Running Head: COHORT CASE STUDY

A Case Study of the Efficacy of a University Cohort Group on
Educational Leadership in a Small Urban School District

Ann Rea Kopy

Western Michigan University

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Table of Contents

Chapter III

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Educational partnerships are forged by independent organizations to meet specific mutual interests or needs (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). Karwin (1992) indicates that the emergence of the numerous partnerships that exist between colleges and universities and public schools show that they are an efficient and effective means to provide quality educational services to constituents. Additionally, educational institutions can share needed physical, human, and fiscal resources they do not possess independent of each other. A collaborative effort between schools and universities brings together support and skills that neither partner possesses as a singular institution. In educational partnerships that are successful, each partner gains from the interaction. In this way, the expertise of one partner creates opportunities for the other while enhancing their own experience (Mariage & Garmon, 2003). True partnerships are described by John Goodlad (1988) as "symbiotic relationships" that have mutual interdependence and reciprocal benefits. Each partner brings something unique to their interactions around a related purpose and, as a result, each gains a new perspective or understanding about their own work and that of others.

Fullan (1993) goes even further when he says that schools and universities should collaborate to successfully address problems of mutual concern; anything less than that is inadequate. Further, Fullan, Erskine-Cullen, & Watson (1995) feel that because most institutions cannot make a difference in isolation, educational partnerships are essential. The intent of collaborative efforts is to form partnerships that equally benefit both partners' vested interests while simultaneously sharing valuable resources (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). These benefits are shaped by the ways their areas of expertise differ from each other. When people from different

institutions collaborate the differing perspectives and knowledge brought to the partnerships

provide opportunities and challenges for professional growth for all involved (Darling-

Hammond, 1994; Linn, Shear, Bell, & Slotta, 1999).

A school-university partnership is an effort for schools and universities to work together

to simultaneously improve student achievement and teacher development. Although schools and

universities have distinctly different cultures, each has overlapping interests and offers benefits

to make each more effective (Goodlad, 1994). School partners each play unique roles in

contributing to the effectiveness of the partnership, its culture, and learning (Goodlad; Holmes

Group, 1995; Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988).

Background

Beginning in September 2001, the Oak Park School District, a small, urban school district

in southeast Michigan became involved in a collaborative educational partnership with Western

Michigan University, a large mid-western state university. The Oak Park School District, that

had an enrollment of 3,793 students which is comprised of 47.5 percentage of at-risk students,

sought professional development to meet these students' needs. The university and the school

district designed a unique program to address the needs and conditions of the small, urban school

district and to assist the teachers of the district to grow professionally to more effectively meet

the educational needs of their students. As research indicates, Black, Hispanic, and Native

American students have much lower average levels of academic achievement than Whites and

Asians by traditional measures, such as grades, standardized test scores, and class rank (Bridglall

& Gordon, 2003; Viadero & Johnston, 2000). The Oak Park School District has a student

population made up of over 90% Black students, almost half of which are economically

disadvantaged and do not attain high levels of academic achievement (School Matters: A service

of Standard & Poors, 2005). To address the need to improve student achievement, the purpose of the program was to assist staff members, including administrators, counselors, teachers, and administrative assistants, in the pursuit of the best practices in effective instruction and curriculum development to enhance student achievement (Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, & Crowell, 2004). Additionally, the program provided the staff members with the knowledge and educational theory needed to serve as the foundation for the development of their roles as educational leaders throughout the district.

The program was designed and delivered as an ongoing professional development experience rather than the time-bound courses in tradition university programs (Muchmore, Marx, & Crowell, 2002). The district's educators that participated in the educational partnership formed a cohort. In general, this indicates that the group of participants worked together to achieve their common goal as they progressed through the program. Specific to this case study, cohort was the term used by the administration and staff of the Oak Park School District to describe the field-based master's, specialist, and doctoral program and its participants as well as the participants as a collective group (Marx, 2001). The courses were taught as off-campus classes by Western Michigan University professors in various school sites throughout the Oak Park School District. The cohort participants discussed the knowledge gained in the university classes and then applied them in the schools and classrooms throughout the district. When a cohort member successfully completed the program, he or she was to be awarded a master's, specialist, or doctorate degree or a combination of these degrees in educational leadership, depending on their educational background and coursework.

Purpose Statement

A major public policy issue for elementary and secondary schools is the quality of

teaching and the professional development needed to best address teachers' learning, teachers'

practice, and student achievement (King & Newmann, 2000). As a result, many schools of

education at universities have begun to focus on effective teaching methods and professional

development (Maeroff, Callan & Usdan, 2001). Partnerships between universities and school

districts are one innovative response to address the need for improvement in the focus and

effectiveness of professional development for educators. As educational partnership projects

involve more than the imparting of knowledge and the earning of degrees, this case study will

include an examination of the project history, background, practices, and lessons learned from

the perspective of the participants from the school district in an educational partnership with a

university. The purposes of this case study will be to describe the process by which staff

members of the Oak Park School District participated in an educational partnership with Western

Michigan University as well as the changes that occurred in their beliefs, practices, and sense of

efficacy as a result of their participation.

We know that universities and school districts have formed professional learning

collaborative groups in order to assist teachers in increasing the levels of student learning

(Moriarty & Gray, 2003). We also know that teacher' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy can

be influenced by participation in a collaborative program between a university and a school

district (Welch & Sheridan, 1993). However, educational research has not investigated to a great

extent the *design and process* of educational partnerships between universities and school

districts or the impact of the relationship on the participants and the school district. Therefore,

the purpose of this case study will be one, to describe the process by which the staff of a school

district participated in an educational cohort partnership with a university and; two, to explore

how the participants of the collaborative effort between a university and a school district describe

the changes in their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy.

Research Questions

Qualitative research questions are open ended, nondirectional, and evolve as the

researcher considers and reconsiders the broad themes of their study (Creswell, 1998; Maxwell,

1996). Additionally, in qualitative research a primary or central question is usually broad and

general and then is followed by a series of sub-questions that give direct implications for data

analysis. These questions become the topics explored in the data collection (Creswell, 2003;

McMillan, 2000; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Creswell further suggests that the central question

be overarching and stated as broadly as possible to convey an open and emerging design, which

is indicative of qualitative research. Keeping these guidelines in mind, the following is the

central or primary question that would be applicable to this study on the collaborative effort

between the Oak Park School District and Western Michigan University:

Primary or Central Research Question:

How do the participants of an educational partnership between a large state university and a

small, urban school district in southeast Michigan describe the changes in their beliefs,

practices, and sense of efficacy as a result of this partnership?

In order to narrow the focus of the qualitative study but leave open the questioning

process and its potential, a series of five to eight sub-questions usually follows the primary or

central research question. These sub-questions then become the topics that are specifically

explored in the various methods of data collection in the qualitative study (Creswell, 2003). In an

effort to narrow the focus of this case study, the broad, general primary or central question (or

both) that was previously stated will be further addressed with the following series of sub-

questions:

Sub-Questions:

1. What formal and informal learning did the participants of the cohort experience to develop

    the changes in their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy?

2. What barriers did the participants encounter in the process of bringing about changes in

    their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy?

3. How were the participants of the cohort able to bring about changes in the district?

4. From the participants' perspective, what impact has the partnership had on their classroom

    or school or school district or all three?

5. How did participation in the cohort prepare the participants to better address the

    challenges of the school district?

<div align="center">Methodology Overview</div>

This narrative account will be conducted in the Oak Park School District using the

techniques employed in qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The naturalistic data

collected will include careful descriptions of people, places, conversations, and artifacts through

sustained contact with individuals in the targeted school district. The researcher, a member of the

cohort group, will serve as the investigator in the collection and analysis of the data to be used in

this case study. In this way, I am in the role of a participant observer who made firsthand

observations of activities and interactions and sometimes personally engaged in the activities

(Patton, 2002). The data will be collected by asking open ended questions while conducting

individual interviews and focus group sessions with key participants of the collaboration as well

as the distribution of questionnaires to all participants from the Oak Park School District over a

period of over six months. The written results of the research will contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

The study will attempt to examine the elements of change in an urban school district, as it is understood by those who are directly involved in the change process. The subject of the study will focus on the changes that occurred in individual participants, their classrooms, buildings, and the district as a whole as seen from the perspective of the Oak Park School District's participants of the educational partnership. While preparing this case study, I will be concerned with the participants' perspectives to understand the change process from the subjects' point of view. The perspectives of the participants and the significance of their responses will be represented as accurately as possible (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

The District: A Descriptive Overview

The Oak Park School District is located in a small suburb that is adjacent to Detroit, the largest city in the state of Michigan. The school district is approximately 5.5 square miles, with a population of almost thirty thousand individuals. The district has students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. According to data from Standard and Poor's School Evaluation Report, the school district is comprised of the following: 91% Black, 7% White, 0.5 % American Indian/Alaskan Natives, 1% Asian or Pacific Islanders, and 0.5% Hispanic, respectively. The enrollment distribution by student characteristics is as follows: 52 % economically disadvantage, 45.8% receiving free lunch, 6% receiving reduced-price lunch, 5% limited English proficient, and 10% special education, respectively. There are 1,561 pre-school and elementary students, 827 middle schools students, 1,389 high school students, and 16 ungraded students for a total of 3,793 students in the district (School Matters: A service of Standards & Poors, 2005).

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 demands that states set clear and high standards for what every student in grades K-8 should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects of reading and math. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is one of the underpinnings of NCLB. AYP requires that districts and schools demonstrate continuous academic improvement for all students and for each major subgroup of students. States must then measure student achievement using standardized tests that are aligned with the standards. NCLB requires states to establish an initial AYP target goal for student performance on these tests and raise the bar in gradual increments in following years. The ultimate goal is for 100 percent of students to achieve proficiency on the assessment tests by 2013-14 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

In accordance with NCLB, public school districts and individual schools that fail to achieve AYP for two consecutive years are identified for improvement. If a district or school identified for improvement receives Title I funds, they must comply with sanctions as stipulated in the NCLB legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The sanctions are implemented in phases starting with requirements to offer parents an option to transfer their children to schools that have not been identified for improvement. The sanctions become more severe for each additional year that the district or school fails to achieve AYP, culminating in a requirement to restructure the existing governance framework in the sixth year. Restructuring can include a state takeover or closing a building and reopening it as a charter school. However, schools that meet or exceed AYP objectives or close achievement gaps were eligible for State Academic Achievement Awards (Michigan Department of Education, 2005a).

In Michigan, AYP is determined using scores from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics tests (Michigan Department

of Education, 2005b). All four elementary schools in the Oak Park School District made AYP in

2004; however, one school is still identified for improvement at the Corrective Action phase

until it achieves AYP for two consecutive years. Corrective Action requires that the school offer

all students the option to transfer to a school not identified for improvement and offer qualifying

students the opportunity to participate in supplemental educational services. Additionally, the

district continues to provide technical assistance to the principal and faculty as part of the

required corrective action plan implemented the previous year.

     In addition to the four elementary schools, the Oak Park School District also has one

middle school and one high school. At Roosevelt Middle School, the economically

disadvantaged subgroup made AYP in Mathematics based on the 2004 MEAP results, but not in

English Language Arts. Students as a whole, and all other subgroups made AYP in both subjects.

Roosevelt was identified for improvement if the school fails to make AYP for two consecutive

years. Oak Park High School failed to meet AYP in the area of Mathematics and was identified

for improvement. However, since the high school does not receive Title I funds, NCLB sanctions

do not apply.

     Since over 50% of the students attending each of the elementary schools and Roosevelt

Middle school qualify for the free or reduced price lunch program, all five buildings meet the

Requirements for offering Schoolwide Title I programs (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

These schools are now in the process of changing their program delivery system from Targeted

Assistance programs to Schoolwide Programs (SWP). One advantage of a SWP is that all

students in the school are potentially eligible to receive Title I services based on their current

academic performance in the core curriculum subject areas.

Approximately 95% of the teaching staff of the district is considered to be highly

qualified by the standards established by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which means that

the teachers have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) proven that

they know each subject they teach (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The District is helping

teachers who do not meet the requirements of NCLB before the mandated 2006 deadline.

Additionally, almost 70% of the staff has attained a master's degree or higher. The mean length

of employment in the district is 9.5 years; with a range of forty-six years to less than one year

(Oak Park School District, 2004b).

<div align="center">Significance of Study</div>

The results of this investigation will have implications for practitioners determining

whether efforts similar to this university-school partnership should continue. The participating

educators have given of their time, effort, and financial support to create and sustain this

partnership. Since partner schools and the universities are public institutions, research is

necessary to rationalize the investments made by these two institutions and to verify the

effectiveness and value of educational partnerships. The findings will provide insight for

educators for future activities that lend themselves to continued professional growth and

development through the formation of an educational partnership between a university and a

school district.

The case study will offer educators a process by which they can analyze their roles within

their own school cultures in the areas of school leadership and school improvement. Findings of

this research will provide additional insight to other educators concerning school improvement

efforts as well as defining and redefining roles, practices, and models of school leadership. This

process could be helpful to other educators in establishing a baseline of information and

determining a direction for future dialogue and interactions in the areas of school improvement and leadership.

Delimitations and Limitations of Study

In research, "delimitations address how the study was narrowed in scope, whereas limitations identify potential weaknesses of a study" (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). The researcher needs to understand these restrictions and indicate that they have been considered throughout the study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

Because case studies are by nature limited in scope and generalizations to larger populations cannot be made (Yin, 2003), this study will be limited to respondents who participated in the case study. However, it is my hope that a theoretical supposition found from this case can shed light on other cases. It will be further limited to the collection of data over the five school-year period from September 2001 through June 2006. Out of necessity, this study will include the perceptions of individuals that participated in the study and does not include individuals who did not participate in the study.

Role and Placement of the Researcher

As a teacher in the Oak Park School District, I was a participant in the educational partnership. Additionally, as a researcher in this case study, I was an observer of the participants of the educational partnership. This puts me in the valuable position of being a participant observer (Yin, 2003) which will allow me an ideal opportunity to examine this case study from both perspectives. As a participant observer I will be able to view the partnership from the inside (as a participant) and from the outside (as an investigator). However, I am also cognizant of the necessity of researchers in case studies to be sensitive of the inherent biases in this type of research (Merriam, 1998). I am aware that I have biases and will take them into account when

commenting on this case (Merriman); however, every effort will be made to remain as neutral and unbiased as possible in the collection, analysis, and reporting of the data used in this case study.

Summary

The purpose of this case study will be to explore the processes followed in the educational partnership and to describe the changes in the participants' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy as a result of their participation. This case study will describe and analyze the educational partnership between Western Michigan University, a large mid-western university, and the staff of the Oak Park School District, a small, urban school district located in southeast Michigan. The purpose of the partnership will be to provide the participants the knowledge to enhance student achievement as well develop educational leaders throughout the district. The participants will consist of teachers, counselors and administrators of the district that enrolled in the educational partnership that existed for four school years. In this case study, the data will be collected through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires that will be conducted at the conclusion of the educational partnership.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This study will be a narrative account of an educational partnership between the Oak Park School District, a small, urban school district and Western Michigan University, a large midwestern university. It will be a careful description of the educational partnership and its effects on its participants. It will consider the rationale that will apply in the formation of the educational partnership and the contributing factors to the outcomes of changes in the beliefs, practices and sense of efficacy of its participants that evolved as a result of the collaboration. A development of insights on educational partnerships and professional development, as well as the interaction of the two, and their effect on the participants' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy will be included.

The review of relevant literature and research focused on the following sections: section one is a summary of the current literature and research regarding what benefits educational partnership can provide to professional development; section two encompasses research on professional development's impact on participants' beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy.

Educational Partnerships

Definition of Educational Partnership

The term *educational partnerships* refers to relationships between universities and schools that draw upon equitable and shared power relationships that plan, implement, and evaluate joint initiatives designed to better meet the education needs of teachers and students (Brookhart & Loadman, 1992, Clark, 1988; Feldman, 1992; Hord, 1986). A variety of configurations of these relationships, such as Professional Development Schools (Holmes Group, 1990), Clinical Schools (Goodlad, 1994), and Partner Schools (Harris & Harris, 1993), exist and

are used to describe collaborations between schools and universities. Goodlad indicates that "a school-university partnership represents a formal agreement between a college or university (or one of its constituent parts) and one or more school districts to collaborate on programs in which both have a common interest" (p. 113-114).

Although a multitude of terms exist that apply to educational partnerships, many educational researchers advocate a precise definition to avoid mislabeling of programs and projects. The term educational partnership needs to be expanded and supported with a review of the definitions others have written. Although partnership is a term that is frequently used in literature, Su (1991) points out that, "the concept often carries different meanings when used by different persons or institutions" (p. 11). She points out that collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships are often used interchangeably to refer to inter-institutional relationships. Clark (1988) distinguishes "partnerships" from "networks" by saying that networks tend to consist of similar organizations, where as partnerships more often are composed of dissimilar institutions (p. 21). Goodlad and others reiterate this difference, commenting that networks most often function to exchange information but not in the service of joint projects (Goodlad 1987; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988). Hord (1986) points to the differences between collaboration and cooperation. She indicates that cooperative arrangements do not require a mutual goal or participation that collaborations do. Further, cooperation usually occurs when one organization asks another for assistance in completing a project; however, collaboration requires equal participation and cooperation as well as the exchange of ideas (Hord).

The significance of such differences and distinctions is that a consistent interpretation of the parameters of educational partnerships is still elusive. While there seems to be general agreement that partnership programs must function with the active collaboration of the

associating institutions, the interpretation of this factor is inconsistent (Greenberg, 1992; Hord, 1986; Karwin, 1992). This allows for different philosophical propositions and evaluation standards to exist which create opportunities for a wide variety of interpretations of the term. Consequently, there are many programs which refer to themselves as educational partnerships which adhere to very different principles of design and practice from those of others. The theoretical framework of an educational partnership needs to be considered when studying, analyzing, or designing a program (Kerka, 1997; Petrie, 1995). Additionally, a researcher must recognize that it is not so much the organization of the partnership but whether it is appropriate for the problems being addressed and the setting in which the partnership is situated (Tushnet, 1993).

Purpose and Rationale

Educators, particularly those of at-risk students, are turning to educational partnerships to renew the efforts, practices, and strategies implemented by teachers in the education of their students (Karwin, 1992; Sheridan, 2000). Educators who have participated in collaborations gain insights into the nature of their own and fellow educators' orientation with respect to the areas identified for renewal (Gifford, 1986). Teachers who collaborate grow both personally and professionally as they become more analytical and more willing to apply new ideas (Porter, 1987). Participants of educational partnerships become trained in current best practices and then are able to share their knowledge and experiences with their colleagues. Additionally, the participants are able to research teaching practices and strategies in operation at a variety of school sites (Auton, Browne, Furtrell, 1998; King-Sears, 1995).

Educational partnerships also effectively address the disconnect that graduate students experience between their on-campus coursework and their off-campus classroom experiences.

For both pre-service and in-service teachers this fragmentation between on-campus coursework and off-campus classroom experiences is one of the major weaknesses of traditional teacher education programs (Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1990). As noted by McIntyre and Byrd (1996), a significant number of teacher education programs fail to enable their students to understand how ideas and concepts discussed in their college classes are related to their actual teaching experiences. Collaborations are advantageous for both the university and the school because they provide the opportunity for both faculties to unite in the desire to support teachers to effectively meet the needs of their students. Additionally, universities and school systems work together so that their needs compliment each other and so that resources from each are more fully shared and utilized (King-Sears, 1995). It is prudent from an administrative point of view to enroll similar students into groups that would move through the educational process together as well as strive to achieve common educational and personal goals (Clementson, 1998).

Changing practice requires teacher learning hence school-university partnerships provide the opportunity for educators to acquire learning that is relevant and pertinent to their teaching situation (Kerka, 1997; Sandholtz, 1998). Research has indicated that learning and knowledge should be situated in the physical and social context that is familiar to the learner and requires interaction with peers to be most effective (Putnam & Borko, 2000). They also suggest that learning and knowledge are best situated in a context that is applicable to the learner and is enhanced with interaction among learners and the setting. Therefore, teachers need experiences that help them attach meaning to concepts and theories, provide opportunities to interact with others in the discussion and practice of concepts and theories, and require examination of the contexts in which the practice of teaching occurs. A close connection between clinical fieldwork and coursework is necessary to provide such learning experiences; experiences that help teachers

gain depth and meaning from their knowledge. Further, in order to affect a wider range of changes beyond individual classrooms, teachers need to consistently share what they learn with their peers (Burnaford, 1995).

Participants of educational partnership are immersed in sustained professional development and growth as they are intellectually stimulated and energized by exposure to new ideas, opportunities to conduct action research, and increased collegial interconnections (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). Cultural changes occur in schools as participants incorporate new paradigms to improve student achievement and teacher development as a learning community (Holmes Group, 1990). Goodlad (1994) has identified this paradigm as "simultaneous renewal" and reform. In a study conducted by Reinhartz and Stetson (1999), teachers within a school university partnership showed a significant increase in teaching effectiveness that was indicated by significant gains in student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. They further suggested that increased teacher willingness for risk taking, implementing new instructional strategies and technologies, working longer hours, interacting with university supervisors in the classroom, and willingness to assist other teachers were the result of participation in educational collaborations.

As indicated by the research reviewed, educational partnerships are opportunities for beneficial and productive interactions between school districts and universities. An educational partnership has the potential to create and nurture professional interactions to bring about changes that can result in improved student learning (Mocker, 1988; Sadao & Robinson, 2002; Teitel, 2001). However, a mutually beneficial relationship is not in itself an inherent result of all educational partnerships (Wiske, 1989). The factors that contribute to successful educational partnerships, that is those that serve as instruments for educational improvement, will be addressed in depth later in this literature review.

History of University/School Educational Partnerships

Educational partnerships have been in existence for more than one hundred years and can be traced to the late nineteenth century (Clark, 1988). The earliest efforts began in 1892 when Harvard's President Charles Eliot and others formed the Committee of Ten. The committee outlined and described curricular and other educational goals for American's secondary schools including the subjects taught in schools, most effective strategies for instruction, and the best methods of preparation of teachers (Benson & Harkavy, 2001; Brookhart & Loadman, 1992; Clark). In the early 1900s, educational collaborators concentrated on the requirements for high school graduation and the testing of students entering college. Continuing throughout more than half of the twentieth century, the most significant outcomes of educational partnerships were on the preparation of teachers and the shaping of curriculum. However, the impact of the reforms brought about because of early educational partnerships was not profound (Bennett & Croxall, 1999).

During the 1980s an education reform movement began that has been described as occurring in three distinct "waves". The first wave of reform had centralized authority with responsibility at the state level, creating bureaucratic control and prescribed practice. A report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) entitled, *A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Education Reform,* is considered the impetus for the first wave of the educational restructuring movement. The report identified the weaknesses in the educational systems throughout the United States and indicated the need for stronger academic requirements, higher expectations for student performance, and improvement in the preparation of teachers. Promoting leadership from the federal government, the report encouraged top-down initiatives such as education bills containing regulations pertaining to teacher preparation, staffing, merit

pay, and requirements for graduation. Throughout the process, increased accountability was demanded from educators (Lane & Epps, 1992).

In response, partnerships between public schools and universities gained new purpose and meaning. Substantial support for educational excellence through university and school system partnerships began to develop (Brown & Jackson, 1983). In *A Place Called School,* John Goodlad (1984) expressed the need for a greater commitment toward excellence in schools. Earnest Boyer's report entitled "High School: A Report on American Secondary Education In America," (1983) furthered the support of this premise and offered guidelines for collaboration. The Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching encouraged collaboration between high schools and colleges as one of its goals (Maeroff, 1983).

By the mid-1980s, the second wave of educational reform began to focus on improving the quality of school organizations and teachers and was characterized as a "bottom-up" approach (Lane & Epps, 1992). The means of achieving reform shifted from centralized, bureaucratic strategies of reform that minimized teachers' decision making to a decentralized approach that gave teachers greater autonomy and influence and sought to build their professional knowledge and skills (Conley, 1988). Rather than controlling teachers' behavior, reform was designed to build the capacity of teachers and schools by engaging in collaborative inquiry and decision-making. In 1986, the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, established by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, published *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. The Carnegie Report called for drastic improvements in the preparation of teachers to serve as the basis for other school reforms. The report centered on teacher preparation and the building of teachers' professional capacities to transform schools.

The Holmes Group, composed of deans from university schools of education, expressed a commitment to the education of teachers in their first report entitled *Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group* (1986). The report advocated creating strong bonds between universities and public schools as well as professionalizing the culture in which teachers work and learn. The group went on in their second report, *Tomorrow's Schools* (Holmes Group, 1990) to discuss the "professional development school (PDS)—a new kind of educational institution that was a partnership between public schools and universities" (p. vii). The authors expected professional development schools to be long-range partnerships, "for the development of novice professionals, for continuing development of experienced professionals, and for the research and development of the teaching profession" (p. 11).

A third wave of reform began to take shape by the early 1990's. School reform focused on school restructuring, calling into question the management structure and culture of the school (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Lane & Epps, 1992). The third wave of school reform sought to transform theory into practice by encouraging the restructuring of schools. Restructuring involved three types of changes—changes in the teaching and learning process, in the conditions of teacher's work, and in the incentive and governance structures of the school (Elmore, Rowan, Sykes, Gideonse, Moore, Raywid, & Cohen, 1990). As stated by Darling-Hammond these changes were driven, in part, by the need to professionalize teachers' roles, a requirement if teachers were to be recognized as the most significant component in student achievement.

Factors for Success

Educational partnerships between schools and universities can provide the professional development that fosters new teaching paradigms needed to improve student achievement (Mocker, 1988; Sadao & Robinson, 2002; Teitel, 1997). A collaborative partnership can support

and encourage a forum for reflection, discourse, and an environment for change. However, collaborative relationships between universities and schools have been characterized as a "fickle romance" (Wiske, 1989); one in which both institutions need to understand and appreciate the other (Osguthorpe, Harris, Black, Cutler, & Fox-Harris, 1995).

Variables that address the success of school college collaborations are cited extensively in literature. There is no single way or checklist to follow; however, certain principles should be applied by those who wish to use partnerships as vehicles for educational improvement (Tushnet, 1993). Researchers (Allum, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1988; Karwin, 1992; Maeroff, 1983; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997; Wiske, 1989; Zetlin, Harris, MacLeod & Watkins, 1992), who have studied educational partnerships, indicate a variety of factors that contribute to the success of collaborative efforts. Specifically, these authors emphasize the importance of common goals, mutual respect, effective communication, adequate resources, and sustained support. It is believed that in order to have an effective collaboration, both partners need to understand the importance of each of these factor, be flexible to the demands of the project in the face of persistent change, and apply them in practice (Boyer, 1987; Starlings & Dybdahl, 1994). Because of the significance of these findings, these are the areas that were addressed in this section of the review of literature.

Common Goals

To be most effective, educational partnerships need to have a mutually determined purpose or goal that is designed to address the educational outcomes of students (Hord, 1986; Kasowitz-Scheer & Pasqualoni, 2002; Mocker, 1988). Mutually identified goals intended to improve existing programs that address student learning are attained through the sharing of knowledge, skills, resources, and efforts of the participants of the educational partnership

(Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman, Bishop, & Mayer, 2001). A clear vision, which spells out the mission and determines the outcomes of partnerships, strengthens the development and attainment of the goals of strong, successful collaborative efforts. As Fullan (1982) points out, for an innovation to succeed, those who implement the program must share the vision. Further, visions are best accepted and most effective when they reflect a shared ownership of the group (Karwin 1992) rather than one that is imposed on an organization and attains only compliance rather than commitment (Senge, 1994).

With the attainment of a shared vision of what they are trying to achieve, which determines a mutually agreed-upon set of goals, participants gain a sense of ownership in and commitment to the educational partnership (Kerka, 1997). This process gives the participants a sense of satisfaction that they are making meaningful contributions to the development and attainment of their goal (Fullan, 1993; Karwin, 1992). Through the process of working together to bring about change and attain common goals, the participants and their respective institutions are impacted. The more the partnership requires individuals to change what they are doing and how they relate to one another, the more important it is for them to be involved in early discussions that determine the goals and directions of the program (Tushnet, 1993).

In successful partnerships, the results of the changes grow and continue to proliferate as the desired results are collectively actualized (Fullan, 1993). According to Trubowitz and Longo (1997), throughout the process, the positive feelings of solidarity and unity are visible and are frequently expressed verbally, especially at points of high intensity, success, or attainment of goals. To obtain optimal success, the participants must be willing to trust and share authority, responsibilities, and leadership (U.S. Department of Education of Educational Research and Improvement, 1996). Trust develops as participants believe that the decisions that are made are

based on true collaboration, a focus on common goals, and a sincere desire to benefit both institutions (Robinson & Mastny, 1989; Sandholtz & Finan, 1998)

Goals that drive collaborative effort should be specific and clearly defined. When goals are broadly stated, they can lose their meaning and the ability to be achieved (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). To encourage ownership of the educational partnership requires mutual effort and dedication by the members in the formulations of its goals. The advantages of clear, concise goals can be found in the united desire to support and effectively meet the needs of the participants of the partnership (Sheridan, 2000). The rewards are worth the extensive amount of time and energy spent in the development of the goals, since from it a sense of mutual trust was established. Further, this will allow members to understand their roles in relation to their vision, thus possibly avoiding conflicts (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Mutual Respect

Educational partnerships require establishing respect, trust, and parity, among participants in order to be successful. Collaboration between the partners must maintain a sense of collegiality and support the understanding that all members are essentially equally contributing citizens to the partnership. An environment must be created in which participants feel safe taking risks, relinquishing autonomy, and viewing the world from others' standpoints (Kerka, 1997; Sandholtz, 1998). The building of trust must be continuously nurtured among the members in order for them to take ownership of the collaboration. Therefore, it is important for the partners involved in the collaboration to know when and how ownership is achieved. According to Trubowitz and Longo (1997), "Trust and respect are the means by which any of the other goals was reached, and it is critical that the importance of this process is appreciated and given the full attention of its merits during this vital phase" (p. 56).

The leadership must be shared, based on knowledge and expertise. To be most effective, the leadership must provide opportunities to air philosophical differences, sort out the different goals and issues, and establish which activities are common and which are primarily the domain of one institution. Leadership should rotate among partners as appropriate to their skills, with teachers given equal status and leadership opportunities as university participants (Balajthy, 1991; Wiske, 1989). Thus, the strengths and skills of each individual participant will contribute to the overall decision-making efforts as each member has equal status within the collaborative relationship. As the participants are willing to relinquish personal control and assume more risk, they create a more flexible environment that will enable a higher level of collaboration (Hord, 1986).

Communication of the content and the roles of the participants are also important. These communications should respect the existing knowledge and skill of participants (Tushnet, 1993). However, achieving parity among the participants in educational partnerships may be challenging. This is particularly difficult when teachers are in equal relationships with those whom they formerly perceived as authorities (Teitel, 1996). The notion of parity, which refers to the equal and balanced position that partners share within a collaborative relationship (Welch, 1998) does not imply that all members are identical; indeed a benefit of this approach is that individuals with diverse backgrounds, skills and expertise come together to address educational issues. However, the communicative exchanges should be reciprocal; each partner should have input as well as gain something in the exchange (Wiske, 1989).

Researchers assert that in a collaboration, effective relationships among the participants must be nurtured and supported in ways that more hierarchical arrangements do not require (Johnston, Brosnan, Cramer, and Dove, 2000). Collaboration in educational partnerships should

be viewed as a value system that is based not on competition, but on human caring, mutual

aspirations, appreciation of the other's contribution, and a chosen commitment to work together

over time (Wiseman & Knight, 2003; Wiske, 1989). Nel Noddings supports the notion of caring

and mutual purposes as central to the success of educational dialogue (1992). As Goodlad (1988)

indicates, consideration of the needs of the partner and the partnership must take precedence over

one's own needs in order for the collaboration to be successful. Interest in the survival of the

collaboration must be prominent; this goal is achieved when everyone's energy is focused on the

end goal.

Effective Communication

In the more recent partnership literature, dialogue appears as a prominent component of

building and sustaining collaborative partnerships and is considered one of the most important

factors that contribute to the success of collaboration. There is broad agreement by theorists that

good communication is an essential goal that must be accomplished if a partnership is to be

effective (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Karwin, 1992). Darling-Hammond believes that

communication is the key to conflict resolution and that good communication skills should be

required of all participants. Members of the collaboration must make a conscious habit of sharing

information that is of interest across organizational boundaries, and that "information should be

treated as a cherished commodity shared widely" (p. 216). Marilyn Johnson and Michael

Thomas (1997) state, "many of us judge the quality of a meeting and the strength of our

collaboration by whether meaningful dialogue has occurred, to make collaborative work and its

challenges worth while" (p. 19). When participants are reluctant to openly discuss conflicts,

concerns, and differences directly, the effectiveness and quality of the educational partnership

can be compromised (Teitel, 1997).

Karwin (1992) as well as Mattessich and Monsey (1992) agree and recommend that communication between collaborative partners should be both formal and informal as well as always open and frequent. Relationships in a collaborative effort are built on the members knowing their worth to the partnership. Darling-Hammond (1994) reminds us that when there is a breakdown in communication and meaningful relationships, mistrust, cultural conflicts, intrusiveness, conflict, and self-interest take hold and have a negative impact on the relationship. She recommends open meetings among all members of the partnership as an effective instrument to avoid miscommunication. Furthermore, she states that if this formula is religiously followed, even in the face of change, including change of membership and goals, the educational partnership will survive.

Researchers assert, that in order to be most effective, the level of anxiety experienced by the participants need to be recognized and addressed (Bullough, 1999; Karwin, 1992). Johnston and Thomas (1997) discuss the importance of dialogue among participants of school-university partnerships to enable them to move beyond viewing differences as conflicts. Rather, they contend, that dialogue contributes to a "growth environment" where ideas are shared in a spirit of learning and understand that the discourses will aid in the development of individual and group capacity. Further, Johnston and Thomas assert that dialogue should be considered a communal exchange and negotiation of ideas; it is an opportunity for ideas to be "shared freely, critically, and in ways that nurture rather than destroy" (p. 16).

Adequate Resources

One of the reasons for collaboration is the acquisition of mutual resources through the merging of the resources of all of members of the partnership. The clear identification of the resources is necessary for the partnership to succeed, as it takes various resources to make a

collaborative effort between a school and college effective. The basic elements that are necessary include adequate personnel, facilities, materials, and financial resources (Hord, 1986; Kerka, 1997). Although an educational partnership may be endorsed, it will not be effective unless adequate resources are made available to ensure that the collaborative efforts are carried out as designed. Organizational structures must be developed and put into place prior to implementation of an educational partnership in order to optimally facilitate collegial interactions and avoid inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Welch, 1998).

Since the major expenditures in an educational partnership include the personnel and operating expenses, adequate financing is recognized as one of the most important resources. Darling-Hammond (1994) recognizes this importance:

> Participants should not be expected to take on the task without adequate operational support. Otherwise, it will not be taken as a serious commitment of the sponsoring institutions, and individual participants will measure their energy accordingly, those involved in the collaboration must be intellectually honest and politically savvy regarding this matter (p. 214).

The resources for the project should be spelled out and communicated to the partners, so that the partners will know what their share was; changes midway to what is committed may have a negative impact on the collaborative effort. Partners should know how much and where their funds are coming from, and plan accordingly (Moriaty & Gray, 2003).

Robinson and Mastny (1989) disagree that funds are the most essential resource for collaborations but rather believe that the commitment of time is more essential for creating the partnership. They feel that finding the adequate resources should not be a problem for today's collaborators and that the funds can be acquired as the collaboration continues. This joint activity

might actually be a way to bond the partners. They conclude by saying that many urban institutions are pressured by funders and government mandates to collaborate, and this alone can serve as the incentive for collaborations. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) state that staffing, not finances, is more important for effect of collaborations and that increased staffing can supplement the normal budget formula of the respective institutions. Human resources include a skilled coordinator, committed leaders, and the right mix of knowledge, skills and abilities among individual members (Kerka, 1997).

Successful educational partnerships provide resources, particularly technical assistance, to those who are expected to change behavior, roles, and/or relationships. Necessary resources include training opportunities, matching talent to activities, and providing technical support. The greater the change required at the activity level, the greater the need for technical assistance and the less likely that training and identifying appropriate personnel will suffice. When partnerships aspire to make changes, assistance is needed from leaders to support new ways of developing and implementing policy (Tushnet, 1993).

Sustained Support

Direct support of school and college leaders, specifically that of the Superintendent and President, is an important factor in the success of collaboration. That commitment must be communicated to all members of the collaboration. Mocker (1988) and Trubowitz and Longo (1997) tell us that the greater the support that collaboration receives from both educational systems, the better the chances that the partnership will survive. Trubowitz and Longo reiterate by saying that systems are complicated and so it is difficult for them to be managed from lower-levels; to do so requires support and decisions to be made at the top. This support from the top is crucial, since it is believed that it will ensure that the necessary resources are made available to

the partners. Trubowitz and Longo identified successful collaborative leaders as people who are competent, who are visionary, who are enthusiastic about the collaborative venture, who hold stable positions, who are clear about their role, and who know how their respective systems benefit from the collaboration.

Karwin (1992) gives the role of the leader a different spin. He feels that the leadership role must be played by the chief executive officers of partnership. He states that in today's school-college collaborations, the role of the chief executive officers is not clearly defined. Karwin forewarns us that because of the position CEOs hold in the organization, they should not be limited to a peripheral role in the operation, because limiting them to that role can mean problems for the partnership. Additionally, Karwin feels that the governance structure of a partnership must include broad representation to ensure that the needs of all members of the partnership are met. Karwin sees the chief executive officer as one who should be honest, a good listener, one who has the ability to understand and respect both organizational cultures, one who is open and willing to champion the ideas, and one who maintains the interest of the whole enterprise rather then his or her own institution's personal agenda. Starratt (1993) and Goodlad (1998) believe that leaders have no power or authority in a collaborative effort since all those involved in the partnership functioned as peers. Also, they maintain that those who are leaders in their respective organization may lack expertise on the intricacies of collaboration, and in many cases, may have to depend on others who have the necessary knowledge to accomplish tasks, thus limiting the chances of the success of the collaboration.

Professional Development

Definition of Professional Development

Before embarking on an effort to explore and more fully understand the area of

professional development, a careful look at the definition of the term "professional development"

should be taken. With an understanding and awareness of what professional development

encompasses, a greater recognition of the scope of the area can be attained. Leading authorities

in the field of education have included an array of definitions of professional development in

their writings on the subject. It should also be acknowledged that there are synonyms for

professional development such as staff development, teacher development, teacher training and

professional growth, which are used interchangeable in educational literature.

Guskey (1986), a leading authority in the field of education, offered this definition of

staff development, "… staff development programs are a systematic attempt to bring about

change—change in the classroom practices of teachers, changing their beliefs and attitudes, and

change in the learning outcomes of students." (p. 5). In a later writings, Guskey and other experts

define effective professional development as those processes designed to enhance the

professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and instructional practices of educators to improve the

learning of students (Guskey, 2000; Odden, Archibald, Fermanich, & Gallagher, 2002; Sparks &

Loucks-Horsley, 1989). In both definitions, the authors indicate that professional development

involves efforts that are designed to improve educational structures and culture. By improving

the practices, skills, and beliefs of the educators, the organization can solve problems and renew

itself which will ultimately improve student learning.

Other authors add various aspects to the concept of professional development. In their

definition of professional development Knapp, McCaffrey, and Swanson (2003) state "our

conception of professional development incorporates any learning experience that teachers engage in to expand their professional knowledge and skill" (p. 7). According to this definition, there is a broad range of experiences that could qualify as professional development of teachers rather than the intentionally designed activities included in Guskey's (1986) definition. Little (1993) adds further to this concept when she states that "Professional development must be constructed in ways that deepen the discussion, open up the debates, and enrich the array of possibilities for action" (p. 22). In this statement Little indicates that successful professional development includes experiences and opportunities for growth beyond those that are predetermined in its design.

To add another aspect to the definition of professional development, Evans (2002) notes that professional development is: "the process whereby teacher's professionality and/or professionalism may be considered to be enhanced" (p. 131). Further in her writings, Evans points that professional development should be a continuous process rather than a series of isolated, disconnected workshops or activities. Adding to this aspect of professional development, Speck and Knipe (2001) propose that, "professional development is a lifelong collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of educators, both as individuals and as team members to improve their skills and abilities" (p. 4). This definition also emphasizes the need for the continuous, interrelated nature of successful professional development.

Elmore (2002) states, "professional development is the set of knowledge—and skill-building—that raise the capacity of teachers and administrators to respond to external demands and to engage in the improvement of practice and performance" (p.13). In this definition Elmore includes administrators, a group not directly included in most definitions. Bellanca (1995) furthers this concept of when he defines professional development as a planned, comprehensive,

and systematic program with the goal of improving the ability to design, implement, and assess productive change in each individual and for all the schools personnel in the school organization. He feels that professional development opportunities should be delivered in a variety of forms, extend beyond formal coursework, and utilize a variety of delivery modes that include all involved in the educational process. King and Newmann (2000) elaborate on this concept when they indicate that professional development is most effective when "teachers collaborate with professional peers, both within and outside of their schools, and when they gain further expertise through access to external researchers and program developers" (p. 576).

The definitions of professional development that have been offered by various authors suggests that effective professional development is designed to included the following: change in the practices, skills, and beliefs of educators; a variety of delivery modes and forms that extend beyond formal coursework; focus on continuous, interrelated teacher learning; and the participation of teachers and administrators. However, collectively all of the experts in the field of education indicate that the explicit outcome of effective professional development is the increase of student learning and achievement (Bellanca, 1995; Elmore, 2002; Evans, 2002; Guskey, 1986, 2000; King & Newmann, 2000; Little, 1993; Odden, et al., 2002; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989; Speck & Knipe, 2001).

Historical Overview

In order to frame and enlighten the understanding of present day decisions about professional development, a look at past professionals development theories and practices is necessary. Insights gained through a historical perspective will help inform the rethinking of current and future preparations of teachers as well as new and potential professional development practices (Speck & Knipe, 2001). Professional development for teachers has seen

many revisions; some of the professional development approaches initiated and conceived in the past have been abandoned while others have been able to evolve to their current form. Early professional development was based on the premise that curriculum packages, testing programs, and management systems would improve schools (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Educational leaders now view teachers as professionals and involve them in needs assessments and professional development plans (Darling-Hammond, 1997; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001; Senge, 1994). To attain a greater awareness of present views of professional development, a review of the evolution of professional development was synthesized.

Early attempts to provide professional development beyond the coursework designated for certification to educators that were already in the field had its roots in 'institute days,' which provided an opportunity for teachers to meet their licensing requirements (Bellanca, 1995). It was through the efforts of teachers themselves that educators made attempts to collaborate in order to hear speeches by prominent educational leaders and then participate in discussions surrounding the educational issues of the day. As educators felt the need for more in-depth learning to improve their instructional practices, the workshop, a form of professional development familiar to most educators, began as a way of supporting teachers, school reform, and curriculum innovation. The workshops were designed to provide opportunities for formal interaction among teachers to discuss educational concerns, policies, and practices (Kridel & Bullough, 2002). Examples of this type of professional development includes, "one-shot" (Papanastasiou & Conway, 2002), "credit-for seat time" (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995), and short, one time sessions (Darling-Hammond, 1996) and "charge up the staff" sessions led by experts with little follow-up (Shibley, 2001). The pragmatic concerns of teachers such as

constraints of time, funding sources, and local or district policies often resulted in the

overabundance of short-term workshops and cookbook approaches which ignored or

underemphasized the complexity of teaching strategies and practices. Additionally, professional

development was often disconnected and sporadic as well as unrelated to the daily lives of

teachers and their actual classrooms experiences (Speck & Knipe, 2001).

  With the passage of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education,

1983) an increased bureaucratic interest in the skills of teachers developed (Hallinan &

Khmelkov, 2001). A myriad of views about how teachers should be supported through

professional development occurred. One strategy that gained prominence was to study the

practices of teachers in schools with high student test scores to identify the skills that teachers

should emulate. In order to achieve this end, schools that scored high on standardized tests were

identified and a list of skills for effective and efficient teaching strategies used in those schools

was generated (Purkey & Smith, 1983). The assumption was that the when educators were

encouraged to implement a prescribed set of teaching skills and strategies, higher test scores

would be attained. Later research revealed that a designated set of teacher skills might be a

necessary component; however, in isolation from other factors it was not adequate for the

successful development of effective teaching and learning relationships. Researchers realized

that a simplistic and mechanistic approach to the complex art of teaching did not fulfill the needs

of a successful educational support system (Good, Miller, & Gassenheimer, 2003).

  Further research indicated that effective teaching was contingent on more than the

acquisition of specific teaching skills. The importance of the relationship between teacher

learning and aspects of coaching gained prominence. Coaches were considered "teachers of

teachers" which provided them the opportunity to provide "on-the-job teacher training" (Siens &

Ebmeier, 1996). Coaches and teachers gradually gained expertise in the ways in which this type

of relationship would produce progressive growth for the teacher, the coach, and level of student

learning in a school (Wood & Lease, 1987). The development of the coaching model to enhance

and reinforce the training of teachers while establishing an ongoing learning process was a

critical breakthrough in professional development. Teachers began to guide and lead their own

profession and wanted to determine the direction and course of their own professional growth

and development (Speck & Knipe, 2001).

In recent times, professional development that was fragmented, based on fads, and

piecemealed has begun to be replaced by systematic, coherent plans for professional

development and organizational change (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 1991).

Increasingly, professional development that is interwoven with the organizational development

of the school and that is on-site, job-embedded, and sustained is viewed as central to advance the

present reform agendas (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Little in

Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Sparks, 1995; Xu, 2002). This approach emphasizes the importance

of professional development that focuses on learning in and from practice and that incorporates

the combination of knowledge of subject, teaching, and a particular group of students (Little in

Lieberman & Miller). With this approach to professional development, educators must

understand and collaborate on effective practices rather than simply adopting and implementing

teaching strategies thought to be effective (Eaker, et al.; Little, 1993). Thus, the focus of

professional development has adjusted from teachers acquiring new skills, knowledge, or support

to providing occasions for them to work collaboratively to "reflect critically on their practice and

to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners" (Darling-

Hammond & McLaughlin, p. 597). Additionally, today professional development is viewed as a

process that is continually improved and expanded upon and that the measure of its quality is increased student learning and achievement (Eaker, et al.; Farnsworth, 2002; Guskey, 2000; Odden, et al., 2002).

Rationale

With the rapid pace of innovations and changes in work practices, the need for continuous career-related learning has been escalated. Proposals for educational reform and plans for school improvement recognize the need for high-quality professional development. As in other professional fields, educators need to be aware of emerging knowledge and continually seek to acquire new knowledge to refine their instructional skills (Guskey, 2000). Without continuous professional and self-growth, teachers cannot attain the levels of expertise needed to perform their roles as educators. Effective professional development is a vehicle for educators to further enhance their knowledge and skills in order to prepare themselves to best educate students (Fullan, 2001)

In most schools the teachers can not produce the kind of instruction demanded by the new reforms and government mandates; frequently this is not because they did not want to, but because they do not have the knowledge and skills to do so. Additionally, some school systems in which educators work do not adequately support their pursuit of the expertise needed (What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future, 1996). The increasing diversity of the student population has put a significant amount of pressure on the knowledge and skills teachers must have to achieve the accountability goals put in place with government mandates such as No Child Left Behind and Adequate Yearly Progress (Rotberg, Futrell, & Lieberman 1998). Particularly difficult to achieve is the specific goal of ensuring that children of all backgrounds master a demanding core curriculum, as well as the other materials intended to prepare students

to assume their civic and social responsibilities in a democratic society. Unless the commitment to enhance the quality and professionalism of America's teaching force is made, it is unlikely that the national goal was met (Shanker, 1996). Darling-Hammond (1996) as well as Rotberg et al. (1998) suggest that reforms, which invest in teacher learning and give teachers greater autonomy, are the best hope for improving education across the nation. Darling-Hammond further asserts that the reform changes that are taking place have set student achievement standards that are increasingly difficult to achieve. These standards reflect a growing knowledge base and a consensus about what teachers should know and be able to do to help all students learn. Research has indicated that opportunities for professional development are directly linked to goals for student achievement and actual student performance (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Without an adequate effective professional development, teachers will have difficulty attaining success in achieving these standards (Darling-Hammond)

Increasingly, research shows that improving teacher knowledge and teacher skills are essential to raising student performance (Odden, et al., 2002; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000). As Norman (1979) indicates, the National School Boards Foundation has identified investing in teacher education as the primary means to raise student achievement. Reese (2004) and Guskey (2002) concur that students' attainment of high levels of achievement depends on the ability of knowledgeable teachers who believe all children can learn and are able to facilitate the learning process in their students. Realizing the importance of the need for professional growth, teachers themselves have identified successful profession development as an important factor in affecting school success (McElroy, 2005). The difference of one full year of a student's achievement can be determined by the instruction of a well-prepared teacher rather than a poorly prepared teacher (Haycock, 1999). Professional development, when done correctly, has been shown to be an

effective means of improving both the way teachers use classroom time and the quality of instruction they provide, so that more classroom time is used for academic learning time for the students (Aronson, Zimmerman, & Carlos, 1999). Opportunities for student learning can the increased by insuring that teachers are employing efficient use of time, knowledge, and instructional strategies. Teachers must know subject matter well and see it through their students' eyes in order to seize opportunities to better correlate content with students' interest and experience (Metzker, 2003). In order to be most effective, educators need a great deal of high-quality professional development with strong emphasis on training designed to addressing the individual needs of schools as determined by student performance on standardized tests (Bridglall & Gordon, 2003; King & Newmann, 2000; Speck & Knipe, 2001).

The rational for professional development is based on the premise that the continuous growth and development of teachers' knowledge and skills will result in increased levels of student learning. A sustained reflection on teaching and learning acknowledges the influence of teachers' understandings of their subject as well as the awareness and implementation of best practices needed to successfully impart their knowledge to the students (Schwartz, 2001). Both educators and their students reap the benefits of increased learning when successful professional development is in place.

Factors for Success

Transforming schools in order to improve student learning and achievement through effective professional development is not an easy process or one that happens quickly. It is a process in which educators need to take a clear, sustained, systematic approach and one that must be nurtured over a period of several years (Fullan, 2001; Schmoker, 1996; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Throughout their participation in professional development that is supportive in

facilitating this transformational process, teachers and leaders require opportunities to gain new knowledge, practice, reflect, and grow together (Speck & Knipe). It is also essential that all efforts for change and growth within a school or district pertaining to professional development to be part of a coherent framework for improvement (Guskey, 2000).

Research has shown that there is no one right answer or best way to approach professional development that is designed to improve student learning; rather there are a multitude of methods and formats. Success rests in finding that optimal mix of format, content, and context that can be most constructively applied in a particular setting (Guskey & Huberman, 1995). However, from the analysis of a diverse array of practices and strategies used in successful professional development initiatives, several principles appear to be common (Barth, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Eaker, et al., 2002; Guskey, 1997, 2000; Hoban, 2003; King & Newmann 2000; Lambert, 1998; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Little, 1993; Sagor, 1992; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Having clearly stated goals and objectives, an emphasis on student learning, decisions that are data driven, collaboration among participants, an embedded or integrated program, an initiative that is participant driven, an effort that is supported, and a format that is continuous or on-going have been identified as important factors in the success of the professional development endeavor. Due to the significance of these findings, these aspects of professional development will be addressed in this section of the review of literature.

Goals and Objectives

Experts in the area of professional development assert that the first and perhaps the most essential element related to the effectiveness of professional development, is goal clarity and identification (Guskey, 2000; Speck, 1996). It is important to be explicit about the goals of the professional development, especially in terms of the students' learning levels to be attained and

the practices that are to be implemented in order to achieve the desired results (Eaker, et al.,
2002; Guskey). The district's and schools' goals need to be reviewed so that the professional
development was consistent throughout the district. Teacher professional development needs to
be a systematic and intentional process based on collectively established, school-centered goals
and a vision that supports the achievement of the broader organizational goals (Bellanca, 1995).
The quality and effectiveness of the professional development increases when educators that
have a clear understanding of the kind of changes they want to see and which goals they hope to
accomplish (Guskey; Lauro, 1995).

If significant change and progress is to be achieved, professional development plans must
be linked systematically with school- and district-wide goals and change efforts (Speck & Knipe,
2001). The direction of the district becomes evident when the professional development
opportunities and use of the district's resources are aligned with its goals (Joyce & Showers,
1995). This alignment of goals with professional development and resources provides the
coherence necessary for long-term commitment to change. The change process must be guided
by a "grand vision" that enables everyone to view each step in terms of a single, unified goal that
goes beyond the individual classrooms or buildings and focuses clearly on improved student
learning throughout the district (Guskey, 2000).

There is valid rationale for the professional development process to have its goals and
objectives clearly determined. First, when educators commit themselves to making major
decisions on why and how they will interact with their students' learning process, the impact of
the professional development increases. The identification of the assessment procedures by
which progress can be measured and success verified can be more readily achieved through the
setting of clear goals that are based on student learning (Eaker, et al., 2002; Lieberman, 1995).

Also, administrators and teachers are more prone to stay on task and avoid distractions by peripheral issues that waste time and usurp energy when they are clearly focused on their intended goals (Guskey, 2000). When well-established goals are in place, educators are able to better mange conflicting policy mandates and practices that may arise and maintain a clear path to success (Little, 1999).

Based on Student Learning

Professional development efforts that are highly successful and effective are focused primarily on issues that are related to student learning. Although there are a variety of approaches and formats, the most successful professional development efforts are centered on a school mission that emphasizes the attainment of high learning standards by students as their principle goal (DuFour, 1997; Eaker, et al., 2002; Guskey, 2000). Research in education has indicated that there is a direct link between a professional development plan that is based on a comprehensive, inter-related change process that includes the objective of improved student learning and the accomplishment of goals that the plan was designed to achieve (Odden, et al., 2002; Sparks, 2002). The authors emphasize that professional development should be built upon a solid learning research foundation in order to provide an adequate background for the intended improvement in student learning to occur.

The ultimate goal of professional development in education should be the improved learning for all students. The most effective professional development efforts are those that have been successful in reaching that goal and have valid evidence to prove it. Educators should evaluate the progress and impact of their profession development by the effect it has made on student learning based on data collected (Speck & Knipe, 2001). According to Sparks (1995) students should be judged by the knowledge that they have acquired and how they are able to

apply their skills. Further, professional development that is designed to best meet the needs of the students has the acquisition of student learning as its primary focus (Guskey, 2000).

In order for the professional development to be most valuable, educators need to determine what the students need to learn, how the level of student learning was determined, as well as how to assist and support students in order to improve their learning (Eaker, et al., 2002). Teachers play a vital role in helping students acquire essential skills and concepts that they need. It is through the knowledge gained from research on students' achievement and cognition acquired in successful professional development that educators are better able to implement teaching strategies and model instruction in lesson presentations that support and encourage the ability of students to broaden their understanding and application of their acquired learning (Ragland, 2003).

Data Driven

Researchers in the field of education assert that if professional development efforts are to be successful, relevant information must be gathered, analyzed, and presented to the participants before the goals are determined. Because student learning is the primary goal in most effective professional development, data about the students' achievement and needs as well as information about teachers' abilities and needs should be used in the design and development of the initiative (Eaker, et al., 2002, Guskey, 2000). The decisions about what professional development needs to take place should be based on a thorough analysis of student work, their achievement levels, and a comparison of this data with the expected standards of student achievement. The information gained from this analysis of data will assist teachers in finding gaps in student learning and in teacher competence. A meaningful analysis of the data enables teachers and leaders to see patterns and trends that provide the understanding necessary for an informed decision regarding

future professional development needs and plans (Speck & Knipe, 2001). When data analysis is

not done or done inadequately, professional development plans are often based on

misinformation and focus on training that is neither necessary nor useful (Guskey, 2000).

Continuous professional development is given credibility and validity with the periodic

evaluation of its progress toward the attainment of its goals and its impact on student learning.

Without a comprehensive evaluation of progress, leaders lack the evidence that the professional

development is effective (Eaker, et al., 2002). Data needs to be collected, analyzed, and reflected

on in order for the leaders to make any necessary modifications to improve the impact of the

professional development process (Guskey, 2000). The evaluation process must analyze whether

teachers have improved their practices and whether the change in practice has affected student

learning. When leaders look at the effect of professional development has had on student

achievement, important data in the assessment of the impact and success of the professional

development initiative is attained. Evaluation is most effective when it is a continuous effort to

verify the success of the professional development effort (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Speck &

Knipe, 2001).

Collaboration

As Muchmore (2001) states, "Teaching is a solitary profession in which practitioners

have limited opportunities to interact with their colleagues." (p. 98). Professional development is

a means to counteract isolation and increase professional interaction among staff members.

Research suggests that professional development thrives in a collaborative setting in which

participants have the opportunity to share their learning and experiences with others. To make

the professional development experience most beneficial, educators need opportunities to

discuss, think about, try out, and refine new practices in an environment that values inquiry and

experimentation (Guskey, 2000). Educational researchers Hawley and Valli (1999) agree that in order to foster teacher learning, educators need to work collaboratively as they put into practice what they have learned and periodically evaluate their progress toward the achievement their established goals.

As professional development plans are organized, the breadth and depth of the knowledge that the faculty possesses as well as how to share that knowledge in a culture that nurtures continuous improvement and learning needs to be incorporated into the process (Joyce & Showers, 1996; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). As the professional development endeavor progresses, it is important for the leaders to listen to educators, acknowledge their anxieties, and nurture the change initiative while implementing instructional models and strategies. During the process, teachers benefit from ample amounts of time for discussion of the rationale for the strategies they are beginning to implement and to acquire a deeper understanding of the process through their collaboration with others (Speck & Knipe, 2001). Without the opportunity for the participants of the professional development to gain a shared meaning and understanding of the models and strategies that are presented and applied into practice, their widespread implementation on a permanent basis is less likely to occur (Sparks, 1996).

Embedded

Research indicates that in successful initiatives for change and improvement, professional development is most effective when it is school-based and job-embedded rather than a one-day workshop that is separate from teachers' day-to-day professional responsibilities (Guskey, 2000; Odden, et al., 2002). Professional development that is planned as a special event that occurs infrequently throughout the school year does not provide the optimal learning situations that are needed for a profound impact in the enhancement of the knowledge and instructional skills of

educators. To best meet the needs of the participants, professional development is most

beneficial when it is an ongoing activity that is an integral part of an educator's professional life

(Lieberman, 1996). When professional development is an ongoing, job-embedded process, every

day presents a variety of learning opportunities for educators. These opportunities occur as

lessons are taught, assessments are administered, curricula are reviewed, professional reading

occurs, classes are observed, and conversations take place among colleagues. Educators need to

be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities as they occur, make them purposeful, and

use them appropriately (Guskey, 2000)

Professional development should not be an isolated event that takes place outside the

school, but an integrated part of the daily work of teachers. The experiences of learning together

emerge most effectively from the actual work settings and situations that the participants share

(Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Research has shown that professional development is most

successful when it includes opportunities for teachers to work directly on incorporating the new

techniques learned into their instructional practice (Odden, et al., 2002). Professional

development that is embedded in the real work of teachers provides for clear connections to their

interactions with students and to the improvement of student achievement. This relevancy and

context of professional development to their daily work experience allows teachers to inquire,

reflect, analyze, and act on their current practices as they examine student work and learning as

well as their ability to provide increased learning for their students. As it becomes embedded into

the teachers' daily professional lives, professional development nurtures commitment and

continual growth based on the unique circumstances of the teacher and the school. When

professional development is seen as an embedded, integrated part of a teacher's work life, the

assessment of learning needs, the seeking out of new knowledge, strategies and skills, and the

reflection of current teaching practices become routine practices and procedures (Speck &

Knipe, 2001). As these practices and procedures are used on a daily basis, they encourage further

learning, continued sharing and the constant upgrading of conceptual and craft skills of the

educators (Guskey, 2000).

Participant Driven

Research supports teacher professional development that is delivered in a model that

facilitates reflection and examination of the beliefs and practices of the participating educators.

The involvement of the participants in the design and implementation of the professional

development project facilitates a feeling of ownership, a deeper understanding of the plans, and

the development of the knowledge and skills needed to ensure the positive participation of the

educators (Lieberman, 1995; Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989; Speck & Knipe, 2001). When

teachers are engaged in the planning of the process, they can design, give feedback, review, and

revise the professional development based on their own knowledge of the students' learning

needs and the staff members' commitment to the plan. Because teachers are affected by change

brought about through the professional development, they need to have input into the changes or

there is no substance or commitment in their involvement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999;

Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). School leaders must work collaboratively with teachers to

engage them in the process of identifying their needs in acquiring the knowledge and

instructional skills that are necessary to better meet their students' learning needs (Darling-

Hammond & Ball, 1998; Speck & Knipe).

Frequently, school leaders adversely affect the validity and effectiveness of professional

development by failing to include participants in the planning and implementation of the

initiative (Corcoran, 1995; Speck & Knipe, 2001). However, there are distinct advantages in

seeking participant involvement in the design and execution of the professional development process. To begin, when the professional development addresses the needs of students that have been identified by teachers, a solid foundation for the building of the professional development plans is established. It is difficult for teachers to focus on district-imposed professional development when their immediate concerns are not being addressed. Also, when leaders respond to teachers' expressed professional development needs, which emerge from their direct work with students, the design for professional growth becomes more meaningful (Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Speck & Knipe). In addition, it not only increases teachers' knowledge and skills used in their classes, it also enhance their ability to work collaboratively and share in the decision making process. As members of the educational staff work collaboratively to design the professional development, those involved become more aware of the perspectives of others, more appreciative of individual differences, and more skilled in group dynamics. When participants help form the professional development, they generally have a strong interest in the problems and issues addressed and become personally committed to finding workable solutions. Further, by involving all staff members, the isolation that many educators experience is diminished (Guskey, 2000). As teachers plan, implement, review, and revise their own profession development, their interaction with others strengthens themselves individually as educators and collectively as a staff working together for a common goal (Speck & Knipe).

Supported

Administrative support is a key element in successful professional development planning and implementation (Bellanca, 1995; Robb, 2000). When administrators understand the importance of the professional development plan and how it affects student learning, their support is more easily attained. As administrators support teachers and their professional

development work with the needed allocation of resources, including structured time and recognition of merit, they send an important signal that professional development is to be taken seriously (Guskey, 2000; Schmoker, 1996). With the leadership of administrators and teachers that establishes a priority for professional development planning and implementation, the attainment of improved student learning is made possible. The most supportive learning environments for students occur in those schools where teacher development was also valued and supported (Lieberman & Miller, 2001).

Professional development without leadership direction and active participants lacks the necessary commitment on the part of teachers and administrators to successfully achieve its goals (Little, 1993). Principals and other leaders need to be present and involved in professional development activities to learn, understand, and support the new learning (Fullan, 1993). Through discourse and engagement in learning, teachers and administrators, model a community of leaders. Educators can easily become confused by "mixed" messages that are sent when leaders do not provide support and resources for professional development, but still expect that teachers should learn and implement the new strategies to raise student achievement (Speck & Knipe, 2001). If changes at the individual level are not encouraged and supported at the administrative and organizational level, even the most promising innovation is doomed to failure (Sparks, 1996).

Continuous or On-going

If individual educators are to continue their personal growth, they must have multiple opportunities for participation in professional development with an in-depth approach that is intensive and sustained over an extended period of time (Bellanca, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Ongoing professional development is essential for further growth and to maximize

teacher productivity to better meet the needs of all students. Research has shown the importance of continuous, ongoing, long-term professional development that is substantial in length, sustained over an extended period of time, and intensive in content for lasting change to occur (Fullan, 2001; Odden, et al., 2002; Speck & Knipe, 2001). Successful professional development is a systemic process that considers change over an extended period of time and takes into account all levels of the organization (Guskey, 2000).

To support the professional development, the new learning must be supported with opportunities for modeling, coaching, and refining their practices. This can be attained with study, practice, coaching, feedback, and refinement that occur in an on-going and sustained manner. Modeling, practice, coaching, and analysis of performance help hone the skills of the individual, end the isolation of teachers, and broaden the school into a community of learners in support of teaching and learning (Barth, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1999, Little, 1993; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Professional development that does not model or include the critical element of ongoing modeling and coaching lacks the important element of continuous support that is needed for individuals to change practice (Joyce & Showers, 1982, 1995, 1996). If teachers are exposed only to onetime or other forms of fragmented workshops with little or no modeling, follow-up, coaching, analysis of problems, and adjustment in practice, there was little change.

Summary

Various effective approaches to professional development have been designed, implemented, and studied for decades (Guskey, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Sparks, 1995). A limited amount of research has addressed the design, implementation procedures, and effectiveness of educational partnerships that have existed between school districts and universities (Kerka, 1997; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). Furthermore, very few researchers;

however, have delved into and analyzed the experiences of teachers and administrators

participating an educational partnership between a school district and a university that was

designed to be a comprehensive professional development experience to meet the specific

educational needs of the students within that district. The results of this research provide the data

necessary to fill some of the gaps that presently exist in current literature. Therefore, the

following questions will be applicable to this study on the collaborative effort between a small,

urban school district in southeast Michigan and a large, mid-western state university:

Primary or Central Research Question:

How do the participants of an educational partnership between a large state university

and a small, urban school district in southeast Michigan describe the changes in their beliefs,

practices, and sense of efficacy as a result of this partnership?

In an effort to narrow the focus of this case study, the broad, general primary or central

question will be further addressed with the following series of sub-questions:

Sub-Questions:

1. What formal and informal learning did the participants of the cohort experience to develop

   the changes in their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy?

2. What barriers did the participants encounter in the process of bringing about changes in

   their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy?

3. How were the participants of the cohort able to bring about changes in the district?

4. From the participants' perspective, what impact has the partnership had on their classroom

   or school or school district or all three?

5. How did participation in the cohort prepare the participants to better address the

   challenges of the school district?

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This narrative account will be conducted in the Oak Park School District using the techniques employed in qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The naturalistic data collected will include careful descriptions of people, places, conversations, and artifacts through sustained contact with individuals in the targeted school district. Additionally, the data will be gathered where teachers are engaged in their natural setting of their classroom or building. The researcher, a member of the cohort group, will serve as the investigator in the collection and analysis of the data to be used in this case study. The data will be collected by surveying and interviewing teachers and administrators over a period of over six months. The written results of the research will contain quotations from the interviews, focus group sessions, and questionnaire responses to illustrate and substantiate the presentation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

The study will attempt to examine the elements of change in an urban school district, as it is understood in the context of those who were directly involved in the change process. The subject of the study will focus on how various participants in the collaborative effort saw, described, and explained the changes that occurred in themselves and throughout the school district as a result of the educational partnership. While preparing this case study, the researcher will be concerned with the participants' perspectives; that is the researcher's goal will be to understand the subjects from their own point of view. Also, the researcher will make sure that the perspectives of the participants are represented as accurately as possible and that the people's own way of interpreting the significance of their responses will be captured as accurately as possible (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Case Study Method

A qualitative case study is a comprehensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, experience, or phenomenon. A researcher utilizes the case study methodology when they develop a particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic account of a specific situation or setting (Merriam, 1998). When a case study examines a particular program or entity it is considered particularistic. This case study will focus on the educational partnership that occurred between the Western Michigan University and Oak Park School District. The subjects or participants in this case study will be the educators of the school district who participated in the educational partnership with the university. A case study is regarded as descriptive when it uses vivid details to describe the phenomenon under study (Merriman). The descriptions of the changes in the beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy of the participants will be constructed through the detailed responses that will be given by individual teachers and administrators in questionnaires, interviews, and focus group sessions. This case study will be considered to be heuristic in that it will attempt to examine, summarize and ascertain the changes in the beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy that occurred in the participants of an educational partnership; thus increasing the case study's potential applicability (Merriman).

Most research experts concur that a case study is the exploration by a researcher of a 'bounded system' (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 2000). The defining feature of a case study is the boundaries that establish the parameters of the unit of study. "By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). In this research the bounded system refers to the group of educators from the Oak Park School District that participated in an educational partnership with Western Michigan University. A case study method was chosen for

this study since the primary or central research question asked how the participants of an

educational partnership between a large state university and a small, urban school district

describe the changes in their beliefs, practices, and sense of efficacy as a result of this

partnership. This approach allows for observation of the phenomenon of framing within the

context of its occurrence (Yin, 2003) within the educational partnership.

Another important element of case study research is the focus upon the collection of

multiple forms of data and the provision of 'thick, rich description' (Stake, 2000). In the case

study that will be discussed in this research the data selected for collection will demonstrate

these criteria as they take the form of open-ended survey questions, transcribed interviews, and

transcriptions from focus group sessions. In all three forms of the data collection instruments,

opportunities for the participants to give detailed, informed responses will be available. This data

will provide me with the information needed to prepare the depth and quality of descriptions

required for this case study.

Role and Placement of the Researcher

Background

Because the researcher functions as the primary instrument for data collection and

analysis in a qualitative case study, background information about the researcher is pertinent to

the credibility of this research design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). As the researcher

in this case study, I am not a neutral party; I bring my own ideas, values, and prior knowledge

based on my experiences to the study (Patton, 2002). Having spent over thirty-seven years as

both a secondary classroom teacher and as a Title I teacher, I have had extensive experience in

the educational field. Additionally, my understanding and awareness of educators was furthered

through participation in staff development workshops, educator conferences, in-service training,

and the attainment of a master's degree in education. My personal experiences as an educator have a served as a positive influence and valuable resource in conducting the research since an empathetic understanding of the participants and the setting by the researcher is a characteristic of credible naturalistic studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Participant Observer

As the researcher of this study and as a student in the educational partnership between the Oak Park School District and Western Michigan University, I will be in the position of being a participant observer (McMillan, 2000; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). As Yin states, this technique has "most frequently been used in anthropological studies of different cultural or social groups" (p. 94) and has gained increased recognition in educational studies. A participant observer develops an insider's view of a program or setting and relates their findings of their observations to others. In case studies, the challenge for the researcher is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the setting as an insider, while describing it to and for the awareness and understanding of outsiders (Patton).

In this case study, I will be able to view this educational partnership from both the inside (as a participant) and the outside (as an investigator). As a participant of the educational partnership, I was able to experience first hand the university's educational program with the other educators in the school district. As the researcher who fully participated in the activities and actions of the cohort, I was able to appreciate the program to an "extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews" (Patton, 1980, p. 23). Additionally, as a researcher, I will collect data and reflect on the findings. While actually participating in the program, I will become immersed in the data; which will enable me to have greater insight and understanding in the interpretation of the data (Yin, 2003).

Researcher Bias

My participation in the educational partnership, as well as my experiences as an educator will provide me a greater understanding of the teachers, the climate and culture in which they worked, and their educational concerns. Because of my background and the opportunities for insights that would be unavailable to a relative outsider, the effect that my biases and assumptions may have on the findings of the study need to be addressed. Researcher bias recognizes that someone else, looking at the data collected, may sort and interpret the findings differently than myself as a researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When an attempt is made to create an awareness of the researcher's assumptions, what the investigator brings to the research setting can have a positive effect on the research process (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

In order to enhance the creditability of the study, it is important that as the researcher begins their research they clearly identify their role as well as be acutely aware of their biases and predispositions (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Although every effort will be made to ensure objectivity in this case study, my biases as a researcher may shape the way I analyze and interpret the data that will be collected. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1982): "No matter how much you try, you can not divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe in it what you value… the goal is to be more reflective and conscious of how who you are may shape and enrich what you do, not to eliminate it" (p. 34). As has been asserted by Patton, a serious limitation to the credibility of qualitative research concerns the researcher's bias as it could influence the results. In an effort to address this limitation, as the researcher I will rely on the triangulation of data, which is the usage of multiple sources of data to confirm or corroborate the emerging findings (Creswell, 1998; Merriman, 1998), and member checks, which is the systematic solicitation of feedback about the

data and conclusions from the people you are studying (Maxwell, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These procedures will be used to ensure the validity of the results (Creswell, 2003; Merriam; Yin, 2003).

<div align="center">Participant Selection</div>

This case study will include the teachers and administrators of Oak Park School District that participated in a collaborative effort with Western Michigan University to form an educational partnership. Initially, the district had approximately seventy-five teachers that participated in the leadership program. With just over two hundred thirty teachers in the district, the cohort participants represented over thirty-five percent of the district's staff. The experience of cohort members ranged from first year teachers and administrators to others with more than thirty years of teaching and or administrative experience. Instructional and support staffs, counselors, instructional leaders, and building administrators participated in the program. Specifically, there were two elementary principals, two secondary counselors, two elementary subject coordinators, three secondary department heads, three elementary and one secondary Title I teachers, as well as sixty-two K-12 classroom teachers. In addition, thirty-four staff members from all grade levels on the elementary level as well as thirty-eight secondary level staff members from all the academic and nonacademic areas participated in the educational partnership. Further, there were fifteen male and sixty female educators, forty-two percent of which were African-American, fifty-six percent of which were Caucasian, two percent of which were Chaldean, and one percent were Hispanic, that were involved in the program.

This case study will be limited to the educators who participated in the educational partnership, and will be further limited to the collection of data and artifacts that reference the

four school-year period from September 2000 through June 2005, the length of time the

educational partnership was in place.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Data collection involves the acquisition of the information needed to answer research

questions. It includes a description of the methods used, how they will be conducted, and why

the methods were chosen (Maxwell, 1996). For purposes of this case study, information will be

gathered by the researcher, who was a member of the educational partnership. In this case study,

I will utilize individual interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires as instruments to collect my

data. In all instances, participants will be purposefully selected, which means that the participants

will be selected because they will be particularly informative about the cohort itself as well as

their participation in the cohort (Creswell, 2003; McMillan, 2000). Purposeful sampling will be

used because I want to discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample from who the most

can be learned (Merriman, 1998). The interviews, surveys, and focus group sessions will be

conducted at a time and place that will be convenient and comfortable for the participants

(Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Below is a detailed description of the processes and techniques

that will be utilized in each of these methods of data collection.

For this study, a questionnaire with open-ended questions will be sent, via the inter-

school mail system, to those staff members of the Oak Park School District that participated in

educational partnership with Western Michigan University. The questionnaire will have a letter

of explanation, consent form, and return envelope attached to it. The subjects will be instructed

to read and sign the consent form before completing the questionnaire. The subjects will be told

not to put their name or any other identifying information on the questionnaire. After completing

the questionnaire, the subjects will place it in the return envelope, seal the envelope, and send it

back to me along with the consent form via the interschool mail system. When I receive the

consent form and the sealed envelope, I will separate the consent forms from the envelopes and

place them into two different groups in order to ensure the confidentiality of the subjects. All

staff members that participated in the cohort will have the opportunity to complete the

questionnaires confidentially at their earliest convenience. The survey will consist of eight open-

ended questions regarding the staff members' opinions concerning the relevancy of the cohort on

the policies, procedures and practices of the district. The following are the open-ended questions

that will be included in the questionnaire:

1. What was your initial impression of the Oak Park /WMU partnership when it first began

   in 2001? (i.e. planning, communication with cohort members, appropriateness of course

   content, community building, etc.) Why did you feel this way?

2. What is your impression of the partnership now? Why do you feel this way?

3. From your perspective, what impact has the partnership had on your school?

4. Give one or more examples of how the partnership has influenced your teaching—either

   directly or indirectly?

5. What do you view as the greatest challenge facing Oak Park teachers today?

6. Do you think the Oak Park /WMU partnership helped you to address this challenge? If so,

   how?

7. What do you see as the biggest shortcoming of the partnership?

8. What do you see as the greatest strength of the partnership?

      As the researcher of this study, I will have a listing of all the participants of the

educational partnerships. As the questionnaires are returned with the signed consent forms, the

names of the respondents will be checked on the listing of participants. Two weeks after the

initial questionnaires are mailed, a second mailing will be sent to all the participants who did not

return the completed questionnaires. In the second correspondence, I will remind the participants

of the original mailing and encourage them to complete the questionnaire and send it back to me

via the interschool mail. Additionally, I will send a new copy of the cover letter, consent form,

and the questionnaire to each participant who did not return the questionnaire in the event that

they may have misplaced the original mailing. As the questionnaires are returned from the

second mailing, I will check the respondent's name off the listing of the participants.

After one more week, I will personally contact each participant that has not completed

and returned his or her questionnaire and consent form. I will do this by visiting them in their

classrooms, either before or after the school day. In a friendly and non-coercive manner, I will

remind the participant of the research project and its questionnaire. I will have additional copies

of the consent form, questionnaires, and interschool mail envelopes available for them to use in

the event that they misplaced the previous copies sent to them. After one more week, the number

of completed questionnaires will be accepted as final.

In addition to the questionnaire, I will conduct individual face-to-face interviews with a

purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of up to ten participants of the cohort program.

The interviewees will be determined to be key informants as defined as "individuals who are

particularly knowledgeable and articulate" (McMillan, 2000, p. 262). The key informants will

provide responses to the matters questioned as well as provide insights and perspectives on the

topic being studied (Maxwell, 1996; Merriman, 1998; Yin, 2003). Semi-standardized interviews

will be conducted in which seven predetermined questions will be asked of each interviewee in a

systematic, consistent order. However, as the interviewer, I will be allowed the freedom to probe

beyond the answers to the prepared standardized questions to elicit further views and opinions of

the participants (Berg, 2004; Yin). Each interview will be conducted separately in a predetermined setting that will be comfortable and familiar to the interviewee and at a time that will be convenient for both the interviewee and the interviewer (Creswell, 1998; Merriman).

The interviews will delve into the staff member's views and beliefs regarding how their participation in the educational partnership affected them as individuals and as educators within the district. The following are the predetermined questions that will be asked of each interviewee:

1. Share with me something about yourself and your position in the district.

2. Explain your perception of the purpose/goals of the Oak Park /WMU educational partnership? Do you feel that they were attained? Why/why not?

3. What skills did you acquire or refine as a result of participating in the cohort? Explain.

4. How were your attitudes and dispositions affected by your participation in the cohort?

5. Give one or more examples of something that the cohort accomplished, either by you as an individual or collectively as a group—in your classroom, the school, or the Oak Park School District?

6. How do you think that the accomplishments of the cohort will continue? Give examples.

7. How do you feel about your participation in the cohort?

As previously noted, in addition to these predetermined questions, probes will be used as the interview progresses to gather more information or insight into the issues under discussion.

Focus groups, comprised of a minimum of four staff members who participated in the cohort, will be organized in each of the schools in the district; one focus group will be conducted in each of the four elementary schools as well as one in both the middle and high schools. The focus groups will be a means to gather views, perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of staff

members on the impact of the cohort program on the policies and practices of the district. The

focus groups will be used as "member checking" bodies to feed back to them the insights gained

from the questionnaires and probe their responses further (Creswell, 2003). These are

particularly effective uses of focus groups. The focus groups will provide and encourage a

setting in which one participant will be able to draw from another's response or to brainstorm

collectively with other members of the group (McMillan, 2000; Villard, 2003). As Villard further

states, focus groups allow participants to express their points of view in a group setting as well as

provide researchers with information on the topic being studied (p. 2). In order to create the

optimum research situation for the focus groups, there will be a facilitator and a second person

who will sit, observe the group, and create field notes about the group dynamics (Berg, 2004).

The questions that will be asked during the focus groups are as follows:

1. Describe your perception of the initial purposes of the educational partnership.

2. What went well?

3. What did not go well?

4. What happened during the course of the program that changed the direction of the
    program?

5. What would you have done differently or should have been done differently?

6. Is this type of program beneficial?

    Both the interviews and focus group sessions will be tape-recorded. As the interviews and

focus groups are completed, the data will be transcribed. Additionally, the responses to the

questionnaire will be carefully read and reviewed. The written results of the research will include

direct quotations from the interviews, focus group sessions, and responses to the questionnaires

to exemplify the data collected and validate the conclusions derived as a result of the findings.

Data Analysis

In order to gain optimal value from the data, the researcher needs to organize and analyze the information collected (Merriman, 1998). As Maxwell (1996) indicates, this is how researchers make sense of the data they collected and are able to apply their findings to interpret the larger meaning of the data. The process involves "preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2003). Once all the interviews, focus group sessions, and questionnaires are completed, the data will be read and reread to categorize the responses according the perceptions of the respondents. The information will be analyzed for categories, patterns, themes, and issues and then compared for relationships and differences. The data will then be coded and rearranged into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and aid in the comparison to guiding literature. The data will be further reviewed to look for relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole. In the analysis of the data, topics and trends that are expected to be found will be looked for and emerging information that contradicts expectations will be sought and analyzed. This will be done in order to gain a wider theoretical perspective in the research (Creswell).

After the themes and trends are identified, a data accounting sheet will be designed and implemented. The data accounting sheet will enable me to arrange each research question's trends and themes by participant or group of participants. This process will enable me to visually represent the volume and frequency of trends and themes as well as the corroboration of data and testing of emerging conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Because of the large volume of data that was collected in this case study; I will consider the utilization of a computer program such as NUD ·IST to help me with the coding and further assist me in locating specific information (such as quotations or perspectives). The program will assist in the process of organizing and reorganizing the responses of the participants in order to more fully analyze the data for a variety of comparisons on different levels. The program may also help visualize relationships needed to develop and interpret the findings of this case study.

Data Verification

Verification is the strength of qualitative research made possible by the extensive time the researcher spends in the field, the thickly detailed descriptions, and the closeness to the participants (Creswell, 1998). The first means of verification will be through the triangulations of the data. This will be achieved through the examination of evidence from three different sources (interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires) to build a coherent justification for the themes (Creswell, 2003). I will employ member-checking to verify my findings. Member-checking will be used to determine the "accuracy of the qualitative finding by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether participants feel they are accurate" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). In this case, I will provide a purposeful sampling of the participants of the educational partnership as well as any other participant who may request it a copy of my findings for them to read and review. They will then have the opportunity to indicate if they feel my findings are accurate. With these methods of data verification in place, I will be confident of the validity of my findings.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the methods and procedures that will be used in the compiling of this qualitative research project. The decision to use qualitative research was based upon considerations of the problem, the personal experience of the researcher, and the audience (Creswell, 2003). The design of this research project will be a case study in which the researcher will be both a participant and an observer of the educational partnership studied. The role of the researcher will be explicitly stated, as will be an acknowledgement of my biases, which will be taken into account when commenting on the case (Merriman, 1998). The strategies that will be used in this research project for the selection of the participants, data collection, data analysis procedures, and data verification methods will be described. Chapter four will present the findings from the analysis of these data.

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