her experiences as a teacher, her principal never saw her teach but always provided her with glowing reviews. She said she never wanted to do that to her teachers:

For each [evaluation] cycle, I take on the bulk of the teachers of which I have 50 teachers. I spread out the rest among my instructional leadership team, but I make sure I see every teacher formally at least once a year. I want to see every single one. I don't want someone to be on our campus for eight years, and I've never seen him teach. That's just ridiculous.

Felicity’s desire to be present in all classrooms based on her own experiences means principals’ jobs as instructional leaders are even more complex than assistant principals’ jobs as instructional leaders. While assistant principals may only be assigned a group of teachers to evaluate and support, teachers (like Felicity when she was a teacher) could expect or hope to be supported by the principal in addition to their assistant principals. Principals like Felicity could also feel principals responsible for developing school goals and plans should know what is happening in all of the classrooms on their campuses. Observation reliability could result from shared leadership (Lavigne & Good, 2015). Leadership teams working together to calibrate teacher evaluation scores by observing teachers as leadership teams could strengthen the evaluators and thus the observation itself. Emily said it is “nice to see someone else’s perspective,” and she explained her leadership team sends one another the feedback emails they plan to send teachers after those teachers’ informal observations. This principal’s effort to have her leadership team members review one another’s teacher observation feedback suggests how important she feels feedback is in supporting teachers. She also said she has observed struggling

teachers with her entire leadership team as a form of support for the teacher and her leadership team. Again, this principal is maximizing the strengths of her leadership team members in order to support her teachers. . It is evident the participants depend on the support of their leadership teams to grow them as instructional leaders.

Participants also described sharing leadership with teachers. Many principals discussed their own positive experiences with collaboration as teachers. Dan spoke highly of his instructional coach when he was a teacher and how much support he received from that coach:

We did have an instructional helper at the first school for three years I was there. She supported. She popped in [to observe] more, and since my focus was English, she was definitely there for me more than she was for others because she worked on reading.

Dan's instructional coach was skilled in his content area and was able to provide support in delivering that content. These collaborative opportunities materialized most often in the interviews as peer observations. Four of the ten participants described sending teachers to fellow teachers on campus or other schools in the district as a form of support. Betty called these collaborative opportunities "positive partnerships." It is not surprising that the principals who had positive experiences with collaboration as teachers try to create collaborative opportunities for their own teachers.

Summary

Principals in this study often spoke of relying on their leadership teams to support them as instructional leaders. Principals in this study relied heavily on peer observations as a form of instructionally leading teachers. Since these principals are accustomed to relying on one another for support, instead of the school district staff, it is not surprising why these principals utilize peer observations as an instructional leadership practice: Principals recognize the value in these

collaborative partnerships. As a result, these principals enable and encourage their teachers to rely on their peers as well. Participants seemed comfortable determining which teachers needed support. How principals instructionally led their teachers was sometimes through the analysis of student work. Principals also seemed confident in their abilities to determine when to support teachers with their needs whether during teacher evaluation processes or whole-school professional development.

The Challenges of Accountability

Though participants described some aspects of teacher evaluation accountability, they mostly described the challenges they faced as teachers and the challenges they now face as principals with teacher evaluation. Participants' negative experiences with teacher evaluation as teachers shaped the instructional leaders these principals became (Camburn et al., 2003). For example, participants described the challenges of the teacher evaluation instrument for observations. Many explained the lack of training they received on teacher evaluation and the instrument (Sartain et al., 2011). As if the challenges of the accountability system itself is not enough, the principals also described the efforts they must take to engage teachers in self-reflection. This reflection is necessary for teachers to take an active role in their post-observation conferences with their evaluators (Danielson, 2012). Principals also had to make efforts to build relationships with teachers, which helped the participants with teacher evaluation feedback and support. Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) said instructional leadership involves this encouragement. These relationships made principals more comfortable in their post-observation conferences with teachers, and principals said these relationships made teachers more open to the participants' observation feedback. One way principals built these relationships was through

positivity. A discussion of the data illustrating the teacher-evaluation challenges faced by principals follows.

Principals' Evaluation Experiences as Teachers

Many participants described the negative experiences they had as teachers with teacher evaluation and instructional leadership. When asked about her experiences as a teacher with instructional leadership, Emily did have some positive comments: "I would say that my experiences [with instructional leadership as a teacher] were overall positive." She commented on having a mix of strong instructional leaders and "not-so-strong" instructional leaders, but she appreciated the "wide array" of leaders because she said she "got a feel for different [leadership] styles." Emily seemed to have learned what not to do as an instructional leader from some of her evaluators. She said she remembered feeling mostly "empowered" after observations, but she did comment on her evaluators' feedback:

I remember the feedback was just so miniscule ... over exaggerated ... They [my evaluators] had to find something ... There was just more good than not. And so I keep that in mind as a leader. I am very careful about the way that I talk about things and the way that I approach certain topics.

Emily said here that even her negative experiences with teacher evaluation as a teacher shaped how she approaches her own evaluative tasks. Principals recalled either receiving no feedback at all from their principals as teachers or feedback they described negatively. These comments about the irrelevant feedback show evaluators fishing for areas of growth on the participants' evaluations. Perhaps these principals were highly effective teachers who the administrators did not feel they had to observe often and did not have any glaring issues that needed addressing, or maybe the participants' principals were not trained to effectively supervise

instruction. While participants spoke of some evaluators who did not provide feedback, others spoke of evaluators who fabricated teacher observation feedback by writing evaluations of teachers they never observed. Two principals said they knew principals who fabricated the feedback they provided teachers for their formal teacher evaluations. Charles said the previous administrators at his school before he was principal were also guilty of fabricating evaluation feedback for their teachers:

She [a particular teacher] had spent her whole career working for these two other principals, and she was a good teacher ... so they [the two principals] literally would just make up her stuff and file it, and here's your score, go on with your life, and not actually have the [formal] observation.

This lack of evaluations or fabricated feedback show that the experienced teacher evaluation as a practice meeting the needs of an unvalued external accountability system, instead of an opportunity for long-term professional growth. Though highly effective teachers may have less room for growth than struggling teachers, if the purpose of teacher evaluation is to positively impact teaching and learning, everyone has room to grow. This example also illustrates the complexity of a principal's job. This principal was new to the school and had to assert himself as an instructional leader among teachers who had not been formally observed in years. It can be assumed that his job establishing trust among his faculty was even more difficult as a result. Dan said it was a "disservice" because he could only remember two times he was observed by his principal as a new teacher. While principals should support all teachers, this emphasizes the importance of principals supporting all new teachers no matter the content or grade level. It was important to these principals to be observed at least once by their principals when they were teachers; the participants perceive the job of the principal as overseeing and instructionally

supporting all teachers, not just the teachers on the principals' assigned evaluation rosters. These principal observations seem especially important for new teachers who can use all the support they can get.

Principals Conducting Teacher Evaluations

Participants' experiences as teachers seemed to have shaped the choices they made when conducting teacher evaluations and engaging in instructional leadership as they assumed leadership roles. Three of the ten principals explicitly stated when they became principals, they did not want their teachers to experience what they experienced with teacher evaluation as teachers. This highlights the why of the participants' actions with teacher evaluation and instructional leadership. Anna mentioned her effort to change teacher evaluation for her teachers:

That [teacher evaluation] was always something that I feel like needs to be different ... I felt like they could have kind of done more. Once I got was able to work from an administrative standpoint, I took that, and we kind of built a little bit more teacher evaluation, a little more structure to a program there.

This principal recognized the value of teacher evaluation and its potential to positively influence teachers; the structure she described adding was observations and feedback being done by the principal, something she did not experience as a teacher at the smaller school where she was employed.

Participants were asked whether they felt formal teacher evaluation policy has made their school better. Felicity said she did not have data to support that teacher evaluation policy has "made her teachers better"; however, she said she thinks teacher evaluation policy has made her leadership team better. While Felicity did not think the evaluation system improved

teaching, she did think it improved her leadership team. This could be a result of the required number of observations her leadership team had to complete, as well as the follow up team members were expected to do with teachers. Gloria said informal teacher observations have improved her school. It is interesting that participants specified whether informal or formal teacher evaluation policy has made their school better. Participants were asked whether formal teacher evaluation policy made their school better, but participants like Gloria felt the informal pieces of formal teacher evaluation policy has made her school better. A few principals described what about teacher evaluation policy has made their schools better: Hannah attributed the growth of her school to the TAP rubric and teacher incentives for effectiveness. Emily said teacher evaluation policy has made her school more aware of best teaching practices. The responses to whether formal teacher evaluation policy made their school better varied.

Principals also described the support they offer through teacher evaluations. Regarding the specific support principals offer teachers, the participants discussed the teacher evaluation conference structure. Principals discussed instructionally leading teachers during the pre-conference for the formal evaluation observation. Hannah spoke in depth about how she uses the pre-observation conference to support teachers:

The pre-conference entails you, the teacher, telling me what I'm going to see in your classroom ... It really should be a detailed description of what is going to happen ... because if that is done ... the teacher will sometimes discover, oh, I missed this. Yes, I forgot to plan for this. Oh, I didn't include this. And so with that happening, you're able to bounce ideas off of each other. You can offer support. You can provide suggestions. You can say try this ... [Then,] they see the leader, the evaluator as a supporter.

Hannah's pre-observation conference style is conversational; she feels that when the teacher talks her through the teacher's lesson, the teacher has one last opportunity to review her work or planning of the lesson to ensure nothing is missing. Hannah uses those teacher aha moments of having forgotten to plan a piece of the lesson to offer suggestions and support. Other participants spoke of the power of the post-observation conference. While Hannah spoke in depth about the power of the pre-observation conference in supporting teachers, Felicity and Gloria spoke in depth about the power of the post-observation conference in supporting teachers. Felicity called the post-conference "guided practice" and "a mini-PD." Felicity used the post-observation conference to further support instruction. Gloria spoke of modeling instruction for the teacher during a post-conference. Two participants described the conversations in which they engage during the post-conference with teachers: Charles called the TAP feedback he provided teachers during a post-conference as a conversation that was "collaborative in development." He said his post-conferences were often positive when those post-conferences flowed like conversations. It seems the informal nature of his feedback delivery helped to create an opportunity for discussion. Though principals complained during the interviews about formal teacher observations, they spoke very highly of the pre- and post-observation conference structure. Other than the pre- and post-observation conference structure, the principals did not describe any other one-on-one time supporting individual teachers.

Fostering Teacher Self-Reflection

When asked if they do things differently for different levels of teachers, the principals described the number of evaluations, the ability of the teacher to reflect, and the ability of the teacher to implement feedback. Many participants spoke of assigning tiers to their teachers. Isaac spoke of these tiers:

Depending on the level of where the teacher is at, or her experience, they may have more walkthroughs; they may have a few more observations; they may have ... a few more coaching meetings with myself or the admin team.

Isaac and Jennifer said they use those tiers to determine how often they observe particular teachers, conducting more observations in struggling teachers' classrooms. Principals discussed the challenges with providing observation feedback. They said some teachers have difficulty reflecting and difficulty being realistic about their evaluation scores. Betty and Dan commented on veteran teachers and highly effective teachers. Dan said his veteran teachers struggle with feedback and sometimes lack the desire to change their practices because they often "don't want to adjust anything." Some of these veteran teachers may have experienced different administrators with different levels of instructional leadership training and different perspectives on the purpose of teacher evaluation; as a result, they may be hesitant or even resistant to change when previous administrators supported them differently. Betty said growth is hard for highly-effective teachers:

When you're an exceptional educator, it's not always easy to make growth because you're already doing pretty good, but when it's those simple, deeper levels of questioning or more opportunities for student-led thinking or student demonstration of their thinking or student-to-student feedback giving one another, that kind of stuff elevates them, and I'm just really pleased.

Betty identified how she encourages growth in highly effective teachers – student discussions and peer feedback. Principals who lack training in instructional leadership might struggle to support growth in highly effective teachers. Principals explained how the teacher's ability to reflect impacts the observation conferences the principal and teacher have. Principals

described the ease of post-conferences for reflective teachers. Betty said though her conferences may be brief with high-performing, reflective teachers, she said those conferences are her most “meaty” conferences because these “reflective practitioners ... are talking me through it ... and telling me exactly what I’m about to tell them.” It seems Betty feels as if she can engage in the most meaningful discussions with high-performing, reflective teachers. This seems to take the pressure off the administrator to provide the feedback and assist the teacher with understanding the feedback. Felicity commented on how a teacher’s ability to reflect and implement (not necessarily the experience level of the teacher) affect how she presents her post-observation conference:

While there's way more years of experience [for this teacher], the level of self-reflection and the ability to implement anything has caused me to really present the post-conference plan in a different way, in a more simplified format, where he got mainly, you know this was really strong in your lesson. Here's some things you might want to consider, and this is how it would look.

It is evident from her description that she either feels self-reflection is intrinsic, or she feels this teacher has the capacity to but chooses not to reflect. Principals also spoke about the feedback they provide teachers and how necessary buy in and reflection is on the teacher’s part. Without this reflection, the growth principals wish to see in teachers would not be possible. Betty and Hannah described needing teachers to buy into and be open to their evaluation feedback. This buy in and openness would save principals time convincing teachers they need to improve in those areas so that principals could spend more time supporting the teacher with those efforts. Hannah said it is “critical” for teachers to engage in reflection and “stifling” if they do not. Stifling is an interesting way to describe a teacher who does not reflect; it seems to

highlight a physical barrier between the principal wanting to support the teacher and the teacher not recognizing they need to be supported. Four principals all described engaging teachers in this self-reflection by having them do a self-evaluation and scoring their lessons with the evaluation instrument. These principals are thus forcing their teachers to engage in reflection; however, forcing reflection does not mean teachers will be honest in their reflections or will have the capacity to reflect effectively. The principals spoke often of the necessity of teacher reflection for growth; they described a teacher's ability to reflect as something he or she either has or does not. The participants did not describe working with teachers to strengthen their ability to reflect other than engaging teachers in scoring their lessons on the rubric. This self-evaluation seems to be one way to teach or force teachers to be self-reflective; however, Dan said some teachers assign themselves unrealistic ratings when they reflect. Therefore, a simple self-evaluation may not be the only step needed to teach teachers to reflect; self-evaluation might have to follow a step like a peer observation, which could require a teacher to compare his or her less effective lesson with a more successful lesson.

Evaluation, Instructional Leadership, and Relationships

When describing teacher evaluation and instructional leadership, participants described the importance of relationships. Of the ten participants, six discussed how important principal relationships are with their teachers. These relationships, they said, assist them with supporting teachers and providing teachers with feedback. Isaac discussed relationships and feedback: "If they [teachers] don't trust you [evaluator] and they don't ... connect with you, I don't think... me giving them feedback, even though it might be great feedback and it's needed, ... it may not be well received." Though building and fostering meaningful relationships with faculty may take time and effort, it is necessary for instructional leadership. If teachers do not learn from people

they don't trust or "don't want," it is critical for the principal to be an instructional leader teachers respect and trust.

Since the relationships between principals and teachers are so important, some participants described how they build relationships with teachers. Jennifer described all of the effort she makes to build relationships with her teachers. She said she goes as far as calling teachers in during the summer just to chat, so she can get to know them better; she also said she would never ask a teacher to do something she would not do such as morning duty in the rain. Emily discussed how she demonstrates that respect as an instructional leader: honoring teachers' observation time by not allowing other duties to interfere. Because of the weight of the observation score and because many teachers go above and beyond to plan for their formal observations, it is evident that not honoring teachers' scheduled observation times could ruin the respect a teacher has for that evaluator. Felicity described another approach to building relationships with teachers through instructional leadership: working alongside teachers. She said because of her efforts, teachers "do better" and "give more." Since her teachers understand how hard she is working with them, they are willing to do more to honor those efforts. Though building relationships with teachers takes time and effort, the principals recognized the value in spending time building those relationships.

In forming those relationships, some discussed the power of positivity and trust.. The two participants who focused on relationships and trust in their interviews were the same participants to discuss the power of positivity. Jennifer said she puts an emphasis on what teachers are doing right because that builds confidence and increases the likelihood for the teacher to repeat that same behavior. Emily said how you say something matters, so she always tries to "put a positive spin" on what she communicates. Principals did not comment on school

culture or climate professional development they received as leaders. Since the participants explained having little to no training on instructional leadership, one can assume that discussions of school culture and climate are not a part of their training in instructional leadership.

Principals' Challenges with Teacher Evaluation

When discussing their challenges with teacher evaluation, principals described the challenges the teacher evaluation instrument presents them and teachers: The tool is unclear and does not fit all classroom scenarios. This was evident when Charles described his move from one school to another when he was appointed principal. He said he “thought he knew what a five was” on the TAP rubric before he moved schools. This emphasizes that different administrators and different schools interpret the tool differently depending on their training or lack thereof. Principals discussed spending time interpreting the teacher evaluation instrument. Most principals completed informal observations with their leadership teams and calibrating their scores. Isaac referred to these observations as “discovery walks” with his leadership team. These helped to minimize the variation in scores between evaluators but likely did not eliminate that variation. If the rubric is being interpreted in different ways depending on the evaluator, teacher scores and thus feedback and support likely vary from evaluator to evaluator.

The participants described other issues they have with the evaluation instrument. Though referring to the teacher evaluation instrument for the next school year, Felicity said the rubric has changed, and principals have not received any training on those changes. Three principals said the tool did not fit certain classroom scenarios such as an English Language Arts class of four students with disabilities ranging from severe to mild/moderate. Principals described having to “make the tool work.” The idea that the rubric does not fit all classrooms implies that principals have to interpret the rubric further for themselves creating more inconsistencies among

evaluators from school-to-school and even within school buildings. Two principals complained the rubric is not enough. Hannah said the teacher evaluation rubric does not encompass all that it means to be an effective teacher, and Gloria said she wishes the rubric included a portfolio featuring informal observation data and student work. This highlights that a rubric alone cannot improve teaching. Though some principals complained the rubric was not enough, three principals commended the TAP observation instrument. Charles said the TAP rubric is reflective in nature, not like COMPASS, he said. Hannah said TAP is more rigorous than COMPASS, and Emily said TAP has helped with instructional leadership:

Since we've adopted TAP, we've been more instructionally focused. Not that we weren't before because we always were very data driven ... but it just seems like TAP has been a really big push to ensure that principals are instructional leaders because it is very easy to get swept away on a daily basis with lots of different, interesting things.

Emily asserted that what the TAP evaluation system requires of principals, such as the required number of observations, has helped focus her on instructional leadership. Participants discussed the excessive weight of the teacher evaluation score, despite it only being a snapshot of a tiny percentage of a teacher's annual work. Emily said how important observation scores are to teachers, and Charles and Gloria illustrated that importance by saying the score caused one teacher to retire and another to shed tears, respectively. Dan said the scores just leave "bad tastes in people's mouths." Dan highlighted how teachers can perceive evaluation scores negatively. This negative perception of a teacher could result from the teacher not being reflective enough or feeling as though the effort he or she exerted to plan and deliver the lesson should result in a higher score. Two principals had a solution to the challenges associated with the weight of the evaluation score: Get rid of the score, and just give teachers feedback. Charles said the score is

so problematic because it is an evaluation of the teacher's ability for an observation of three hours. Therefore, while the formal observation can lead to teacher growth, the observation may not be an accurate indicator of the teacher's ability. Teachers' perceptions of the formal observation process as a snapshot in time and not a true indicator of their abilities might shift with principals who are often in their classrooms informally observing. Though principals were in favor of particular teacher evaluation systems, principals were not in favor of the required scoring component.

Because of the weight of the observation score, it is not a surprise that principals described how much effort teachers often put into planning and executing their formal observation lessons. Six of the ten participants described this effort, and four of the participants called the formal observation a "show." Betty and Gloria called teachers' formal observations "dog and pony shows." These descriptions highlight the planning involved in formal observations and how much pressure some teachers feel as a result of the weight of the observation score. These participants described formal observation as a show that teachers put on, which means the teachers' instruction was not typically this way. More than half of the participants expressed their desire to get the formal evaluations "over with," implying that it is just another task of the many principals must complete. With Covid, participants said they were happy that the number of required formal observations decreased. Two principals said informal observations, not formal observations are a better depiction of a teacher's ability. Informal observations are snapshots of lessons throughout the school year when the teacher is not expected to be observed, not the formal observation dog and pony shows many participants described. On the other hand, principals spoke highly of the pre- and post-conference structure of formal evaluations. Participants liked the scheduled, sacred, one-on-one time the formal

evaluation conference structure afforded them; however, as the Instructional Management Framework (1987) includes, informal observations might also involve conferences between the evaluator and teacher

Summary

Principals' negative experiences with teacher evaluation as teachers shaped their practices as principals and evaluators. Participants also did not seem to have relationships with their evaluators. Participants might have had more positive reflections on their experiences as teachers with teacher evaluation and instructional leadership if they had those relationships. Principals criticized the teacher observation instrument and the training they have received on that instrument. While principals criticized the production that is a teacher formal observation, participants were in favor of the formal observation conference structure. Many of the participants used the pre-observation conference to coach teachers on best practices, and many participants used the post-observation conference to engage teachers in self-reflection and more coaching. Though principals were in favor of the formal observation conference structure, principals celebrated when the state and their school districts required less formal teacher observations due to Covid and Hurricane Ida. This begs the question of what would happen to the coaching and reflection many principals engaged in during observation conferences if formal teacher observations were no longer required.

The Desire for More Time

Principals have full plates with many responsibilities, all of which absorb time. Principals have little time to focus on sustained tasks (Lavigne and Good, 2015) and have to decide which tasks on which to spend their time: managerial, political, or instructional tasks (Supovitz and Poglinco, 2001). When asked what they would do if they were gifted more time,

principals in this study said they would spend that time in classrooms; this aligns with what Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) found in their study: Principals prioritized instructional tasks when they recognized the difference between instructional and managerial tasks. The demands of teacher evaluation also absorb time. Principals cannot just observe teachers; they must also support teachers throughout their evaluation cycles (Horng et al., 2010). Part of supporting teachers is conducting observations, identifying areas of growth, and supporting teachers as they grow.

Tasks Absorbing Principals' Time

Participants described the instructional leadership tasks absorbing their time. Two principals commented on not wanting to waste their teachers' time in meetings. Participants also described purposefully planning those professional development sessions for teachers so that teachers' time was not wasted. Dan said that while meetings are not his "favorite," he understands that in order for instructional leadership to happen, meetings must happen. In addition to meetings, every participant described the daily managerial tasks that take their attention away from instructional leadership: student discipline, cafeteria, custodians, parent communication, etc. When referring to the lack of time they have, principals expressed being overwhelmed with their responsibilities and communicated that sense of being overwhelmed with the following descriptions: a lot to take on, wear many hats, balancing, never enough time, crunched for time, pulled with administrative duties, no time, and little things take time. Participants felt meetings with their leadership teams and teachers, as well as managerial tasks absorb a lot of their time.

In the realm of instructional leadership, participants discussed how much of their time formal teacher observations absorb. Some principals explained how time-consuming formal

teacher observations are due to the sheer number of observations they have to conduct. Jennifer said she feels eight to twelve teachers is a reasonable number of teachers for one administrator to evaluate. She said once evaluators have thirty teachers to evaluate, those teachers just become “a number on a page,” which again insinuates formal observations becoming another task principals have to complete but may not necessarily want to complete. A few principals commented on the managerial side of teacher evaluation. Betty said the evaluation paperwork is time consuming, and Gloria said she spends a lot of time ensuring her teachers enter their observation documents into their district’s online system. This begs the question whether this paperwork is necessary for teacher growth; principals may be challenged by the time the paperwork is taking away from them being able to instructionally lead teachers. Felicity said she is so overwhelmed with tasks throughout the day and the time evaluations take that she only scores teachers and writes her score reports at home, not at work. Principals not choosing to take the scoring home are either putting other tasks aside during the school day or are rushing through scoring as a result of the little time they have. Principals described how they manage the time teacher evaluation requires. Many discussed which days they allow teachers to schedule their observations and how many observations they allow in a span of one week. Participants managed their evaluation tasks in different ways including scheduling teachers and scoring at home.

The multitude of instructional and managerial tasks led principals to comment on the dangers of being overwhelmed. Emily says she does many things during the school day but none with one hundred percent effort. One principal discussed another danger of principals not feeling they have enough time to support struggling teachers – potentially losing teachers who you do not have the time to support:

We spent all this time with one teacher, and it turned out she's really turned into a great teacher. So, it just goes to show that if you really have the time to do that kind of stuff, you can really change someone for the better. The problem is that I feel like with all of the managing and everything else that we have to do, we don't have that kind of time to do that. It got to a situation where I was going to fire this person that caused me to take the time to do that kind of stuff.

Gloria admitted she does not always have time to support all teachers even the ones struggling the most because of all of her other responsibilities; this is a concerning statement as schools could be losing potentially highly-effective teachers who are being supported inadequately. The principals did not criticize anyone in particular for the demands of the job and seemed to understand these responsibilities are just part of the job; however, the principals did describe how much of their time formal teacher observations absorb. When asked what they would do if they were granted permission to abandon formal teacher evaluation, many participants said they would engage in informal observations, which they described as being more worthy of their time than formal observations.

Efforts to Create More Time

Principals discussed what they do to maximize their time and instructional support. Felicity said she needs a “practical solution for making more time for instructional leadership.” The word practical highlights she has been given unreasonable solutions before but still cannot balance instructional leadership and all of her other responsibilities. Charles offered a solution: hire more instructional staff for his campus. Dan described the benefits of his additional staff, which are mentor teachers:

We have three mentor teachers that we need to do better at incorporating into meetings ... so we're starting to really push that a lot more. And I hope that that's going to allow us to ... if I can coach the mentors, and they can coach other people, then it's almost like spreading that like carbon footprint and impacting more people differently than before.

He recognized the potential of his mentor teachers and hoped to call upon them to maximize his time and impact. Other participants had another solution: decrease the required number of formal teacher evaluations. At least half of the participants said either they wished the required number of evaluations would decrease or stated how happy they were when Covid or Hurricane Ida forced their districts to decrease the amount of required evaluations. The principals did not speak much of Covid or Hurricane Ida, illustrating they would be pleased to eliminate formal teacher observations in a normal school year that was uninterrupted by a pandemic or natural disaster.

Another solution to these principals not having enough time in the school day was to focus their goals and efforts. Seven of the ten participants mentioned having to focus their efforts when providing feedback to teachers, providing whole-school professional development, or providing individual teacher support. Emily said she likes to provide “the biggest bang for her buck” feedback to teachers. Honing in on such a focused area must save the principal time and effort, and it must allow for her to see the most growth as a result of the concentrated effort. Principals described the importance of not overwhelming teachers with feedback. Isaac said he focuses on one or two areas of growth when providing teacher with feedback. Jennifer said she likes to focus more of her time on struggling teachers. If principals target growth areas for teachers, principals in turn can save time because they are only providing support on those

targeted areas, not all areas. Hannah described how her district's superintendent lessened the load for principals and allowed the principals to focus on instructional leadership:

The superintendent removed the custodians [from the principal's responsibility] and put someone else in charge of that at the district level. The superintendent removed the cafeteria because the cafeteria manager was coming to me for a lot of things ... And the superintendent really told us not to even focus on transportation, buses [because] someone else should be communicating to ensure that all of that is happening. So the only thing that really I've been focusing on is instruction.

This was a practical solution this superintendent implemented to support principals in balancing their responsibilities.

Another solution to principals not having enough time for effective instructional leadership was that principals served as facilitators on campus. Charles said he is "steering the ship." During his leadership team's meetings, he tells his team what the focus will be that week and how they will move forward. Putting this trust in his leadership team allows him to have more time to focus on particular efforts. In regards to serving as facilitators, principals asserted they are not the experts of every content area. Betty said while she has to be knowledgeable of all content areas, she does not have to be the expert in each of those content areas. The expert in the content area is the teacher, according to Charles. What helps principals with this facilitation is their experiences as teachers. Anna said it is really important for leaders to have been teachers before their leadership positions. Not only should administrators have been teachers, but they should have been strong teachers, according to Betty. Hannah said her school district would not promote her to an administrator until she had teaching experience in that district. Emily said she often likes to think as a teacher to determine what teachers need. Anticipating teachers' needs

must save Emily time and must help her develop respect and trust with her teachers. This again illustrates that participants' experiences as teachers impact their leadership.

The participants recognized the need for more time and thus the need to focus their efforts. The participants also capitalized on the strengths of their leadership teams and teachers, saving more time. Participating principals share leadership to accomplish all they need to accomplish. One superintendent demonstrated superintendents could help control the amount of responsibilities principals have. That superintendent recognized the time demands of principals in the district and removed the supervision of cafeteria employees and custodians from the school principals.

A Principal's Place in the Classroom

If they were afforded more time, the participants said they would spend that time in classrooms. Six principals described wanting to spend more time conducting informal teacher observations or walkthroughs. Betty said she would get into classrooms more and give more feedback. She said, "I think that I gained more from my daily interactions with teachers and students than I do from that [formal teacher observation] twice a year." The daily interactions are occurring more often and are not a production like a formal observation may be, so it is not surprising how much Betty values the informal observation.

Five participants described the joy they have interacting with students during their informal observations. Gloria said while she does informal observations the least, she enjoys them the most because they get her "around the kids." While formal observations get principals into classrooms, the paperwork and reporting required could take them away from students during those observations. Participants explained instructional leaders are found in the classroom, not in their offices. Jennifer said principals "can live in the office forever," implying

principals have many administrative responsibilities that take them away from getting into classrooms. Felicity seemed to be appreciative of formal teacher evaluation policy when she described what she would do without it: “sit in my office to deal with students and parents.” Felicity’s word choice of “deal with” made it obvious she is happier in the classroom than in her office. Hannah described principal visibility:

Unless you're handling something, an instructional leader will be found in the classroom, on the campus moving about, visible ... If you're in the office, you're not an instructional leader. If you're spending more time in the office ... I have to say you're a leader or manager. You're not an instructional leader. An instructional leader will be able to tell you where in the curriculum different grade levels are because they've been in the classroom to see what the teaching and learning is all about.

Hannah said managers sit behind their desks in their offices, but instructional leaders are visible in classrooms. The participants demonstrated their desire to spend time out of their offices and in classrooms. Though participants did not comment on their interactions with students during formal observations, they described their interactions with students during informal observations. It is clear principals have the opportunity to interact more with students during informal observations than during formal observations since many are scripting lessons during formal observations. Informal observations also allow principals to spend time in multiple classrooms, instead of just one for a formal observation. Informal observations give principals the opportunity to compare the teaching and learning occurring in classrooms and determine patterns for whole-school professional development.

Summary

Though many participants expressed the desire to abandon formal teacher evaluation policy or decrease the number of required formal observations for teachers, the participants said they would still spend time in classrooms. Principals described having to conduct formal observations with a rubric they have to work to understand. They described having to assign teachers a score that bears a lot of weight for what they feel is a snapshot of a lesson that is too planned. They said they spend hours reporting the results of the formal observation and chasing after teachers' evaluation paperwork. They also said the formal evaluation results do not influence whole-school professional development, which means the principals do not see as much value in them as the informal observations that guide whole-school professional development.

Conclusion

This study examined the experiences of ten principals who engage in instructional leadership and mandated teacher evaluation policy at their schools. Three themes emerged from the data: the complexity of instructional leadership, the challenges of accountability, and the desire for more time. Principals described their instructional leadership practices mediated by teacher evaluation policy but said the time demands of the job prevent them from being in classrooms as often as they desire.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand how principals perceive the instructional leadership they provide teachers in a context of the instruments they utilize to observe classroom instruction. This chapter discusses the study's findings and makes connections to the literature on instructional leadership and teacher evaluation and provides updates to the Instructional Management Framework (1987). This chapter also includes implications for future research and recommendations for policy and practice.

Discussion of Findings

The literature on instructional leadership mostly focuses on the instructional leadership practices of the principal, instead of the principal's sense-making when it comes to executing those practices (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Understanding why and how principals execute their practices is important to understanding instructional leadership completely (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2006). Because most of the instructional leadership literature came from an era without high priority given to evaluation, is it important to update what we know about leadership in this new political context. Ten participant interviews were conducted to answer the research question: *How do principals perceive their instructional leadership in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation model?* Three themes emerged from principal interviews: the complexity of instructional leadership, the challenges with accountability, and the desire for more time. This section includes summaries of participant interviews and connections to the literature. Though this section is not organized by theme, it is organized by the ideas that emerged within the themes.

Shared Leadership and School Growth

Principals in this study embraced shared leadership through their leadership teams. Participants discussed the makeups of their leadership teams. In order for shared leadership to materialize, principals have to seek shared leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). At one high-performing school, the principal and master teacher comprised the leadership team, and they called upon teachers weekly to participate in leadership team meetings. At another high-performing school, the leadership team consisted of more individuals: administrators who focused on different content areas. At the third high-performing school, the administrators, master teacher, and teacher leaders comprised the leadership team. All three of the high-performing schools' leadership teams met weekly. While the three high-performing schools met weekly with various leaders at their schools, the low-performing school in this study also had an established leadership team of school administrators and master teachers that met weekly. Supovitz et al. (2010) found shared leadership to result in sustainability and more focused efforts with instructional improvement. As evidenced by the performances of the four schools mentioned above, having an established leadership team meeting weekly will not necessarily lead to instructional improvement. Instead, considering how each leadership team is sharing leadership, what the leadership teams are discussing during those weekly meetings, and what the leadership team is doing with that knowledge could lead to instructional improvement.

One participant at a high-performing school went into depth to explain what her leadership team meetings were like. She explicitly mentioned putting the school's goals at the forefront of her leadership team meetings, which signified her team engaging in Dimension 1 of Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Management Framework: defining the school mission by framing and communicating the school's goals. Specifically, this participant engaged in the following indicators from the Instructional Management Framework PIMRS: frame the school's

academic goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them; communicate the school's academic goals to people at school; refer to the school's academic goals in informal settings with teachers. This participant went on to describe her leadership team meetings by discussing how her team adopted one student, a bubble student, to observe in all of his classes. She and her team wanted to look closely at this student's actions and work, instead of analyzing teacher actions. This work was in alignment with Dimension 2 of Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Management Framework: managing the instructional program by monitoring student progress. Within the IMF PIMRS, this aligned with "identify students whose test results indicate a need for special instruction such as remediation or enrichment." This participant and her leadership team wanted to bring those observations and that analysis to their weekly cluster meetings with teachers to influence teachers. They wanted teachers to adopt this same practice of looking closely at low-performing students and their growth. Their efforts to take this practice and their analysis to weekly clusters or professional development illustrates this principal and her leadership team engaging in Dimension 3 of Hallinger and Murphy's Framework: promoting the school learning climate by promoting professional development. Within the IMF PIMRS, this aligned with "selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school's academic goals." The approach this principal took to analyze this data followed the three dimensions of the Instructional Management Framework (1987) in the order the job functions appear in the framework. The participant described focusing on the school's goals like Dimension 1 of the framework, selecting a student's work to analyze like Dimension 2, and then bringing that information to professional development like Dimension 3.

While the principal did not cite specific data to show the positive impact of these efforts within her leadership team, it can be assumed that this approach to growth will have positive

outcomes for this high-performing school. Shared leadership has had positive results in learning, growth, increased achievement, and synergy (Marks & Printy, 2003), and shared leadership has assisted with teachers' professional growth (Urick & Bowers, 2014). As a result of the positive results that can be expected from this approach to shared leadership, it then may be worth it for researchers to explore whether a linear approach through dimensions one, two, and then three of the Instructional Management Framework (1987) would produce positive outcomes for teachers and students. While it is clear components of the dimensions of the IMF are represented in other dimensions (e.g., the school's goals are present in professional development), it is less clear how interconnected each dimension is and how a principal could move across the dimensions to engage in Dimension 3 functions such as professional development.

Informal Observations and Opportunities

Principals expressed being overwhelmed with all of their responsibilities, and they described having many tasks absorbing a lot of time, including meetings with their leadership teams, managerial tasks such as student discipline, and formal observations. The research supports principals have limited time to focus on tasks (Lavigne & Good, 2015), and principals have to decide how to spend their time: managerial, political, or instructional tasks (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). One of the tasks principals described taking them away from being visible in the classroom was formal observations of teachers. Kraft and Gilmour (2016) found principals need support in learning how to manage their time when they discussed how principals struggle to balance conducting teacher evaluations and completing formal evaluations with facilitating managerial tasks associated with transportation of students and the cafeteria. The irony here is that formal teacher evaluation by design gets principals in classrooms; however, the participating principals described how much time all components of the formal observation absorbed. Formal

teacher evaluation policy is designed to get principals in classrooms, but principals feel aspects of their teacher evaluation policies such as the number of evaluations they must complete, scoring, and reporting are taking them away from instructional leadership, instead.

Many of the participants either said they wished the required number of formal evaluations would decrease or expressed how happy they were about the COVID-related reduction when the required number of observations decreased. This suggests the evaluative purpose of teacher evaluation perhaps crowding out the teacher growth purposes. Kraft and Gilmour (2016) found leaders to have differing views of the purpose of teacher evaluation: providing feedback, teacher self-reflection, teacher monitoring, and accountability. Measurement and development are two purposes of teacher evaluation (Donaldson & Papay, 2014; Marzano, 2012b; Sartain et al., 2011), but teacher development is the most important purpose of teacher evaluation (Marzano, 2012b). While some participants viewed the formal observation post-conference as an opportunity for teacher growth, participants preferred informal observations to formal teacher observations. Participants said if their school systems abandoned formal teacher evaluation policy, they would spend that time informally observing teachers. Marshall (2012) found short observations at different points in the lesson can occur more often and are more effective in evaluating teachers. Participants agreed that the “dog and pony show” formal teacher observations were not adequate representations of teachers’ abilities, further supporting their desire for more informal teacher observations that do not involve as much paperwork, stress, and time. Participants also discussed using informal observations, not formal observations, to plan whole-school professional development, which further indicated the little value participants placed in formal observations. While principals expressed preferring to

conduct informal observations, the demands on principals might force principals to de-prioritize informal observations if principals are not held accountable for conducting those observations.

The IMF includes conducting informal observations within Dimension 2 with the job functions of supervising and evaluating instruction. The PIMRS states, “Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled, last at least five minutes, and may or may not involve written feedback or a formal conference).” The unscheduled nature of the informal observation saves principals time, and the requirement of a five-minute observation is much less than the time demands of a formal observation. While the PIMRS makes mention of providing teachers with feedback during the post-observation conference, the PIMRS does not specify whether that post-observation conference must be for a formal observation. In fact, formal observation is not included in the PIMRS. The PIMRS does include, however, reviewing student work products when evaluating classroom instruction. While this review of student work might still occur within a formal observation, participants expressed the desire to engage in this work by spending more time with students talking about student work. Participants felt formal observations did not afford them the opportunity to engage with students in this way. This could be due to principals scripting lessons and recording notes. The engagement with students that the informal observation affords would allow evaluators to have a better understanding of student outcomes than if they just evaluated student work without speaking to students. This deeper analysis into student work could also lead to improved teacher outcomes as principals would have a better understanding of the students’ understanding of the lesson’s skills and standards.

The Principal-Teacher Relationship

Principals described the importance of meaningful feedback and teacher reflection during the post-observation conferences they conduct. Teachers need actionable, not “superficial” feedback (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Raudenbush & Rowan, 2016; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). This feedback is important for teacher growth; however, in order for the feedback to be well received, and the growth to occur, participants said teachers must buy into the feedback and be reflective. Reflection and goal-setting during post-observation conferences assist with teacher growth and can even intrinsically motivate teachers to grow (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Principals described engaging teachers in reflective conversations during their post-observation conferences. Some participants said their easiest (and sometimes quickest) post-observation conferences were with the reflective teachers. When engaging teachers in reflection, many principals required teachers to complete a self-evaluation on their formal observations before they engaged in their post-observation conferences. Some participants commented on the challenges with teachers who are not reflective – Participants said some teachers who are not reflective assign themselves unrealistic evaluation scores. Though self-reflection forces teachers to assume an active role in observation conferences (Danielson, 2012), this active role does not mean all teachers are willing to accept the feedback they receive. In fact, some participants described teachers retiring or resigning because of their evaluation results. Thus, one observed challenge of accountability is the uncertain reactions to teachers who may not value or understand the process.

Principals commented on the importance of building relationships as an evaluator and instructional leader. Though building and fostering trust among teachers is important, it could be challenging for principals, who juggle many responsibilities, to prioritize these relationships with their faculty. The participating principals said they felt more comfortable in their post-observation conferences with teachers with whom they had these relationships, and principals

said these relationships made teachers more open to the observation feedback; this illustrates that though these relationships take time and energy, they are worth the investment. Some principals discussed the importance of relationships in general while some discussed the power of positivity and trust. The amount of participants who discussed relationships suggests building relationships with teachers should be more of a focus in instructional leadership discussions and training.

A few job functions within the IMF could help principals develop and foster relationships with their faculties. Specifically, providing incentives for teachers within Dimension 3 could give principals guidance on how they might approach fostering positive relationships with their teachers. The PIMRS includes four behaviors in which principals can engage to provide incentives for teachers: reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters, or memos; compliment teachers privately for their efforts or performance; acknowledge special effort or performance by teachers in memos for their personnel files; reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities for professional development. Many participants discussed the importance of positivity, including complimenting teachers, in building and fostering relationships with their teachers. These relationships could lead to improved student and teacher outcomes if teachers are more willing to implement feedback and act on instructional support from principals with whom they have positive relationships.

Relation to Research Question

Though the literature discusses school leader behaviors (Stein & Nelson, 2003) and recognizes that leadership practices can be mediated by a specific teacher observation tool, (Spillane et al., 2001), what is less clear is leaders' sense-making when it comes to instructionally leading their organizations (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2006). What is also

less clear is how the teacher evaluation tool might influence that sense-making. This study sought to fill that gap in our understanding based on the research question: *How do principals perceive their instructional leadership in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation model?*

During the interviews, participants shared their teaching experiences with teacher evaluation and instructional leadership. Participants' professional experiences, both good and bad, shaped the participants as evaluators and instructional leaders. Their negative evaluation experiences with their principals, who rarely observed them and who provided meaningless feedback when they did observe them, caused them to consider how to be better principals themselves. The interview data supported the finding that the amount of professional development leaders received, as well as leaders' reflections on that professional development influenced the instructional leadership they provided (Camburn et al., 2003). When defining instructional leadership, participants said instructional leaders are visible, and when asked what they would do with the time saved if their organizations removed formal teacher evaluation policy from their responsibilities, participants said they would spend that time being visible in the classroom. The participants' early-career experiences with principals who were not visible in their classrooms shaped them into principals who were aware of the importance of observing instruction and supporting teachers.

While participants' negative experiences with teacher evaluation and instructional leadership influenced their instructional leadership, participants' positive experiences with collaboration as teachers shaped them into principals who depended on their leadership teams. Because participants did not receive adequate training on their teacher evaluation models, particularly the observation instrument, which is consistent with the literature (Sartain et al., 2011), participants also depended on their leadership teams. Principals engaged in shared

leadership with their leadership teams to plan whole-school professional development and to calibrate their thinking on the teacher observation instrument after conducting paired observations with their leadership team members. This shared leadership could produce positive results; Supovitz et al. (2010) found sustainability and more focused efforts with instructional improvement in situations where shared leadership was exercised. While principals engaged in collaborative experiences themselves, principals also embraced collaboration for teachers such as peer observations as a result of their own positive experiences with collaboration as teachers.

Participants used the data from their observations of teachers to plan whole-school professional development. Principals can focus on learning by understanding teachers' needs (Stein and Nelson, 2003). Participants used whole-school professional development to target common areas of need based on teachers' informal observations. Participants often supported teachers through the analysis of student work during whole-school professional development. Principals did not use teachers' formal observations to plan whole-school professional development; this could be a result of principals' negative perceptions they expressed of formal teacher observations that they described as being too planned and too much of a production.

Participants said relationships helped them maximize the impact of their instructional leadership. Oliveras-Ortiz (2017) found teachers did not trust principals who were not visible, and principals provided superficial feedback if the principal lacked expertise in the content area being observed. Principals in this study also had experienced teaching under principals who were not visible, and participants did not have positive relationships with their principals. Many participants were strategic in their evaluator assignments to maximize their leadership team members' content expertise. Participants expressed how trust and positivity helped them build and foster positive relationships with their teachers. Many participants spoke of building trust

with their teachers by getting to know them personally and doing the hard work in professional development sessions alongside them. Participants explained teachers do not learn from people they do not trust, and they recognized relationships as an important component of instructional leadership.

Connection to Framework

The Instructional Management Framework includes three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate, and within each dimension are job functions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The PIMRS (the measurement instrument based on the IMF) includes behavior statements stakeholders can rate on a likert scale for each job function. The PIMRS behavior statements were beneficial in analyzing how the framework connects to the participants' instructional leadership practices. It was not surprising for principals to describe engaging in many of the behaviors included in the PIMRS. Gurley et al. (2016) used the PIMRS to compare teachers' perceptions of their principals' instructional leadership to the principals' perceptions of their own instructional leadership. The researchers did not find much difference in the teachers' perceptions versus the principals' perceptions, and the researchers wondered whether the new principals were focusing more on instructional leadership as a result of being recently released from their graduate programs, which have increasingly focused on instructional leadership. Veteran and novice teachers participated in this study, but it was evident all participants understood instructional leadership and desired to spend more time in classrooms being more effective instructional leaders.

Within the first dimension of defining the school mission, participants framed and communicated the school's goals through shared leadership with their leadership teams and

through whole-school professional development. One descriptor on the PIMRS for framing the school goals is using student data for school goals. While principals did not discuss specific school goals during their interviews, they did speak of using informal teacher observation data including student work to guide their professional development sessions with teachers. Their efforts to use data during whole-school professional development also support the indicators in the PIMRS for communicating the school goals. Principals communicated and discussed school goals with the faculty through professional development sessions for teachers.

Participants engaged in all three functions of the second dimension: managing the instructional program. According to Hallinger (2008), the principal does not need to manage the instructional program independently; however, the principal is ultimately responsible for managing the instructional program and overseeing these functions (Hallinger, 2008). The participants often described themselves as these facilitators. The participants supervised and evaluated instruction through their teacher evaluation models. Principals engaged in informal observations for five minutes or longer and sometimes provided written feedback after those informal observations as the PIMRS states. Another PIMRS behavior for supervising and evaluating instruction is to identify and comment on teachers' strengths and areas of growth during observation conferences; participants' formal evaluation policies required this task. Participants made clear who was responsible for coordinating the curriculum as the PIMRS states. Principals appointed leadership team members to groups of teachers to provide professional development and evaluate, and some principals discussed utilizing department heads to engage in this work. While principals did not conduct individual teacher meetings on student progress as the PIMRS suggests, they did describe generally monitoring student progress through the analysis of student work.

Lastly, participants promoted the school's learning climate through the following three job functions: protecting instructional time; providing professional development; and providing incentives for teachers. Principals protected instructional time through their classroom observations. One behavior in protecting instructional time is to observe classrooms to ensure teaching and learning is occurring with new skills and concepts; this is consistent with the participants explaining how they follow up on post-observation conferences expecting to observe the teacher implementing the feedback they provided during the post-observation conference. Principals promoted professional development through cluster meetings, teachers' observations of their peers, and follow up observations from post-observation conferences. Principals used their schools' goals to plan professional development, and principals supported teachers' new learning through encouraging teacher peer observations and following up with observations after post-observation conferences. Principals can individualize attention to teachers through direct activities such as conducting observations (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Principals met individually with teachers to "discuss instructional issues" through formal teacher post-observation conferences (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Participants provided incentives for teachers through positive reinforcement. This positive reinforcement was also a means of developing and fostering positive relationships with teachers.

Though participants described the importance of building relationships in effective instructional leadership, the PIMRS does not explicitly include building relationships. Instead, the PIMRS includes behaviors in which principals can engage to develop trust and respect. For example, participants mentioned engaging with teachers to get to know them, which could be accomplished by "taking time to talk to students and teachers during recess and breaks" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Participants mentioned how necessary it is to do the hard work

alongside teachers through professional development and even through morning duty in the rain; a task such as “covering classes until a late or substitute teacher arrives” (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) could garner the same respect from teachers. The power of positivity in building relationships with teachers as the participants discussed was represented in the PIMRS through teacher feedback on their strengths. Visibility was not represented in the framework in the same way it was portrayed in the participant interviews. Visibility in the participant interviews referred to principals’ role in the classroom while visibility in the PIMRS is not necessarily instructionally-focused. Other areas of the PIMRS addressed the leader’s presence and role in the classroom.

Implications for Future Research

This study sought to understand principals’ perceptions of the instructional leadership they provide. Ten principals from two school districts participated. Research should continue on principals’ execution of their micro-tasks such as planning professional development and providing feedback to teachers to understand how and why they engage in the instructional leadership practices they do; however, other perspectives should be considered. Since instructional leadership is being exercised on teachers, their perceptions should be considered. Researchers should explore teachers’ perspectives on how they perceive the instructional leadership they receive in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation model. The purpose of instructional leadership is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Jenkins, 2009; Neumerski, 2012) and impact teaching (Spillane et al., 2003; Day et al., 2016). Moreover, since instructional leadership is dependent upon meeting teachers’ individual needs (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001; Stein & Nelson, 2003), seeking teachers’ perspectives on whether their needs are

being addressed is vital. Teachers should be asked whether they feel they are growing professionally as a result of the principal's instructional leadership.

Additionally, district administrators' perceptions of the instructional support they provide administrators in the context of a mandated teacher evaluation system should be considered. District administrators seeking to strengthen principals as instructional leaders could be engaging the same instructional leadership practices as principals: fostering an environment where teaching and learning can improve (Halverson et al., 2007; Stein & Nelson, 2003) and providing the resources, motivation, and collaboration for that improvement (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Considering teachers' and district administrators' perspectives could strengthen the instructional leadership principals provide.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Participants' perceptions of the instructional leadership they provide in the context of mandated teacher evaluation illuminated the following recommendations for policy and practice. The possible impact of effective teacher evaluation makes these recommendations worth exploring. The most evident recommendation for policy and practice from the findings is the first recommendation: the need for additional principal support in instructional leadership and teacher evaluation. Principals can help teachers improve their effectiveness through teacher evaluations (Donaldson, 2013; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016), and effective observation systems can foster teacher growth (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Moreover, accurate teacher evaluations can influence teacher effectiveness and impact student achievement (Donaldson & Peske, 2010). Because of this possible impact on student achievement, it is worth exploring how to support principals with instructional leadership.

The first challenge in supporting principals as instructional leaders is determining whose responsibility principal growth is. The observation tool or rubric itself does not foster teacher growth (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015; Sartain et al., 2011). Some participants commended their leader preparation programs for their support with instructional leadership while others said they taught themselves how to be instructional leaders. One participant commended the school district for its support in instructional leadership, but other participants did not feel their school districts supported them as instructional leaders or evaluators. Determining who is responsible (leader preparation programs, the state's department of education, school districts, principals themselves, principals' peers, or all of these entities) and determining what support each entity is offering is necessary in supporting principals as instructional leaders. Perhaps the state department of education is responsible for educating district leaders, and district leaders are responsible for supporting principals as instructional leaders. If this work is not being done top down from the state though, district leaders may lack the capacity and understanding of how to support principals as instructional leaders.

Since school districts exercise power in selecting their teacher evaluation models, it seems fair to assume school districts are mostly responsible for the professional development they offer their evaluators. Specifically, school districts should evaluate the professional development for evaluators. Principals need support in learning how to manage their time, training on conducting observations and providing feedback, and support on how to use classroom observation feedback to drive instructional improvement (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Participants described their struggles with managing their time and maximizing their time to serve as instructional leaders. Principals who do not know how to manage their time could fall victim to providing feedback centered upon their own experiences or not spending enough time

providing teachers with adequate feedback (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). The participants who described district evaluator training described that training occurring when the evaluation model was adopted, not throughout implementation. Training in the teacher evaluation model is important throughout the process (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016), not just at the beginning of implementation (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009).

Evaluator training could be specific to providing teachers with feedback. Teacher evaluation results do not always result in improved instruction because of the lack of specific, actionable feedback from the evaluator (Sartain et al., 2011). Participants described their personal experiences as teachers with superficial evaluator feedback, and participants explained how their feedback to teachers must be purposeful. According to the research, leader preparation programs do not prepare principals to provide feedback (Lavigne & Good, 2015), and the training that is provided in some teacher preparation programs varies (Herlihy et al., 2014). Kraft and Gilmour (2016) found the need for training and support in their study – They found principals deliver feedback focusing on different areas. For example, some principals did not include a discussion on opportunities for teacher growth when they provide feedback, and principals who observed teachers outside of their grade level or content expertise did not comment on the content of the lesson. Some participants seemed to have caught onto the idea that better feedback comes from leaders most familiar with that content area, so those participants were strategic in assigning leadership team members to particular contents and evaluator responsibilities. In addition to providing feedback, principals should support and monitor teachers as they implement that feedback. Since teacher evaluation needs to include a support system for implementing feedback (Curtis & Wiener, 2012; Donaldson & Papay, 2014), principals may also need training on supporting teachers' implementation. Because of the

demands placed on districts to provide this evaluator training, districts should review their options for teacher evaluation systems to determine if any evaluation systems are tailored more to instructional leadership than others. Though the observation tool or rubric itself does not foster teacher growth (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015; Sartain et al., 2011), one particular evaluation system may support leaders as effective instructional leaders more so than another evaluation system. Participants who experienced both the COMPASS and TAP evaluation systems praised TAP for its focus on instructional leadership for evaluators. District administrators needing training in supporting principals as evaluators and instructional leaders might depend on an evaluation system like TAP for their own support.

School districts unable to provide evaluator support to school-level administrators might shift evaluator responsibilities to the district-level. If evaluator responsibilities shifted in this way, school-building leaders could shift their focus from evaluator and supporter to just supporter. The data suggest the need for principals to manage their time better to maximize their instructional leadership, and the data suggest the need for the instructional leader providing the support to teachers to be an individual the teacher trusts. Supovitz et al. (2010) defined instructional leadership of a principal as one who focuses on the school's mission, instruction, and trust. The trust between a teacher and principal could be damaged if the instructional leader is doing both the evaluating and supporting; it may be more efficient for a school-building leader to establish trust with a teacher than for a district-level staff member to establish that trust. A district-level science evaluator could focus on evaluating science teachers while the school principal focuses on establishing trust and supporting those teachers.

Limitations and Delimitations

Though I engaged in measures to increase trustworthiness, my biases could have still surfaced in the research as all research was presented through my own analysis. According to Lichtman (2013), “All information is filtered through the researcher’s eyes and ears and is influenced by this or her experience, knowledge, skill and background” (p. 21). These biases could influence the study, so in an effort to manage these biases, it is important that I identified the biases and paid close attention to them throughout the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I only included some principals’ experiences in two school districts at some schools with some teacher observation tools. The strength of the instructional leadership a principal provides is also subjective, so I did not know whether the principals I interview were the best at instructional leadership. The Instructional Management Framework I used to frame the research also does not measure the effectiveness of a principal’s instructional leadership. Therefore, while the framework assisted with defining instructional leadership for the research, the framework itself does not assist principals in improving their instructional leadership; however, it was hoped the interviews would allow me to have discussions with principals about instructional leadership and the potential barriers to being effective instructional leaders.

Summary and Conclusion

This was a qualitative, phenomenological study that involved ten participant interviews of principals in two school districts. The interviews produced the following three themes: the complexity of instructional leadership, the challenges with teacher evaluation, and the desire for more time. These findings were connected to the literature and the Instructional Management Framework (1987). The results from this study can assist school districts with reflecting on the support they provide administrators with instructional leadership, and this study can help

building administrators reflect on the instructional leadership in which they engage. Lastly, this study can help school districts reflect on their current teacher evaluation systems.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduction

1. Can you tell me about your career path to principalship?
2. Describe this school and the community you serve.
3. Tell me about your experiences with instructional leadership when you were a teacher.
 - a. What was your most positive experience?
 - b. What was your least positive experience?
4. Did you have opportunities as a teacher to serve as a teacher leader in your school? What were they?
5. When you were a teacher, what was your experience with teacher evaluation?

Instructional Leadership

6. Describe the training you have received on instructionally leading your teachers.
7. How do you define effective instructional leadership, and what has influenced your definition?
8. Tell me about your involvement with instructional leadership at your school.
9. Which instructional leadership practices absorb most of your time? Why?
10. Which instructional leadership practices are most worthy of your time? Why?

Teacher Evaluation

11. Talk about teacher evaluation at this school. How does it work?
12. How do you feel about your evaluator responsibilities and the way your administrative team has divided those responsibilities?
13. How do you feel about the training you have received on your school's teacher evaluation model?

Principals' Sense-Making

14. Tell me about the most recent teacher evaluation cycle in which you participated.
 - a. Do you do things differently for teachers of different experience/performance levels?
15. Tell me about the best teacher evaluation cycle in which you participated as a principal. Why was it the best?
16. Tell me about the worst teacher evaluation cycle in which you participated as a principal. Why was it the worst?
17. Besides evaluative observations, many principals engage in informal observations as well. Describe your most recent informal classroom observation including the steps you engaged in before, during, and after the observation.
18. Describe your most impactful informal classroom observation including the steps you engaged in before, during, and after the observation. What was it the most impactful?
19. Can you explain whether you feel formal teacher evaluation policy has made the school better?
20. What changes would you make to your teacher evaluation system?
21. If the superintendent was to grant you permission to abandon your teacher evaluation system- What would you do with the time this saved you?
22. What aspects of instructional leadership would you like to learn more about?

Vita

The author was born in Metairie, Louisiana and has resided in St. Rose, Louisiana for her entire life. In 2011, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a concentration in secondary education from Louisiana State University and began teaching secondary English Language Arts. She obtained her Master of Educational Leadership in 2015 at Southeastern Louisiana University and then enrolled in the Educational Administration Doctoral Program at the University of New Orleans.