A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY PRINICPAL'S USE OF

MULTI-FRAMED DISCOURSE

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By

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MULTI-FRAMED DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand through case study how the principal used discourse within a single elementary school. Previous research offered leaders multiple interpretations of how discourse has been used to promote reform (Berkhout, 2007; Chia, 2000, Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 2006; Gordon, 2009; Morel, 2007; Tannen, 2000). These studies have neglected to include theories for how discourse was used to improve the school (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). School improvement is the most important concern of the leader (Berkhout, 2007). It is the practices schools use to make sure all students are achieving at high levels. Thus, prior research omits confirmation related to how the principal uses discourse to improve the school (Berkhout; Checkley, 2000; Eubanks, Parish & Smith, 2006). The following inductive research question was developed to guide research.

Research Question

This study aims to answer one research question; How does the principal use discourse?

Design

A single case study design was selected to observe, identify and describe how the principal used discourse within a single Missouri elementary public school. Cresswell (1990) defined a qualitative case study as interpretive research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedure or other quantification. Furthermore, a single case study allows for a holistic description of a single instance within one school (Merriam, 1998). The advantage to

this kind of research is increased understanding related to how the principal facilitated discourse and tapped the tacit knowledge of the learning community. Additional benefits included increases to teacher efficacy. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis positioned the researcher to achieve a complete, inductive understanding of how the principal used discourse (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Mertens (2005) stated qualitative research is meant to proceed inductively, not deductively. Consequently, the researcher inductively interviewed the principal and teachers, convened focus groups, and engaged in direct observation (Cresswell). Purposive sampling was used to ensure a holistic view. The researcher triangulated data and studied one public school principal during faculty meetings where discourse was used.

Findings revealed the principal used discourse to improve and promote teacher efficacy. Teacher participants expressed wanting the principal to use discourse which increased how adult voices impacted improvement. It was also concluded that discourse should occur in a safe environment where risk was diminished. Professional development days were identified as opportunities for the principal to provide support for using discourse to meet the diverse needs of the group. Most importantly, targeted collaboration between the teachers and the principal emerged as important to the leader for using discourse to improve and promote efficacy. It was noted that generalizations should not be drawn from this case study of how a single principal at one small rural elementary school used discourse. However findings could be of use to school leaders considering using discourse in a similarly sized school.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The need for the elementary principal to use discourse to access the tacit knowledge of teachers is worthy of further study (Berkhout, 2007). Chia (2000), found there is a need for discursive, ideological conflict since it promotes teacher efficacy and improvement. Discourse which involves ideological conflict surfaces the core values and the beliefs of teachers (Chia). The responsibility for using discourse to foster this kind of conflict rests on the principal (Eubanks et al, 2006). Ideological conflict also illuminates key assumptions and values of diverse groups of educators (Berkhout). Educational discourse in the context of this study occurs when ideas are presented and challenged by educators in the spirit of improvement (Lambert, 2002). How the principal uses discourse will be generally defined as how the leader situates other educators to embrace and consider the ideological conflict of colleagues (Cresswell, 2003, Gibson, & Baradae, 1999). Morel (2007) found using discourse requires the principal to be a manager of intractable conflict. Thus, productive leaders who use discourse assist participants in seeking clarity and mutual understanding during times of ideological difference (Research Center for Leadership Action, n.d.). School improvement through the use of discourse increases clarity and can lead to adaptations and changes within the organization. A secondary potential ripple effect of discourse is teacher efficacy (Brockberg, 2008). School Improvement is the most important undertaking for educators. It is the process educators use to ensure all students are achieving at high levels. Consequently, this case study assessed and inductively examined how one an elementary principal used discourse to promote teacher efficacy and improvement.

Where discourse is used, teachers feel empowered and expand the expertise of the learning community (Brockberg, 2008). Past are the days where the principal's exclusive tacit knowledge of what defines best practice is enough. Education is now best understood and defined by the opinions and perspectives of the learning community (Kirkland, 2002). Leaders who use discourse, set aside time to re-examine reality through ideological conflict (Gordon, 2009). Consequently, the inductive investigation of such discourse uncovers how the principal engages teachers in ideological conflict to improve. Moreover, acting on the beliefs of one single individual, isolates the rest of the learning community, which in turn does not cause transference of teacher knowledge (Parker, 2009).

The use of productive discourse by principals promotes teacher efficacy and includes both parallel and diverse metaphors (Morel, 2007). In this study, the researcher looked closely at one school where the principal used discourse. Furthermore, this single ethnographic case study assessed and inductively examined how one an elementary principal used discourse to promote teacher efficacy and improvement. The research site was a small elementary school comprised of fourteen teachers and one school principal. Although discourse is not a requirement of traditional structural leadership, there are leaders worthy of study who make a concerted effort to hear, debate, and consider diverse opinions (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The continuation of a three year process to use discourse in an open meeting framework directly contributed to the selection of one principal and fourteen building teachers who participated in this study. Educators at the research site used discourse to discuss improvement initiatives. Drawing on focus group, interview, and observation data, the researcher endeavored to understand how one leader engaged teachers in discourse.

The leader is situated to coordinate policies, procedures, and chains of command (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In addition, there is a growing acknowledgement the principal can use discourse to solve key issues (Yukl, 2010). Discourse is not just a tool for resolving conflict; instead, it is a legitimation strategy (Stake, 1980) affording the leader chances to capture the point of view of others before making important decisions. Thus, the leader regularly assesses the state of the school by seeking the opinion of teachers. It seems easy to talk about the principal's use of discourse as the main issue of this study, but according to Stake, true ideological conflict is far from an easy subject to observe and define. What constitutes discourse is often subject to diverse meaning and is sometime superficial (Stake). Thus, examining one school where discourse was prevalent assisted the researcher in gaining a deeper inductive understanding of the complex chains of cause and effect at the site. On the most basic level, the study tried to explain how the principal used discourse at one public elementary school. How the principal used discourse parallels with a focus of the impact of discourse on efficacy and improvement. Finally, research on the use of discourse in small school settings presented substantive issues to be discussed and evaluated. The small research site also provided robust findings served as guidelines for further research.

Background

In November of 2010, United States Department of Education, Secretary Arnie Duncan released the publication, "Transforming American Education, Learning Powered by Technology" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The document effectively outlined the depth, breadth and scope of the United States Department of Education's overall plan that leaders would use discourse to promote improvement. Most importantly, it identified leadership practices principals employ to cause organizational change through ideological conflict.

Furthermore, the plan articulated the country's grand challenge that discourse must be coordinated at the building level by school leaders. Incidentally, the insights and recommendations embedded within the plan were developed through rigorous, inclusive discourse.

Tapping the tacit knowledge of teachers through discourse was identified as a salient path to better decision making (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). School leaders were also challenged by Duncan (2010) to employ structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames of leadership to use discourse. Other educational experts recognize the internal capacity for a school to flourish, depends upon the leaders use of discourse (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011; Lambert, 2002). Thus, school leaders should consider making and effort to use and manage discourse during meetings (Tannen, 2000). Leaders, who perceive how to use discourse, tap the collective knowledge of the school (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme; Lambert). Where discourse prevails, educators work together in meetings and conversations to scrutinize practice and promote efficacy (Lencioni, 2002; National Turning Points Center, 2001).

This case study examined how one principal used discourse. Furthermore, the researcher employed inductive, qualitative methods to discover how a single elementary school used the practice of discourse. (National Turning Points Center, 2001) Duncan stated the time to act is now; individual groups of principals and teachers should commit to developing and investing in such discourse since groups of educators who use ideological conflict as a tool to access the tacit knowledge of the entire learning community improve (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The statement identifies ideological conflict to be a viable door through which discourse is used to direct improvement. Yet, education is also a value-laden process thus leaders face challenges when using discourse for critical reflection (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). State and

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federal directives communicate high-stakes consequences to schools, especially those failing to cause student growth (National Turning Points Center). Consequently, a leader who engages staff through discourse could face important challenges in the struggle to promote efficacy and improvement (U.S. Department of Education, Brockberg, 2008; Kirkland, 2002). Thus, surface meaning is one thing, but deeper understanding more profound, especially when the principal uses discourse to access group knowledge (Bolman & Deal, 2008; London; Porsch & Bromme).

Principals face challenges when using discourse (Berkhout, 2007). As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, leaders must learn how to frame and use discourse to uncover the best ideas (Yukl, 2010). Structural leaders establish strategies and design conversations, while human resource principals redistribute power to teachers transforming the learning community into a collaborative partnership (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Checkley, 2000; Yukl). Human Resource leaders who use discourse empower teachers and grant efficacy in return for action and conversation (Bolman & Deal; Checkley). Consequently, such leaders simultaneously apply four frames of leadership when using discourse (Bolman & Deal, National Turning Points Center, 2001; London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Discourse is important because it provides the leader access to the knowledge of the learning community and situates ideas for improvement (Bolman & Deal). This study took place from the vantage point of the researcher being present during faculty meetings so that he could inductively observe and record how the principal used discourse.

This research is important since Heystack (2007) found few principals use discourse. Discourse is a conversation system for revealing different assumptions and comparing how people use language to make contributions to the organization (Tannen, 2000). Bolman and Deal (2008) asserted leaders can learn to use framed discourse to improve practice. Thus, this case

study inductively examined how the principal used discourse. Using discourse to cause change is not a common approach in public education (Gordon, 2009). As a result, the researcher purposefully selected one school where discourse was used by the principal. Consequently, this single case study examined how one leader used discourse in a single public elementary school.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

How the leader uses discourse in public education is imprecisely understood (Eubanks et al., 2006, Parish, & Smith, 2006). Previous claims to evaluate principal led discourse relied on a particular pre-conception of engagement (Chia, 2000; Tannen, 2000). By focusing singularly on one goal, outcomes of these studies were misinterpreted. Consequently, the researcher took an open, inductive approach free of expectation. There is a lack of knowledge and information as to how the principal of the selected school used discourse (Yukl, 2010). Drawing on focus group, interview, and observation data, one Missouri public elementary school was studied. The researcher made every effort to understand how the principal used discourse.

<center>Purpose Statement</center>

Leaders are challenged to use discourse to improve (Yukl, 2010). Given the knowledge base around discourse there is still much to be known in regard to how the principal uses discourse. Thus, the purpose of this case study was to understand the use of discourse. During this research, how the principal used discourse was generally defined as what the leader did to situate teachers to embrace and consider the ideological conflict of others (Cresswell, 2003; Gibson & Baradae, 1999). Interactions between one principal and fourteen teachers were observed. By focusing singularly on how the principal used discourse, obstacles to multiple interpretations were removed.

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Past research has examined the following aspects (a) the importance of trust and the willingness to listen (Lambert, 2002; Lencioni, 2002), (b) principals building cultures that support teacher leadership through discourse (Berkhout, 2007), and (c) improving teaching and learning by valuing difference and opinions of others (Lambert, National Turning Points Center, 2001). However, research omits a clear explanation of how the principal uses discourse in the elementary school studied (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Past research by Checkley (2000) indicated enhancing efficacy and improvement through discourse is complicated but necessary. Thus, principals could use discourse in political arenas where bargaining, negotiating, and jockeying of ideas is welcomed (Bolman & Deal, 2008). To better understand these factors, the principal was inductively observed.

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to understand through case study how the principal used discourse within a single elementary school. The findings of this case study will be used to inform principals and principal training programs.

Research Question

This study aims to answer one research question; how does the principal use discourse?

Conceptual Framework

Bolman and Deal's (2008) multi-frame perspective ensured multiple categories of analysis were used to gain in-depth understanding of how the principal used discourse in the selected school (Bolman & Deal; Guillermo, 2008; Rachlin, 1991). The research of Bolman and Deal identified four frames through which leaders use discourse. These researchers concluded effective leaders maintain a multi-frame perspective. Leaders who simultaneously applied more than one frame to discourse were more effective than those who limited themselves to a single lens (Bolman & Deal, Guillermo; London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Leaders and

teachers face pressure to improve and how discourse is structured could be important to discussions which center on learning outcomes (Research Center for Leadership Action, n.d.). The structural frame positions leaders to view the school as an efficient structure established with the goal of maximizing human resources. Authors have contributed to the value of using human resources, particularly their discourses to improve (Bolman & Deal; Guillermo; London; Porsch & Bromme). Discourse taps organization tacit knowledge and helps the leader increase the complexity of thinking (Gordon, 2009; Morel, 2007).

Leaders utilizing the human resource frame see discourse as a tool for promoting collective collaboration. Discourse is also used to identify and solve burning issues of theory and practice. For example, the human resource principal (Bolman & Deal, 2008) might use discourse to access the ideas of others in order to improve. Yet, exclusively top down, structural (Bolman & Deal) managers do not naturally develop such a social order of discourse (Chia, 2000). Therefore, as part of discourse there is the potential for structural leadership to play some role in how dialogue should be framed by the leader (Checkley, 2000).

The political frame situates principals to recognize how unbiased savvy is needed to lead discourse, since power and influence are critical factors (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Berkhout, 2007). The symbolic frame increases principal awareness of figurative power and how leader-led discourse relates to rituals, traditions, and influence (Bolman & Deal). Given this, there is more to be known about the bargaining, negotiation, and compromise associated with the use of discourse. Moreover, Bolman and Deal found leading through the political lens requires embracing and understanding both marginalized and progressive values. This correlation between highly effective principals and the simultaneous use of four frames of leadership has been extensively supported by past research and is therefore, important to this study (Bolman &

Deal, Guillermo, Peters & Waterman, 1982). Frame influenced discourse positioned the researcher to identify and recognize which lens the principal was using when engaging teachers in discourse (Bolman and Deal). Similarly, this study employed four frame analyses to study how the principal used discourse. Positioning the study to examine discourse though Bolman and Deal's four frames assisted the researcher in achieving a deeper understanding of how the principal used discourse (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011).

Four Frames of Leadership

Across the state of Missouri, principals, teachers, and state leaders are concerned about student learning. The use of discourse by leaders has emerged as a powerful tool for tapping the tacit knowledge of teachers (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Thus, leader understanding of how structural, human resource, political, and symbolic, leadership frames impact discourse use is important (Bolman and Deal, 2008). Structural leaders define clear goals. Human resource leaders value feelings and relationships. Political principal's focus on individual and group interest and symbolic leaders develop a shared mission. Previous research omits a clear explanation of how principals should use all four frames during discourse (London, Porsch & Bromme). The following paragraphs explain how four frames of principal leadership are simultaneously applied to discourse.

Peters and Waterman (1982) first applied the benefits of using four-frame leadership by describing the process as being firm/hard and loose/soft when using discourse to improve (Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Researching America's best managed companies, the duo demonstrated how loose/tight rules support multi-frame leadership and shared decision making during discourse (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Research by Checkley (2000) found past efforts to treat educational problems through discourse succeeded only when a specific context for

discussion was first specified. Today, principals' face such a fast period of educational change, few are able to find the time to use discourse effectively (National Turning Points Center, 2001). Consequently, Checkley found a small amount of the principals' time is committed to using discourse (Davey, 1981; London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme).

The use of discourse by principals represents an important methodological approach to accessing the tacit knowledge of the learning community (London, 2008). Discourse is a conversation system for uncovering different assumptions and comparing how people can use language to make contributions (Tannen, 2000). The structural frame provides a blueprint for discourse, while the human resource frame promotes open, teacher controlled communication (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Viewing discourse through the political lens makes the bargaining, negotiating, and ceremonial exchanges authentic (Bolman & Deal, Tannen). Principals using discourse through the lens of the symbolic frame instill a culture of ideological conflict and drama into school meetings (Bolman & Deal).

The purpose of discourse is not to provide people with direct answers, but instead, afford the group ritual access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of others (Cresswell, 2003; Tannen, 2000). Understanding how leaders use discourse to tap the ontological positioning of people was important to this study since doing so opened doorways to advanced search and discovery (Yukl, 2010). In support, Tannen found the use of discourse involved complex deconstructing and interpretation of diverse thought through multiple lenses. Other authors have contributed to the value of discourse and its use, particularly for improving adult efficacy (Tannen; Gordon, 2009).

The Research Center for Leadership Action (RCLA) discovered discourse serves as a balanced entry point for aspiring directors to promote efficacy and improvement (Research

Center for Leadership Action, n.d.). Davey's (1981) research agreed with this finding the regular use of discourse to solve problems reduced anxiety, shaped efficacy, and activated internal improvement. Furthermore, thoughts or feelings that cause individuals to react in fear during discourse were found to be best addressed openly and honestly (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Consequently, previous research provided a compelling case for the principal to use discourse to promote efficacy and improvement (Gordon, 2009; Morel, 2007; Tannen, 2000; Yukl, 2010).

Research performed by Tannen (2000) identified the connection between leader led discourse and improvement. Moreover, causing improvement through the use of discourse was also found to require thoughtful processes (London, 2008). Research by Morel (2007) supported this notion, finding teacher involvement in discourse depended on how the leader used discourse to frame improvement differently. Using inductive case study based on interview, Morel discovered when people were led to use discourse, organizational processes improved. Thus, transferred into the context of this study, a school was further studied to learn how the principal's the use of discourse influenced efficacy and improvement.

Design and Methods

The purpose of this study is to understand through inductive case study principal used discourse within a single school. Cresswell (1990) defined a qualitative case study as fundamentally interpretive research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedure or other quantification. Furthermore, a case study is an intensive, holistic description of a single instance within a school district (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis position the researcher to achieve a complete understanding of how the principal uses discourse (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). The researcher interviewed

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one principal and fourteen teachers, convened focus groups, and engaged in direct observation (Cresswell). Interview and focus groups sessions were digitally recorded, thus enabling the researcher to transcribe data and code for themes and categories (Cresswell).

Cresswell (2002) described purposive sampling to be based on the assumption the researcher wants to discover, understand and gain insight; therefore, it was important to select a well-located sample (Amedy, 1999). A convenient sample of one elementary school within the state of Missouri was studied with the intention of identifying how various themes and patterns reveal how the principal used discourse.

Identifying and describing how the principal uses discourse is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring (Cresswell, 2002). Qualitative, case study research should be exploratory and openly conducted without bias or restriction (Cresswell). Consequently, through data collection, ongoing analysis, and spiraled, interpretive practice, the researcher strived to reach an in-depth understanding of how one leader used discourse. To ensure a holistic view, the researcher triangulated data and by studying one public, elementary school principal in one school setting captured participant stories. Meetings and events where behaviors were most likely to be displayed were observed. Case study research was selected for this study, because it provided a detailed investigation of a single group. According to Cresswell, outlier case studies such as this tend to yield more information than average situations. Finally, improvement information gathered from this investigation could be important to participants at the research site.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been specifically defined by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

Leadership frames defined by researchers Bolman and Deal (2008) suggest leaders act using one of four frames: structural, human resource, political, or symbolic. Furthermore, each leader will have a tendency to lead within a default frame. The structural frame defines clear goals while the human resource frame focuses leaders on the needs of people (Bolman & Deal). The political frame assists the leader in explaining bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise (Bolman & Deal). Leaders who utilize the symbolic frame see the organization through its actors, cultures, and ceremonies (Bolman & Deal).

Sensitization and Desensitization are terms used by psychologists to define human response to phobias and drug addiction. This study applied the theoretical lenses simultaneously, to better understand how principals sensitize and desensitize teachers to discourse (Davey, 1981; London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011).

Discourse is a conversation system for revealing different assumptions and comparing how people use language to make contributions to the organization (Tannen, 2000).

Ideological conflict is the notion ideologies are strongly tied to a person's sense of self, thus discourses related to one's core values, and beliefs cause conflict (Lencioni, 2002).

Epistemological belief is defined as underlying assumptions that influence how people see the world (Dictionairy.com).

Civility refers to the act of separating people from the problem during discourse and recognizing the value of others' ideas (Berkhout, 2007).

Limitations and Assumptions

This study assumed the principal and teachers studied had used discourse to improve. Cresswell (2002) stated case study design must account for construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. According to Merriam (1988), construct validity refers to the

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extent the study investigates what it claims to investigate. The triangulation of different sources of data, including interview, focus group, and observation ensured consistency and accuracy. To determine internal validity, the researcher conducted member checks, rigorous observation at the research site, and considered investigator bias. External validity was confirmed through the use of an auditor who reviewed and provided an assessment of the entire project (Cresswell). Mertens (2005) stated an audit trail is a visible account of research methodology from start to reporting. In addition, a clear and comprehensive audit trail will assist the researcher in identifying potential threats to internal validity (Merriam).

<div align="center">Significance of the Research for Leadership Practice</div>

Past research confirmed principal led discourse during planning positioned learning communities to problem solve (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; National Turning Points Center, 2001). Thus, investigating how the principal used discourse in a well established school further expanded the practice of leadership in education and enhanced the body of knowledge. Findings from this study will enhance and enrich educational design for improvement. The process of studying how the principal used discourse in one elementary school focused attention on one institution's discourse activities. Defining of how the principal used discourse in one school to shape teacher efficacy and improvement might serve as a reference point for other leaders. How teachers describe the role of the principal in using discourse promotes the larger good when it advances how improvement initiatives are conceptualized and operationalized by participants (Rachlin, 1991). Studying how the principal uses multi-frame leadership during discourse is also important (King, 2002). Furthermore, previous research has not specifically examined how the selected elementary principal used discourse. (Berkhout, 2007; Checkley, 2000; Eubanks et al., 2006, Parish & Smith, 2006).

The results of this study inform principals and principal training programs by providing a deeper understanding of how the principal used discourse. Principal training programs and the state of Missouri may wish to consider the findings of this study when establishing criteria for planning principal training programs (Houseman, 2007).

Summary

In this chapter, introductory information about a single case study of how the principal used discourse was presented. Background information and relevant research established a need to inductively study the phenomena (Cresswell, 1991; Gibson, & Baradae, 1999). Thus, this study inductively analyzed and evaluated how the principal used discourse. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to understand through case study how the principal used discourse within a single Missouri elementary school. There is evidence problems can be solved when educators listen to each other and value epistemological difference (National Turning Points Center, 2001). Different voices, experiences, and styles of the principals and teachers add to its strength (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Finally, discourse affords principals another viable strategy for redistributing power to teachers for the purpose of increasing efficacy and improving the school (Porsch & Bromme, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Literature relevant to this study is categorized into four sections. First, there

exists a body of research which contends principal discourse is important to school improvement

(Berkhout, 2007; Chia, 2000; Eubanks et al., 2006; Parish, & Smith, 2006; Gordon, 2009;

Morel, 2007). Past discourse research has also provided insight into the benefits and challenges

to leaders who tap the tacit knowledge of the learning community (Chia). A second segment of

the literature defined discourse as conflict and establishes ideological difference as a significant

and of principal-led discourse (Morel; Rachlin, 1991; Stake, 1980; Sterlin & Lister, 2002;

Worthington, 2009). Thus, this section accepts ideological conflict as a component of discourse.

Groups of educators who are asked to develop through discourse engage in ideological

conflict grounded in a sincere desire to improve (Rachlin, 1991). While discourse is different

than traditional improvement strategies, principals who use the strategy promote improvement

(Parker, 2009). Finally, the third and fourth sections of this review of literature identify

connections between discourse, teacher efficacy, and improvement. Literature in this section is

interpretive and designed to reveal how educational discourse promotes a sense of difference

making in teachers.

This interpretive review of literature connects current research to the work of field

practitioners by placing significance on how the information influenced educational practice.

Leaders who use discourse are guided by this kind work, making the practice relevant to this

study (Yukl, 2010). The lines between discourse and efficacy are blurred (Research Center for

Leadership Action. (n.d.). Yet, in both cases, improvement is the point of clarification. To inform

the research question; how does the principal use discourse? I consolidated and synthesized this review of literature into the four categories of a) discourse, b) conflict, c) efficacy, and d) improvement.

<p style="text-align:center">Discourse</p>

Using straightforward language, modern principals use discourse to tap teacher knowledge (Bolman & Deal, 2008, Berkhout, 2007. Furthermore, the frustration, obstacles, and challenges associated with using discourse are difficult to manage by principals (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Previous studies of literature confirm leaders are not prepared to engage teachers in discourse (Stake, 1980; Sterling & Lister, 2002). Thus, an examination of previous research is necessary to understand how the principal uses discourse (Houseman, 2007). There has been a slow but steady progression toward the use of discourse as an effective tool for promoting improvement. This review of literature spotlights key points of emphasis public school principals consider when using discourse.

<p style="text-align:center">Framing Discourse</p>

First, it is helpful for principals to see discourse through leadership frames (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Eubanks et al., 2006; Parish, & Smith, 2006). The four frames of leadership are structural, human resource, political, and symbolic and can be applied to how the principal uses discourse (Bolman & Deal). Previous research taught principals how framed discourse promoted reform (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The structural frame describes how the principal includes specialized roles, formal relationships, and divisions of labor during discourse (Bolman & Deal). Lambert (2002) found the pursuit of improvement directs structural leaders toward discourses which focus on order. Research by Probst (2011) utilized a fixed non-experimental design to demonstrate how participants in a study preferred the structural approach to using discourse. The

study identified how principals impart a blueprint for discourse to increase understanding and address the reality people exhibit personal preferences and tendencies toward specific discourses.

Research by Bolman and Deal (2008) found leaders who use discourse exhibited a natural tendency to view the organization through frames. They identified the frames as (a) structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, and (d) symbolic. By looking through each frame, participants better understood the context for discourse. For example, leaders using the structural frame to exaggerated key processes central to productive discourse were found to be more successful. After dialogue started, human resource leaders created open systems for talk. Bolman and Deal found the political frame did not focus the leader toward the resolution of conflict, but instead, on strategies and tactics. Finally, the symbolic frame, positioned the leader to form ongoing discursive cultures and ceremonies (Bolman & Deal, Gibson & Baradae, 1999).

German sociologist Michaels (1962) proposed that while people feel the need to be led, power in all forms of leadership, including democracy, rests within a small elite segment of society. He confirmed without the use of multiple frames of leadership, political values surface when leaders try to use discourse. Michael's work explained the conflict that exists between principal and teachers during discourse. Past research also placed emphasis on organizational improvement through scientific management instead of democratic discourse (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Yukl, 2010). Consequently, research performed by both Yukl and Checkley (2000), challenged leaders to use the structural frame of leadership to focus discourse.

The structural frame centers discourse on the goals and objectives of the organization (Berkhout, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2008). Organizations are created to achieve specific goals and structure is enhanced when objectives are debated (Berkhout). The rational pursuit of organizational goals produced research studies that stepped away from democratic discourse

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toward standardized leadership (Gordon, 2009; Morel, 2007). Taylor (as cited in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2003, p. 37) invented the time and motion study of scientific management. Opposing democratic discourse, he broke tasks into minute parts and retrained workers to get the most from motion. Fayol (as cited in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2003, p. 48) found unity of direction demanded a singular leader and plan for activities with one objective. Interestingly, past research into principal leadership did not promote discourse; instead, the structural coordination of strengths and efforts of workers to meet organizational goals and objectives was the focus. Gulick (as cited in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, p. 491) also contributed to the pursuit of organizational goals without discourse. He theorized that work should be divided and coordinated to achieve goals of greater production. While early research helped the pursuit of goals in organizations through divided labor, little attention was paid to how structured discourse could increase production (Chia, 2000).

Black (2004) researched how the dominant frame held by leaders determined whether they used discourse during organizational change. Citing several studies, Black found the structural lens was more often infused into leader decision making and such leadership did not promote discourse. In contrast, research performed by Bolman and Deal (2008) resulted in the need to increase leader understanding that workers possess tacit knowledge, experiences that if tapped through structure, could cause improvement. While the pair correlated four perspectives, or frames, for using discourse they identified the structural frame as used most frequently by leaders. Bolman and Deal's research of frame orientation caused them to discover how leaders most often worked from the structural frame. Yet, in contrast the pair found leadership through the human resource frame more often promoted open collaboration.

The human resource frame creates a link between efficacy and improvement (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Parker, 2009). Through the human resource frame, Follett (as cited in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2003, p. 152) first served as a guide for leaders and managers since he shed insight into how interpersonal dynamics, empowerment and human resource leadership contributed to change. He stated direct orders cause improvement when they promote self-discovery and tap the tacit knowledge of people in the work place. Follett also argued managers who empowered employees to discover the law of the situation promoted sustained growth. Originally written in 1926, Follett's article still challenges contemporary principals to see value in investing in self-managing collaborative teams. Gulick (as cited in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, p. 492) noted workers exhibited a common purpose to play a role in coordination instead of following a structural manual of rules. In support, Kirkland (2002) found that while the productivity of an organization was achieved through clear and consistent structures, collaborative decision-making promoted efficacy. Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr. (1982) metaphorically applied the benefits of leadership which was simultaneously firm/hard and loose/soft to achieve such goals. Researching America's best managed companies, the duo demonstrated how loose/tight rules encouraged structural, human resource, political and symbolic decision making during discourse.

Principals who use discourse ensure workers participate in improvement discussions (Brockberg, 2008). However, Gordon's (2009) work found leader use of the human resource frame varied greatly when little attention was paid to systematic analysis through stakeholder discourse. Using case study design, Maybey (2003) found human resource leaders made better informed decisions based on stakeholder feedback. He attributed improvements in leader performance to the tendency of directors to view problems collectively with staff from non-competing standpoints. Human resource practices observed by Maybey, revealed discourse

generated purposeful dialogue. Furthermore, a study of 300 senior level directors by Bolman and Murray (2004) found 50% of those interviewed indicated their use of human resource leadership was ineffective when trying to clearly define improvement targets and requirements. Participants did confirm without collegial discourse, program implementation suffered and staff members failed to fully embrace the change process. In support, a mixed-methods study by Bolman and Deal (2008) explored the impact of collegial leadership on workers. Data indicated regular use of the human resource frame by directors promoted collective decision making. The findings of the study support the argument principals can empower employees to use discourse to improvement in the school. In alignment with Maybey's work, Bolman and Deal's findings encouraged leaders to use dialogue to uncover opinion (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011).

German sociologist, Robert Michaels (1962) found the political values of workers consolidated interests forcing leaders to become more accountable to decision making. Michaels' work explained the struggles that existed between aristocracy and democracy during discourse. Thus, principals who recognize schools function as clans use discourse to consolidate common goals, since educators naturally desire to improve outcomes (Ouchi, 1981). Ouchi found teachers flourish in such organizations since engaging in discourse around aspects of the job inform change. Furthermore, such schools are defined by discourse and collective decision making, thus cultivating efficacy. Finally, Checkley (2000) proposed organizations benefit from collaborative environments which are trusting and promote participation within the work force. Yet, while discourse seems like a simple enough concept, past research affirmed engaging people in discourse is complex and requires leaders to overcome factors such as rivalry, blame, and targeting (Checkley; Turning Points, 2001).

Leadership through the symbolic frame likens discourse to a collaborative tapestry embroidered within the learning community. Furthermore, leaders who use discourse cause followers to experience a heterogeneous mixture of ontological color, texture, and hue (Gordon, 2009). What this picture symbolizes is best understood by educators who enter the scene and experience the discourse. There are systems and values that have been defined and understood by the learning community since its existence (Bolman & Deal, 2008). There are also irrational and unsubstantiated opinions that attempt to govern and influence behavior. School history, values and beliefs, it's norms and standards symbolize how people respond to principal led discourse (Morel, 2007). Thus, the symbolic frame of leader led discourse focuses on cultural aspects (Bolman & Deal).

Bolman and Deal (2008) found both culture and symbolic meaning to be significant influencers of change. Leaders who used discourse recognize infusing ideological conflict into the learning community impacted culture (Stake, 1980). Consequently, leaders who use discourse situate followers to self-construct symbolic structures which frame and outline social action (Checkley, 2000). In contrast, Houseman (2007) warned the symbolic frame does not easily lend itself to such choice. This phenomenon is due to the need for groups of people to self-construct reality. Thus, different learning communities will achieve symbolic outcomes uniquely (Bolman & Deal). London (2008) found leaders who successfully used discourse to approach conflict saw it as an opportunity to access the symbols, values and insights of other people. He found these leaders structured discourse to promote group thinking and to move conversations in diverse directions.

Structuring Discourse

Van Dijk (2006) found without a certain amount of structured management by the principal, reactive participants offered strongly biased feedback during discourse. In addition, these individuals aggressively turned conversations toward individual ideology and ego as opposed to taking the team approach to improvement. Van Dijk's work supported Bolman and Deal's theory that principals must strike a balance between teachers with different personalities by employing multi-frame leadership when using discourse. Furthermore, research by Ruiz (2005) also supported imposing pre-established norms since the leaders' duty as discourse leader is to ensure workers exercise care for one another during difficult dialogue. Researchers, Fisher (2007), Henderson (2001), Ruiz; and Miles, Jordens, and Sayers (2003), confirmed directors who use discourse cause adults to ethically care about those who offer contrary perspectives. Preparing people to participate in difficult dialogue is complex but promotes safe, multifaceted thinking and thus extended an equal opportunity for all adults to engage in discourse (Worthington, 2009).

Lall (2009) warned expressed anger, happiness, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, and contempt are inevitable healthy aspects of discourse. In response, research by Anderson (2009) confirmed leaders must learn to accept expressed anger as part of productive discourse (Porsch & Bromme, 2011; London, 2008). Furthermore, Lall asserted instead of creating norms which restrict emotion during discourse, leaders should model self-awareness and emotional self-control. Geddes and Stickney (2011) found expressed anger by people during discourse was frowned upon by directors. Yet, Lall concluded expressed anger promoted productive discourse. Consequently, he found displays of expressed anger during discourse were sanctioned by management.

Geddes and Stickney (2011) concluded three types of anger appeared during discourse, (a) expressed anger, (b) suppressed anger, and (c) deviant anger. A case study revealed suppressed and deviant anger produced negative outcomes but expressed anger caused positive results. The results included greater message characteristics, group membership, emotional intelligence and perceived legitimacy. Geddes and Stickney established structural sanctioning of deviant anger must occur to prevent harming leader-follower relationships. This research also confirmed for discourse leaders, the traditional view that any kind of anger during discourse is damaging and must be formally sanctioned to be false. Instead, expressed anger during director-led discourse should be seen as informative, and if responded to appropriately by management pressures workers to improve. Leaders must develop an understanding of how diverse epistemological values held by participants either hinder or promote productive discourse (Geddes & Stickney).

Epistemological Positioning

Managers who use discourse spend 70% of their time in verbal interaction with people from varied epistemological positions (Vert, 1998). Studies by Kirkland (2002) and Diefenbach (2007) examined how human resource leaders managed such pragmatics during discourse. Both researchers sought to discover if discourse was hindered when leaders hired and engaged rational thinkers over value driven people. Each study found employment was not as significant a factor as director suppression or promotion of value driven discourse.

Furthermore, leaders who imposed prefabricated reform strategies were found by Checkley (2000) to hinder authentic problem solving through discourse. The results of Kirkland and Diefenbach's studies helped clarify why federally imposed mandates with top down effects restrained value laden discourse. Checkley (2002) found leaders who predicated discourse with

discussions of mission effectively situated both the pragmatic and rationalistic participants. Leaders who embraced input from employees holding varied epistemological stance gained insight by tapping and embracing the discourse of these individuals (Stake, 1980).

Checkley's research failed to recognize principals and teachers are not trained to respond appropriately during emotionally charged discourse. Hackling, Smith, and Murcia (2010) asserted leaders who use discourse learn to develop a pedagogical framework, one that supports discourse for both pragmatists and those who tend to be rational thinkers. Thus, starting and managing discourse requires principals to teach both pragmatists and rationalists not to fear making mistakes. Checkley and Bolman and Deal (2008) found this is best accomplished by human resource leaders who allow conversational blunders to happen and then step in and help correct them.

The opening paragraph of this review of literature established the need for principals and teachers to use discourse to improve. Within that same theme, leaders who use discourse explicitly teach followers to use it as a tool for promoting improvement (Geddes & Stickney, 2011; Gibson & Baradae, 1999). Structural principals craft faculty meeting agendas to promote collegial discourse yet are careful to avoid top down neutrality and politeness. Research by Porsch and Bromme (2011) and London (2008) agreed the use of discourse during meetings should be the responsibility of the leader. Anderson (2009) and Geddes and Stickney both found when leaders predicated discourse with strict norms and sanctions; employees became reactive and suspicious of groupthink. In contrast, the pair found when peer pressure in the form of appropriate discourse was taught, improvements in professional practice resulted. Furthermore, Geddes and Stickney found de-individualization occurred when discourse was not allowed by

leaders. Their work established the workplace as a place not only for rational, social neutrality and politeness but also a location for discourse.

"It has been said that a wise man learns from his mistakes – and a wiser man learns from the mistakes of others" (Anderson 2009, p.135). Yosifon (2011) affirmed the challenge of multi-framed discourse management is a fundamental problem facing principals who have traditionally led from the structuralist perspective (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Observations of structural leadership by Yosifon found such directors meticulously planned ahead to prevent ideological conflict, mistakes, and disagreement during staff meetings. Sawyer and Berson (2004), and Van Dijk (2006) agreed the opposite should occur if leaders are to tap the specialized tacit knowledge of direct reports through discourse. In other words, while meeting agendas and topics for discussion should align to mission, plans must also be open ended enough to allow key issues to emerge through theoretical discourse. Furthermore, leaders who use discourse allow for mistakes yet prepare subordinates to sensitize to the discomforts of failure (Anderson; Morel, 2007). Research by Geddes and Stickney (2011) affirmed teacher exposure to disrespectful behavior from colleagues caused discomfort, yet simultaneously helped those responsible learn how to avoid making similar mistakes again. Leaders who successfully used discourse made the process more soft and subtle (Anderson; Porsch & Bromme, 2011; London, 2008). However, before teachers will trust colleagues, the learning community must practice doing it wrong to get it right. People will only learn to disagree in a trustworthy fashion with extended practice (Van Dijk). The following paragraph more closely examines additional factors necessary for engaging staff in discourse.

Grice's (Davies, 2007) cooperative principle suggests leaders must require direct reports to first recognize a common purpose and an acceptable direction for talk. Thus, principal-created

norms should include quantity, quality, relation, and the manner which input is communicated. Furthermore, a study by Abdi, Tavangar, and Tavakoli (2010) found a relationship existed between successful discourse and leader-structured norms that controlled for quantity and quality of input.

Leader-led discourse challenges workers to imagine the perspective of others before disagreeing within an academic context (Tannen, 2000). In other words, before speaking, teachers should learn to employ empathy to perceive how discourse influences and impacts others. Research by Diefenbach (2007) and Manuti, Michela, and Giuseppe (2006), identified factors as critical to self managed discourse: (a) discussion domination, (b) the suggestion to restructure and, (c) competition. Human resource leaders see discourse as a privileged vehicle to convey and spread values, beliefs and tacit knowledge through argumentation (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Yet, people must also be structurally taught to use such communication tools strategically and ensure suggestions perpetuate the organization's core values. Change through discourse requires leaders use multiple frames of leadership to manage and norm the context of speech, ensuring participant safety (Manuti et al., 2006). Thus, ideal discourse considers the importance of rational understanding and using norms for talk to assist with the justification of diverse ideas (Brockberg, 2008).

Norms

As previously mentioned, an important task for leaders who use discourse is to frame talk and develop a safe place where people can express disparate views (Rourke & Kanuka, 2007). McNairy (2010) found discourse sometimes includes dialogue which is inappropriate, hostile, insulting, and mean spirited. In response, Ruiz (2005) found imposed norms for discourse should include the moral obligation to ethically care about others. Furthermore, narrowing the ethic of

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care to personal relationships, Ruiz asserted people be taught to merge care and justice during discourse. He found norms must be structured to avoid groupthink but loose enough to permit critical discourse. Norms must also be sufficiently tight enough to protect against power relationships which erode care. This means principals who use discourse should help teacher teams develop norms which promote care for those who think differently.

Using a large sample of experimental data, Carpenter and Mathews (2009) studied norm enforcement and found leader imposed rules were effective only when such sanctions caused people to self-regulate discourses. Worker learning from mistakes and blunders during discourse were an inevitable part of the debate process. A study by Sawyer and Berson (2004) found videotaping to be an effective strategy for promoting task-focused, caring discourse. Reynolds (2007) disagreed and asserted people either valued or devalued another's perspective since power struggles were inevitable. Reynolds found simply heightening employee awareness to the rigors of discourse to be an insufficient and ineffective method for making difficult dialogue productive. He felt rigid norms were best for maintaining personal and professional care during discourse. In other words, it was more important to place emphasis on controlling inter-professional working than to promote trial and error self governance. According to Reynolds, leaders should structurally step in during discourse and situate behavior through norms. Researcher Carter (1998) supported Reynold's idea safe leader-led discourse must be highly structured. He also acknowledged Bolman and Deal's (2008) proposal directors use frames of leadership since when discussing issues rigid bureaucratic regulation promoted unproductive discourse. Reynolds work aligned with McNairy (2010) and Bolman and Deal's assertion that productive discourse is best managed by the human resource leaders, especially when people were asked to engage in genuine theoretical discourse. Reynolds also agreed but added the

director should monitor overlapping comments and even at times interrupted talk. Thus, the conclusion was made, mediation during discourse was not necessary when leaders prepared followers to use appropriate non-verbal communication (Reynolds) Carter supported this idea and asserted back channeling to be a strategy that should be considered during discourse. According to the researcher, back channeling involved head nodding and verbal feedback which includes utterances such as oh, yeah, and sure. Back channeling was also found to prevent the need to stop discourse (Carter).

Safety

Up to this point, this review of literature has not examined when the leader should stop discourse. Yet, it has been observed the safest way for directors to use discourse is to practice key processes (Anderson, 2009). A case study by Rourke and Kanuka (2007) found one of the most important tasks for leaders was to facilitate discourse where people challenged one another and felt safe being challenged. Participant experiences during critical discourse required stopping only on rare instances since people consistently chose politeness over deviant behavior.

Research by Sypher (2009) found incivility during discourse was more associated with affluence, competition, sleep-deprivation, and working long hours more than discourse. Incivility included rude or unsociable speech or behavior. According to dictionairy.com, behaviors which include, lack of politeness and offensive comments also define incivility. Leaders who scheduled meetings earlier in the week had to step in and stop discourse less frequently. Rourke and Kanuka (2007) and Sypher found directors should be prepared to stop dialogue when name calling, public humiliation, and unrestrained emotional tirades occurred. One significant contributing factor to such discourse related to each participant's dominant communication language and ontology (Sterling & Lister, 2002).

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Professionals must work with others who think and act differently due to ontological difference (Rachlin, 1991). Sypher (2009) isolated postmodernists and constructivists as having colliding value systems which produced contentious, uncivil discourse. Discussion related to high stakes initiatives was also found to produce a caustic formula for confrontational listening and speaking between groups. In such cases, leaders were advised to act structurally and stop ideological conflict to recognize the value of ontological difference since there are moments when adults will disagree aggressively for values of importance (Sypher).

Sterling and Lister (2002) confirmed leaders who created norms to compartmentalize knowledge into contexts such as general knowledge, domain knowledge, and source specific knowledge were more effective in promoting the acceptance of diverse viewpoints. The pair asserted framing content in such a heterogeneous manner reconciled content and context without ontological interference. In support, Hirsch (1993) found reconciling ontological difference during discourse by abruptly stopping dialogue to discuss with participants overlaps in thought supported multiple domains. Sypher's (2009) research further confirmed the notion, productive discourse depended on the leaders' ability to guide followers toward embracing epistemo-ontological difference in favor of productive collaboration. He asserted epistemology must come before ontology. In other words, "knowing = being" and how people know what they know and can share it is more relevant to productive discourse than how each participant individually conceives reality (Sypher, p. 29). Nevertheless, studies by Sterling and Lister, Sypher and Hirsch and London (2008) collectively connected uncivil discourse to ontological difference, further anchoring the responsibility of the leader to stop emotional dumping during discourse.

Conflict

Research by Anderson (2009), Porsch & Bromme (2011), and London (2008) confirmed discourse encourages interpersonal conflict. The presence of conflict during discourse means leaders are challenged to learn how to balance efficacious aspects of difficult dialogue with emerging conflict. Anderson further asserted, without this kind of balance, participants will become frustrated during discourse and pull back. In support, research by Diefenbach (2007) found directors who provided guidance for managing conflict during discourse protected core values while simultaneously affording people opportunities to propose changes in practice.

Gill and Spencer (2008) found the easiest way for leaders to manage conflict during discourse was to first handle it themselves and model how to hear and tolerate varied points of view. Yet, Ruiz (2005) found few leaders are capable of managing such complicated differences of opinion. Nevertheless, directors who managed the discomforts of discourse were granted influence (Anderson, 2009; Checkley, 2000; Porsch & Bromme, 2011; London, 2008).

Managing conflict during discourse affects participant temperament, care, demands, and the willingness of people to make mistakes during discourse (Checkley, 2000). Research by Vert (1998) found principals who used discourse to improve, had to manage conflicting interplay which caused ontological insecurity and anxiety. Porsch and Bromme (2011) and Tannen (2007) established transformational leaders consistently and regularly structured meetings and agendas to support such activities. Research performed by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2004) suggested adults practice a skill 24 times to reach competency. Similarly, to effectively use discourse, leaders are obligated to first understand how their own behavior impacts the way decisions are made during ideological conflict. Structural actions by the leader to norm dialogue do not regularly cause important decisions to emerge through difficult dialogue (Abdi et al,

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2010). Research by Abdi et al (2010), and Magnavita (2008) found the act of adults engaging in discourse alone was not a sufficient strategy for promoting security during difficult dialogue. In contrast, the results of research by Anderson (2009) and Peck (1997) disagree and explain the director must simplify the act of discourse by first teaching key skills necessary for handling conflict. The researchers suggested keeping the learning process simple since discourse is achieved through habitual learning, repetition, and trial-and-error. Such simplification meant leaders must initially make discourse a regular element of faculty and team meetings.

Leaders who use discourse support conflict since it is embedded in diverse opinions expressed by groups of professionals (Sterling & Lister, 2002). Yet, Anderson (2009), Hackling et al, Smith and Murcia (2010), and London (2008) found directors are not prepared to manage conflict during meetings. Conflict develops from dominant discourses and is managed by directors through identifying, analyzing, and redefining perspectives. Conflict also occurs when pedagogical knowledge is debated and outcomes hinge upon the executive's ability to manage discussion (Hackling et al., 2010). The act of transforming meetings into an institutional context for ideological conflict requires repetitive practice. Human resource administrators recognize reform is influenced by the leaders' ability to start and manage conflict (Kirkland, 2002). Research performed by Kumaravadivelu (1999) found leaders are not trained to do either.

Teaching safe, flexible and decision oriented discourse requires repetition and simplified processes. Social scholars agree repetition and keeping it easy minimizes worker frustration (Anderson, 2009, Peck, 1997). The most effective strategy for motivating people to handle conflict during discourse is to decrease barriers (Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Thus, leaders who afford followers time to clearly establish the relationship between discourse and conflict successfully used discourse (Hackling et al., 2010). Applying the research of Anderson and Peck,

worker acceptance of conflict during discourse is the linking pin between access to group

knowledge and improvement. Kumaravadivelu (1999) found leaders develop the capacity to

sustain conflict during discourse by removing barriers to feedback and reflection. By structuring

discourse this way, leaders encourage workers to focus discourse away from self and critically

reflect.

Research by Lieb (1991) found three critical elements must be addressed by leaders to

ensure conflict is managed, (a) motivation, (b) reinforcement, and (c) transference. People who

are motivated use discourse as a tool for explaining and understanding improvement. They also

accept conflict as part of discursive processes. Directors, who provide praise when workers

arguably challenge ideas, reinforce discourse. Most importantly, staff members who are praised

for accepting conflict during discourse caused improvement. Consequently, when leaders fail to

address these factors and keep discourse simple and motivating, employee frustration emerges

(Anderson, 2009; Yosifin, 2010). Hickey (2008) and Lencioni (2002) stated leaders who

predicate the discussion of key issues with references to the results or a mission reduce anxiety

caused by conflict. Approaching discourse through this framework causes transference. In

contrast, Berkhout (2007) warned, while processes are important to keep discourse democratic

and non-centralized it must remain democratic.

Research confirmed disparity and adaptation is vital to improvement (Bolman & Deal,

2008; Peck, 1997; Hickey, 2008; Vygotsky, 1986; Berkhout 2007; London, 2008; Porsch &

Bromme, 2011). Leaders develop the staff's ability to adapt to ideological conflicted and

discursive processes (Porsch & Bromme; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Hickey (2008),

Vygotsky (1986), and Berkhout (2007) found leaders who rigorously use discourse cause those

around them to be more acceptant of conflict. These leaders recognize people must be taught to

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respect one another, value differences, and remain open to conflict during discourse. The group found leaders who expose adults to disagreement during discourse promote difference. Consequently, principals must referee and help participants accept diverse ontology and the values of others to be a healthy form of dependency and part of discourse.

Yosifon (2011) argued structural governance is first necessary to change the way people think and to encourage people to talk openly and disagree during meetings. In contrast, Checkley (2002) found human resource leadership was necessary to afford workers the kind of flexible rules critical to productive discourse. Studies by Abdi et al. (2010) and Yosifon found managers who guided conversations with multi-frame process knowledge were successful in helping people manage the discomforts of conflict during discourse. Contrary, research by Manuti et al. (2006) and Peck (2003) confirmed collaboration which promoted change required directors to allow emotional instability to emerge during discourse. The group confirmed it was not enough that the leader simply increase capacity to redesign talk but instead, the he or she should awaken a sense of group efficacy through strenuous, demanding dialogue. Lencioni (2002) agreed confirming the leader's role is not to avoid confrontation but to build a team that can deal with the rigors of ideological conflict, committing to group decisions, holding peers accountable, and most importantly focusing on the results of the team over self. Thus, leader managed discourse promotes individual and group efficacy.

<center>Efficacy</center>

Increasing group knowledge of how discourse should be used reduces frustration and promotes efficacy (Anderson, 2011; Hackling, 2008; Gill, 2008). Authentic educational change requires nonstop, continuous adult learning and development. Meeting the individual learning needs of adults in this time of fast paced, forced change promotes efficacy but also represents a

sizeable challenge (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Furthermore, leaders must rethink collaborative processes used to measure, monitor, and improve. Because of the need to improve, principals and teachers must engage in sustained discourse which promotes efficacy (Research Center for Leadership Action, n.d.). Moreover, sustained discourse requires leaders to define guidelines for talk around improvement (Bolman & Deal, 2008). To promote efficacy, these guidelines should provide explicit frameworks for ensuring discourse targets and blames practice not people. Furthermore, collegial leaders support teacher efficacy and ensure efforts to engage in discourse are kept safe and free from rivalry, blame, and targeting (Bolman & Deal). Brockberg (2008) found worker efficacy to be a determinant of civil, productive discourse. For the purpose of this study, teacher efficacy is defined as the educator's perceived capability to engage in difficult dialogue with colleagues. In discursive contexts, the efficacy of teachers is improved when they are made certain that students will benefit from of the educators ability to debate change. Brockberg found leadership greatly contributed to the establishment and maintenance of teacher efficacy during discourse.

Perception of the leader as ally and not rival is critical to promoting efficacy during discourse (Berkhout, 2007). Difficult dialogue, especially that which impacts worker performance must take place in a safe, well managed meeting environment (Biddle, 2011). Eubanks et al. (2006) further elaborated on the tensions facing leaders who find themselves at the center of starting, and managing safe dialogue. Other findings included disparate diverse perspectives related to increases in performance; dialogue had to be managed by a competent, human resource leader (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Furthermore, directors who acted collegially as ally instead of rival, increased the likelihood workers felt efficacy from discourse (Berkhout). Thus, the public school principal must regularly monitor adult behavior and outcomes during

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discourse. Stakeholders affiliated with schools and school districts compare school employees to peers as a strategy for goal setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Thus, in such a competitive environment, fear of rivalry and blame requires leaders to structurally intervene when discourse negatively impact teacher efficacy (Bolman & Deal; Lambert, 2002).

Blame

Checkley (2000) and Lencioni (2002) confirmed blame caused leaders and workers to lose trust, hindering efficacy. Checkley suggested a good way of identifying blame is to measure the reaction of worker after the leader makes a mistake. If people ask, who made the mistake in place of what can be done to remedy the problem, a blame culture exists (Checkley). Lambert (2002) confirmed blame hinders efficacy during productive discourse. Yet, federal directives complicate the issue by placing blame on schools and teachers when student groups fall below proficiency targets (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Such actions increased the likelihood of blaming, thus augmenting the probability principals and teachers will be found at fault when students fail to learn. In response, Diefenbach (2007) asserted principals who identify pitfalls and carefully frame discourse can prevent blame (Four pillars of NCLB, 2010). More importantly, Hickey (2008) found principals who recognized and stopped discourse which made teachers feel at fault promoted efficacy during dialogue. Research by Fisher (2007) and Kumaravadivelu (1999) supported Hickey's findings that safe, fault free discourse is exclusively rooted in collaborative groups normalized by human resource leaders to accept diverse and subjective dialogue without targeting.

Lencioni (2002) stated functional teams trust one another during discourse. Such teams share mistakes and weaknesses openly in front of peers. This kind of vulnerability enables directors to lead fear free discourse and the passionate debate of ideas which in turn promotes

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efficacy and improvement. Furthermore, the absence of open conflict was reported by Lencioni to cause pretend buy-in and veiled discussion outside of meetings. Lencioni also found open discourse improved the functionality of the organization and increased the probability of commitment, since people were allowed to air opinion through debate. Thus, discourse sets the foundation for participant efficacy and accountability to group decisions. Consequently, teams who regularly engaged in discourse were found by Lencioni to pay greater attention to team as opposed to individual status. Lencioni's work concluded functional teams deteriorated when discourse was hindered by leaders. Research performed by Lencioni, London (2008), and Porsch and Bromme (2011) agreed genuine teamwork is elusive since leaders unknowingly fall prey to pitfalls and top down reform. Concluding principals must be collegial collaborators and referees during discourse.

Discourse communities are headed by leaders with clear vision (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Modern leaders share with teachers the pressures of their position and collectively implement educational reform through discourse (Four pillars of NCLB, 2010). Disparate educational environments add additional stressors for principals and teachers. Consequently, principals who tap the tacit knowledge of the learning community promote teacher efficacy (Lambert, 2002). To ensure discourse is practiced, human resource leaders act transformative and advocate for democratic planning (Bush, 2003). Human resource principals take initiative and moderate discourse which promotes efficacy (Bush, 2003; London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Developing people to use discourse is a transformative process (Bush). Consequently, exclusively structural leaders struggle improve the school alone (Four pillars of NCLB, 2010). In contrast, directors who use discourse to confront key issues promote efficacy (Lambert). The verbal interchange of ideas opens new ways of representing, thinking, and communicating about

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issues (Lambert). In other words, human resource leaders promote teacher efficacy by regularly

engaging them in democratic discourse (Harris & Sass, 2007). Discourse-rich meetings tap the

tacit knowledge of the group (Lambert). Thus, this access to group knowledge assists in

uncovering strategies and processes that promote change. Human Resource principals referee

open, rule free discourse to help teachers' better grasp the depth and breadth of key issues

(Bolman & Deal, 2008). McNairy (2010) provided a contrasting argument for rule free dialogue

asserting that leader managed discourse must teach participants to follow norms. He asserted a

safe environment for discourse affords hot and cold tempered adults sufficient latitude to

exercise ideas without fear of personal attack. Furthermore, Gill (2010) and Peck (1997) asserted

such destructive stereotypes and norms discouraged efficacy, especially when people

consistently thought simplistically and failed to engage in safe, self critical dialogue. Research

by Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, (2007) uncovered certain collaborative groups require

more rules for using discourse than others. Their research found excessive norming of talk and

specific topics for discussion provided by structural principals caused quiet, obedient staff

members who were trained to look to the leader for direction. Furthermore, their work revealed

supervisors promoted groupthink instead of efficacy when workers were provided restrictive

norms which prevented opposing viewpoint.

 Civil discourse results from the practices made to be important by the leader (Parker,

2009). Climate affects how the educational community approaches discourse. Parker's study

used a non-experimental one-shot survey research method to explain how learning communities

promoted safe discourse. An important conclusion from the study found discourse built upon the

assumption knowledge is not transmitted from administrator, text, or activity to the follower; but

was self-constructed. King's (2002) research supported Parkers findings and concluded efficacy, collaboration and decision-making ultimately drive self-regulated, safe discourse.

Pei-I Chen (2006) referred to follower efficacy in the context of discourse as the confidence people need to successfully achieve goals, specifically those related to practice. Yet, a lack of teacher-led innovation is evidenced throughout previous attempts to reform deficits in student learning through discourse, and this failing has had a substantive effect on efficacy (Parker, 2009). Worker efficacy improves use discourse (Enderlin-Lampe, 1997). Yet, Bush (2003) acknowledged clear advantages and limitations to sharing authority. In recent years, standardized testing has increased the visibility of achievement gaps by socioeconomic subgroups in public education. To address low achievement areas, leaders should use what the author referred to as participatory management or an emphasis on discourse for planning (Bush). The collegial improvement planning process can be slow, cumbersome, and time consuming. Yet efficacy building improvement planning requires leaders to encourage innovation and emphasize collective decision making (Bush, 2003). Gamage and San Antonio (2006) confirmed efficacy is improved through such collective decision making. Participatory management through discourse was proposed to be an essential ingredient for improving schools. The author's research successfully related change to discourse (Gamage & San Antonio). Thus, participants who felt efficacy during discourse increased the organizations capacity to improve.

The movement toward reform through discourse has illuminated the need to tap the cumulative expertise of the school's staff (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Scribner et al. (2007) concluded too much autonomy leads to confusion and too little to groupthink. Functional collaborative teams increased self-efficacy, however group members were unprepared to engage in constructive discourse, and became frustrated, by tensions. Lencioni (2002) and Wahlstrom

and Seashore, (2008) further examined the effect of learning through discourse and found a need for the leader to use discourse to share leadership. Both studies argued discourse protected worker autonomy and promoted organizational learning. Furthermore, discourse was found more likely to promote improvement when leaders acted collegially. Finally, research by Stigler (2008) found human resource leaders supported collaboration and avoided groupthink by constantly self-examining their own thinking and leadership. Thus, the authors' challenged leaders to self-analyze and perceive how their own multi-framed leadership used discourse. Consequently, principals who use discourse encourage teachers to air different opinions about the most important issues and promote buy in and commitment to improvement (Lencioni).

<center>Improvement</center>

The Research Center for Leadership Action (n.d.) found leaders who use discourse to promote improvement ensure people hold one another mutually accountable for ideas which define improvement. Similarly, the concept of improvement in the context of this study is to ensure all students are achieving at high levels. Yet, improvement is much more than simply showing growth on norm referenced assessments. Improvement in the context of principal led discourse is a matter of getting the job done by tapping the tacit knowledge of the entire learning community (Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Parker (2009) took a holistic view of improvement through discourse and found a particular set of habits regularly existed in learning communities who improved through discourse. First, the core purpose of the leader was to engage the group in dialogue about important issues instead of structurally providing a singular direction. Second, successful organizations built the capacity to improve by establishing communication strategies. Using discourse, positioned learning communities to interdependently find better solutions through talk (Berkhout, 2007).

<center>40</center>

The National Turning Points Center (2001) found leaders who debate direction and purpose collegially, assume the position of co-creator. For a school to improve, leaders should use discourse which positions groups of educations to remain in a continual mode of learning. Thus, principals who use discourse promote efficacy toward what should be done to improve. Research by The U.S. Department of Education (2010) found an important facet of principal led discourse is embedded in the interactions between principals and teachers, interaction which promoted improvement. Parker (2009) suggested developing a community of discourse is the best way to improve since doing so ensures stakeholders participate in decision making processes. Most importantly, he found discourse promoted a shared sense of purpose in people. Thus, for the school to improve, teachers must be motivated and interested in openly debating ideas which cause the school to improve (Parker).

The National Turning Points Center (2001) performed research and found principals play a key role establishing the conditions for improvement. Research on principal leadership by Bolman and Deal (2008) also suggested structural approaches coupled with collegial leadership fostered improvement. The pair found the catalyst for this kind of leadership is the moment people connect their feedback to evidence improvement occurred. Parker (2009) presented the idea teacher discourse has the potential to unlock group knowledge critical to building the capacity to improve. Consequently, principals who use discourse ensure teachers are situated to link their thinking and the ideas to the thoughts of others and increase group capacity to improve.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

An examination of past research revealed leaders benefit from using discourse to promote efficacy and improvement (Brockberg, 2008; Houseman, 2007; Kirkland, 2002; Lambert, 2002). Research by Bolman and Deal (2008) found leaders view the organization through four frames.

They identify the frames as; (a) structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, and (d) symbolic. By looking through each frame, the leader better understands discourse. For example, leaders act structurally to establish rules, policies, and procedures for discourse. Through the human resource frame the leader focuses on safety, efficacy, and self-actualization during talk (Parker, 2009). The political frame situates leaders to be constructive politicians who consider different perspectives. Finally, through the symbolic frame, the leader forms culture and symbols which provide meaning to discourse.

Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frame model offers a more diverse understanding for how managers use discourse. Past research has related such multi-frame thinking by leaders to gate-keeping during discourse (Bolman & Deal). Bolman and Deal found individual lenses originated from past experiences people had and influence how they approach discourse. Yet, four frames of leadership can be understood and deliberately used by leaders during discourse. Furthermore, the work of Bolman and Deal effectively positioned principals to better understand and frame discourse. Stucturalist principals and teachers might argue against discourse since it causes ontological insecurity and anxiety (Bolman & Deal). Yet, when principals use discourse, the tacit knowledge of the learning community can be accessed to improve (Parker, 2009). However, London (2008), and Yosifon (2011) found before teachers will engage in authentic discourse, the leader must manage the rigors of ideological conflict.

This review of literature revealed leaders who use discourse can promote efficacy and improvement (Lambert, 2002). Bolman and Deal (2008) and Eubanks et al. (2006) agree, leaders who use discourse display a greater awareness of how interactional processes promote improvement. Thus, when improving the school is at stake, contrasting opinions of people should be heard. Worthington (2009) warned, without strong conversation leadership, voices too

forceful will dominate while those not strong enough will be intimidated into silence. This review of literature examined issues associated with how the principal uses discourse. Furthermore, this case study methodology centered in on observing, identifying, and describing, how one principal used discourse. Improving the school is enhanced when principals safely tap teacher tacit knowledge through discourse (Geddes & Stickney, 2011). Different voices, experiences, and styles of the school community add to its strength and provide expertise (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Most importantly, discourse offers principals another strategy for redistributing power to teachers for the purpose of improvement (Gordon, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A single qualitative case study was utilized to examine data from one Missouri rural school. Through case study, the researcher investigated how the principal used discourse. An explanation of the research purpose and rationale for the design and methodology of the project was first explained in this case study's introduction and literature review. Sampling procedures for a qualitative single case study were detailed in addition to methods of data analysis. Finally, the researcher presented issues of quality, trustworthiness, and addressed limitations and delimitations.

Research Question

This study aims to answer one research question; How does the principal use discourse?

Research Purpose

Principals and teachers are seeking ways to change the school since improvement is an expectation of stakeholders, state, and federal education authorities. Additional research examining how principals use discourse is needed (Anderson, 2009; Hackling et al. (2010); London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). The purpose of this study was to understand through case study how one principal engaged teachers in discourse within a single elementary school. The following research design and rationale was constructed to richly describe and explain how the researcher will evaluate the phenomenon.

Research Design and Rationale

An interpretive single case study was used to describe how the principal used discourse within a single Missouri public elementary school (Cresswell, 2003). Single case study methods

afford the researcher opportunity to explore in depth the processes, activities, and events experienced by participants (Cresswell; Merriam, 1998). Furthermore, Cresswell depicted a single case study as backyard research, which involves perceiving dynamics present within single settings and how actors function.

Research has shown the demand for school improvement has increased, so has the need for leaders who use discourse to tap the tacit knowledge of the learning community (Yukl, 2010). Case study methodology is suited for examining "why" as well as "how" and "what" the leader does to use discourse (Cresswell, 2003). The "how" question positions the researcher to interpret participant actions and thus identify leadership frames used by principals to manage discourse (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As a result, case study methods helped the investigator interpret frames and models employed by principals through explanatory and exploratory research (Merriam, 1998).

A closer examination of the research question indicated the appropriateness of "how" and "what" questions to this case study. In addition, the single case study format was suitable for exploratory research and explanatory research (Cresswell, 2003; Moon, 2007). The research question provided opportunities for theory testing and development. In addition, Cresswell stated a theoretical lens or perspective must direct the researcher toward the most important issues to be examined. Utilizing Bolman and Deal's (2008) four leadership frames, the researcher examined data through a conceptual framework related to how the principal used multi-frame processes to engage teachers in discourse.

Cresswell (2003) and Yin (2003) asserted the critical elements of a case study design must include: a grand research question, a system of analysis, reasons for linking data to

findings, and recommendations (Moon, 2007). The research question directs the researcher toward a focus on the multi-frame processes used by principals during discourse.

Although inductive, Cresswell (2003) and Yin (2003) agree case studies must have a clear conceptual focus to direct the collection of data. However, Patton (1990) stated since reality exists as subjects perceive it, preliminary plans must be flexible enough to ensure interpretive validity. Furthermore, Wireman (1995) stated cases studies should be viewed holistically since it is not possible to reduce complex phenomena with predetermined factors. To account for this, Cresswell recommended a funnel approach where the researcher started broad and allowed the research question to evolve and become more focused as data was collected. Following Cresswell, this case study employed a process where the research question was continually revised until theory emerged.

Cresswell (2003), Merriam (1998) and Wiersma (1995) asserted theory is best developed through a modified analytic inductive approach. Research by Mertens (2005) and Fink (2009) found research processes for binding theory into qualitative research strengthens validity and the level of generalizability of the study's findings. As mentioned earlier, the objective of this study was to examine how the principal used discourse, yet simultaneously also allow for the emergence of a complete description of principal-led discourse from the perspective of those who experienced it. Thus, a working hypothesis afforded the researcher an inductive mode of inquiry (Cresswell).

Finally, the choice of single case study design presented the researcher with benefits and difficulties. Yin, (1994) asserted a case design provides more opportunity for in-depth observation at a single research site. According to Stake (1980) single case study also promoted multiple units of analysis. Furthermore, the researcher believes a single case study of how the

principal used discourse increased the value of the study, especially since the research was situated in a single school. Yet, Stake counters this claim stating qualitative case studies are not adequate basis for generalization. In support, Yin asserted quality control methods such as triangulation of data from multiple sources adequately increased the reliability of information collected. Thus, the researcher made observations of what the principal did to use discourse. Consequently, this type of generalization was relevant to this study's research goal to further develop concepts related to how the principal used discourse through new conceptual and theoretical frameworks and to inform principals and principal training programs. Upon theoretical saturation, analytic as opposed to statistical generalization was used by the researcher to extrapolate and apply the results of the study (Yin).

<div align="center">Limitations and Delimitations</div>

Limitations and delimitations of this study caused the researcher to cast a critical eye on methodology (Yin, 1994). This single case study was to observe, identify and describe how one principal used discourse. The scope of the study was limited to information and data acquired from interview, focus group, and observation at one site. The range of this study was limited to one Missouri elementary school. Yin asserted extreme or atypical cases reveal more information because they activate additional subjects in the situation studied and thus illuminate deeper causes behind the phenomena studied.

While the research design lent itself to replication, it did not generate a constant or specific pattern. Data was drawn from one elementary school, which may not accurately reflect statewide trends in how the principal uses discourse. Furthermore, some teachers participating in the study had not been working in the district long enough to be familiar with previously established norms and protocols for using discourse. This limited insights obtained from them.

Additionally, single case study methods involve in-depth examination of a single site; subsequently, findings of the study should not be generalized to other groups beyond the school district studied (Merriam, 1998).

Delimitations within the study include the following: (a) the researcher is aware the results of the study can only be generalized to the school district studied, (b) the study is not an investigation or analysis of statewide trends in principal-led discourse (c) the decision to select a single public school for the study was based on available time and resources, and (d) the researchers choice to inductively observe through single case study how principal used discourse delimits the findings of the study to other clinical settings.

<div align="center">Population and Sample</div>

Purposeful sampling is used in single case study research and is based upon the assumption the researcher seeks to discover and understand phenomena (Merriam, 2005). Furthermore, Fink (2009) stated the researcher must first establish criteria before selecting the sample population. Therefore, the public school selected for this study was unique and exhibited characteristics of using discourse to improve. Consequently, a district where the principal uses discourse was purposefully identified. The school was accessed through interview and reference. Upon identifying an initial pool of schools where the principal used discourse, three were considered for selection. Final selection of the single school was based upon discussions with superintendents, principals, and other faculty members and their willingness to participate (Cresswell, 2003). The researcher established final written permission to conduct the study from the school superintendent and principal. The sample for this study was also selected based on geographic accessibility to the researcher and confirmation the school leader used discourse.

Finally, participants included leaders and teachers who were previously unknown to the researcher prior to the study (Merriam, 1998).

Sampling Procedures

One principal and 14 teachers provided information for determining methods of analysis (Patton, 2001). Yin (2003) stated case study research is not sampling research but instead an effort to maximize what can be learned in the time established for the study. Furthermore, case studies are selective, focusing on a single topic fundamental to understanding phenomena (Cresswell, 2003). The focus of this research was to observe, identify and describe, through case study how the principal uses discourse.

Having previously established a four frame conceptual basis for evaluating principal-led discourse and for the use of case study, this section addresses sampling procedures. This study utilized critical purposeful sampling methods to allow the researcher to effectively study one public elementary school. Upon saturation of data, logical generalizations were made (Patton, 1990). Critical case sampling directed the researcher to choose a single important case likely to yield the maximum amount of information and have the greatest impact on the development of new knowledge (Patton, 2001). Patton (2001) asserted critical case sampling permits regional generalization and application of findings to other school districts. For example, if observations of how the principal used discourse were true in one school, then conclusions are likely to be observable in others. Critical case sampling also guided the researcher toward selecting a site where conditions made strategic sense and where participants produced information that impacted the development of new knowledge (Patton, 1990). The purpose of sampling a single elementary school was predicated upon the assumption educators at the site would provide

valuable information. Yet, a research strategy that focused on a single case must also have included steps to protect the identity of participants (Mertens, 2005).

Mertens (1998) asserted research subjects must agree to voluntary informed consent and understand benefits and risks associated with a study. To shield the identity of the elementary school selected, it's leader and teachers, pseudonyms were used. Leaders from the participating school were asked to provide representatives willing to participate in the study. Informed consent procedures as defined by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri were strictly followed. Most importantly, throughout the study, the researcher took precautions to minimize disruption (Creswell, 2003).

Research Setting

The single public elementary school selected exhibited geographic accessibility to the researcher. The organization was situated in a rural area. The research setting ensured participation in focus groups and interviews would not invade participant personal privacy (Mertens, 1998). Focus group and interview methodology was structured to ensure the grand question did not invade the privacy of participants. As a result, the research settings and the environment in which focus groups and interviews were conducted was selected in advance by the principal.

Data Collection

Data was collected through multiple exploratory formats which included: interview, focus group, and observation. To limit restriction to information gathered, open-ended interview, focus group questions and observations were dynamic and followed a flexible design (Cresswell, 2003). This protocol allowed subjects to construct reality as they saw it and to offer open-ended interpretation to the researcher. Questions were developed to allow for variation in wording and

ordering of inquiry. This method was best suited for this study given its explorative and interpretive nature. Clear, open-ended questions contained familiar language designed for interviews (Fink, 2009). Focus groups were structured to yield information most relevant to the research question.

Interviews, Focus Groups, and Observations

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at the school in a secure classroom with both the principal, and fourteen teachers (e.g., Interview questions available in Appendix A, B, and C). The comfort level and assurance of confidentiality for the interviewee was articulated to participants and found to be most important in assuring truthfulness of responses (Cresswell, 1994). The impetus for interviews was to inquire about how the principal used discourse. Key individuals from the public school were selected based on the roles they played in the institution. Digital audio records of interviews and focus groups were secured to assure accuracy of transcription. Principal interviews were analyzed to determine how the leader used discourse. Teacher interviews were studied to reveal how they perceived the principal used discourse. The researcher used data collected to inform thinking and make decisions about how the principal used discourse.

Focus group discussion documented the opinions, behavior, and/or motivation of participants (Merriam, 1998). A single interview was held with the principal to uncover the how principals used discourse (e.g., interview questions available in Appendix D and E). A second series of focus group interviews sought to uncover the perceptions and opinions of teachers related to how the principal used discourse. Three separate focus groups were comprised of four to five members and a topical guide was employed by the researcher to manage discussion and

ensure each subject participated (Fink, 2009). The principal was asked to assist with securing participants for focus groups which could have resulted in bias.

Non-participant observation was the favored approach to data collection since exploring how principals use discourse in the natural setting provided access to authentic data. As observer, the researcher blended into the natural setting and carefully observed how and when the leader employed structural, human resource, political and symbolic frames of leadership to use discourse. Observation also revealed examples of how the principal engaged teachers in ideological conflict. Dynamics associated with discourse such as verbal behavior and interaction was best documented through observation. The ontological characteristics of individuals and factors that differentiated participants from one another helped the researcher identify how the principal used discourse. Other strengths of observation included the collection of data free of observer bias and strong reliability (Mertens, 2005).

Follow-up observations enhanced and substantiated data collected from interviews and focus groups. The researcher engaged in interpretational observation to look for patterns which explained how the principals used discourse (Yin, 1994). Observations took place during collaborative meetings and professional development events conducted at the elementary school.

Detailed jot notes promote inductive, logical information analysis (Cresswell, 2003). Observation criteria established for each meeting was dependent upon the topic of discussion and the decision making processes planned. Along with discourse, observation included the physical setting, verbal and non-verbal communication, and physical gestures made by participants. An effort was made to provide a complete description of discourse. The observation process was repeated until saturation of data was reached and the study produced trustworthy conclusions

(Merriam, 1998). With participant agreement, digital audio tapes were made and detailed transcriptions of each observation completed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Outcomes of this study will inform principals and principal training programs; Therefore, throughout the data analysis process the researcher strove to identify and describe how principals used discourse. Findings were examined based on how leaders to used discourse and conclusions were proposed.

Merriam (1998) asserted data analysis in single case study is an iterative or a repetitious process aiming to reach analytic saturation of information. Thus, data was analyzed inductively to derive information from participant accounts. In this way, the researcher provided a more complete representation of how the principal used discourse.

Open and Axial Coding

As data was collected from interviews and observations, open coding was initiated to break transcripts down into categorical units of meaning (Cresswell, 2003). Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) proposed two key approaches to open coding which were followed. First, the researcher must engage in interpretational analysis to look for patterns within the data explaining how the principal used discourse. Second, open coding was used to identify categories which described how the discourse was used.

Thus, during open coding, data collected was divided into segments and scrutinized for commonalities that reflected categories and themes. After categorization, the researcher identified key perspectives from educators which related to how the principal used discourse. Next, by making comparisons, the researcher looked for similarities and differences between comments. In this way, similar comments were grouped together to form general categories.

Open coding also reduced the amount of data into sets of themes that described how the principal used discourse. Reflective analysis through open coding, prepared the researcher to begin axial coding processes.

Axial coding is the name given to a second tier of analysis where major categories which emerged from open coding are interconnected by the researcher (Cresswell, 2003). During the process of axial coding, connections were made between categories (Merriam, 1998). Through systematic analysis and continual comparison of data, the researcher reduced information and established relationships (Merriam). Key concepts and aspects of how the principal used discourse were identified and explored in depth then dimensionalized through the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

<center>Design Controls to Address Issues of Quality</center>

To generalize findings from a case study, conclusions must demonstrate trustworthiness and themes must be substantiated through multiple sources (Stake, 1980). Yet, Gall et Al. (1996) asserted case studies are most concerned with a rich description and the extent to which intended users understand the results of the study. Merriam (1985) offered techniques to ensure validity and reliability which include specifying the researcher's location within the study's methodology, triangulation of data, and establishing an audit trail (Mertens, 2005). Triangulation resulted from the use of four distinct data collection methods. To further establish validity, final audit processes included peer consultation in composing the final draft of the study. Merriam stated little can be done to address all concerns associated with the generalizability of a case study. Yet, the researcher accepted and disclosed the study will only center on how one principal used discourse in one Missouri school; therefore, it is unjust to generalize the study's findings to cases where conditions were dissimilar. In such cases, further studies will need to be conducted.

The researcher refrained from imposing personal assumptions upon data. Cresswell (2003) asserted studies must be credible, transferable, and confirmable. Credibility began with the triangulation of data and interview transcripts were cross walked for the purpose of comparing different results from the varied data-collection methods (Merriam 1998). Member checks from interview and focus group participants were conducted to ensure transcriptions were interpreted correctly by the researcher.

Furthermore, Patton (2001) found trustworthiness is enhanced when the researcher engaged in outlier analysis, pattern matching, and coding checks. Outlier analysis involved examining other case studies of discourse in an effort to locate differences between investigations, thus strengthening the integrity of this study's findings. The concept of pattern matching ensured perceived benefits demonstrated some pattern and structural relationships existed between constructs. Finally, Gall et al. (1996) asserts coding checks are beneficial when multiple researchers code the same data to check for differences. If a high level of agreement existed between coders, the trustworthiness of findings was enhanced.

<div align="center">Human Subject Protection</div>

Adult educators selected to participate in this study will remain anonymous to everyone except to the researcher. Potential risks associated with participation in the study are unlikely and of low risk. There is little likelihood of any physical or emotional risk as a result of participation in this research project. Interview and focus group subjects were not asked to perform any tasks as a part of any discussion that could have resulted in harm. Recruitment for interviews, focus groups, and observations, took place randomly. Prior to conducting research, participants were given a formal statement of consent form to read and the form was verbally explained by the researcher. Participants signed the form indicating that they understood they were being asked to

participate in a single case study. Educators understood the risks involved in participating and were told they could refuse to answer any question they were not comfortable with. All information provided was kept strictly confidential. The form provided to participants also included assurances that participation in the research project would in no way affect their employment status at school either positively or negatively.

Participants were free to refuse to respond to any question that could result in a disturbance to the learning community. Identifying information from participants was coded and kept securely. Information linked to individuals was kept in a securely locked office only accessible to the researcher. Furthermore, names and any other identifying information present on informed consent forms was also kept in a locked office file drawer only accessible to the researcher.

While inductive in nature, this study aimed to identify how principals use discourse. To draw viable conclusions, the researcher examined and compared coded documents to data collected from interviews, focus groups, and observations. Case study data analysis involved a spiraling process that moved from broad to more specific observation (Mertens, 2005). Data analysis initially occurred casually during focus groups, interviews and observations and continued through transcription. Utilizing written transcriptions the researcher coded data for themes. Data reduction involved combination and reduction, including the use of tables, and figures to communicate findings (Mertens). To further explain findings, a detailed description of the research site included a rich description of patterns that emerged from the data, along with researcher analysis. Creswell (2003) asserted this spiral of analysis is important to describing, classifying, and interpreting, categorizing, and finally, representing and visualizing data. The spiraled research methodology supported different thematic findings. Finally, Creswell described

computer programs which assist the researcher in data analysis. NVivo 9 was used to drill deeper into data, test theories, and make connections between ideas and findings (QSR International Co., Nvivo 9, 2007). Merriam (1998) asserted such triangulation of data increased the credibility of a study and the dependability of generalizing results.

Interview, focus group, and observation transcripts were securely kept and documents obtained for analysis were stored in a locked office. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of participants and the study site throughout the data analysis process (Cresswell, 2003). Finally, as an instrument of data collection, the researcher upheld an obligation to credible analysis and discussion of findings. The purpose of this study is to inform principals and principal training programs; therefore, the researcher strictly sought to answer the research question avoiding prejudice or bias about what is learned.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The goal of this study is to better understand through single case study how one principal used discourse within a single school. This section began with a rationale for the study and a description of the population followed by data collection, analysis methods, and a summary of limitations and delimitations. The researcher defended the purpose for using single case study methodology and provided a brief description of the design of the project. The foundation for utilizing single case study in this research was to provide the investigator with a firm foundation for assessing and explaining findings (Merriam, 1998). The grand research question was accurately framed to critically assess data collected. Procedures used in the selection of the population and the design of the case study were explained. Finally, the researcher clarified how data was assembled and identified exploration tools used to make findings clear.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Previous research established principal used discourse promotes improvement, and participant efficacy (Berkhout, 2007; Chia, 2000; Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 2006; Gordon, 2009; Morel, 2007). Thus, there are advantages to understanding how the principal facilitated discourse tapped into the tacit knowledge of the learning community. One might even conclude discourse represents a new path to better decision making. However, it should be remembered school leaders are also challenged to employ structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames of leadership to ensure discourse remains effective and meaningful (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Principals who use discourse see it as a methodology for change not control (London, 2008). Consequently, to use discourse leaders find they must manage ideological conflict during meetings (Geddes & Stickney, 2011). Anderson (2009) and Morel (2007) proposed sensitizing and desensitizing to discourse should be considered when leaders use discourse to tap the tacit knowledge of employees (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011; Lambert, 2002). Factors which place teachers at risk during principal led discourse include disagreement, grudges, and unhealthy targeting. Yet, where discourse prevails, adults work together in meetings and conversations to evaluate and scrutinize practice (Lencioni, 2002; National Turning Points Center, 2001). In contrast, principals may have influence over the adverse factors associated with discourse, especially when they do not assume the problem lies within the teacher. Leaders who use discourse can provide appropriate support for teachers who feel at risk during difficult dialogue. Leader support during discourse also increases efficacy (Brockberg, 2008).

The findings of this study will be considered from the perspective of one principal and fourteen teachers related to how the leader used discourse and teachers interpreted the phenomena. The literature suggests leader led discourse promotes efficacy and improvement, thus the researcher will inductively examine data in an attempt to uncover any connections between this study and previous research. As noted in chapter three, data collection included observation, interviews, and focus groups. When data from these sources were examined and coded holistically, themes emerged which presented a comprehensive representation of how the principal used discourse. Similarities and differences between themes were found but each presented an interesting and unique angle relative to this case study.

Literature addresses the advantages of principal led discourse and how it promotes teacher efficacy (Houseman, 2007). Studies examined also substantiated a connection between discourse and improvement (Porsche & Bromme, 2011; Peck, 1997). The purpose of this single case study of a Missouri elementary school was to examine how the principal used discourse. As stated in chapter three, the researcher collected data from observations, interviews, and focus groups. Analysis of data took place in a holistic and inductive manner to ensure themes emerging provided a complete explanation of how the principal used discourse. During open and axial coding themes presented a perception relative to a single Missouri elementary school. Chapter four is organized in the following manner: the voices of the teachers and principal are merged with the size, location, and context for this single case study. Consequently, themes which emerged were carefully scrutinized.

The results of this study will be considered from the perspective of one principal and fourteen teachers who shared how the principal used discourse. An inductive and holistic picture of how the principal and teacher's perceived discourse was used is presented. From these

findings, any discrepancy between the principal's perception of how she used discourse and how teachers interpreted the same phenomenon are shared. Also presented, are participant perceptions of how the principal used discourse and any confusion, lack of training and support that resulted or was absent. Themes are presented exclusively through the voice of the study participants, since their stories addressed the central research question.

Open coding was first used to conceptualize levels of abstraction evident in data. Information from observations, interviews, and focus groups were conceptualized line by line. During open coding two macro themes emerged along with eight sub-themes. Under the first macro theme; the need for the principal to manage discourse emerged. Sub-themes appeared which further defined the need for the principal to manage discourse. The subthemes were: (a) sensitizing and desensitizing to discourse (b) discourse training, (c) norms; how, where and when and, (d) framing discourse. The researcher found it more effective to achieve synthesis during open coding when participant voices were presented holistically rather than individually. The second macro theme emerged as how discourse was used to inform decisions. The second set of subthemes revealed were: (a) meaningful feedback and purpose, (b) differentiated discourse, (c), and discourse standards. A summary and evaluation of the research findings is included at the end of chapter four.

<div align="center">Macro Theme One: Discourse Management</div>

<div align="center">Sensitizing and Desensitizing to Discourse and Discourse Training</div>

Sensitization is the frequent administration of a process such as discourse to induce a response (Anderson, 2009; Davey, 1981; London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011). In contrast, desensitization involves reducing sensitivity to discourse through repetition (Anderson; Davey). Discourse is important because it taps the tacit knowledge of the learning community and

situates the leader to use group expertise to promote change (Chia, 2000; Yukl, 2010). The first sub-theme that emerged from the data during axial coding was the teachers reported need for the principal to sensitize and desensitize them to used discourse. All fifteen participants' demonstrated awareness during reporting that using discourse required sensitization and desensitization (Anderson; London).

According to Anderson (2009) a person's sensitization to using discourse could be called positive adaptation since it is a type of sensory adaptation in where the professional becomes more sensitive to airing different opinions. Desensitization is sometimes called negative adaptation because it is a type of sensory adaptation where professionals learn to be less sensitive to constant discourse or ideological conflict (Anderson). Finally, through sensitization and desensitization people learn essential skills that teach them to use discourse in a relaxed, trusting manner.

<div align="center">Sensitization to Discourse</div>

Teachers reported involvement in discourse used by the principal hinged upon sensitizing to engaging in collegial debate and being challenged. For example, Angie, a fourth grade teacher said "challenging each other is difficult." Yet, she also admitted she enjoyed discourses which required her to "examine the ideas of other colleagues during meetings since such conversations make us better (Angie)." Through repetition Angie admitted over time discourse had become more enjoyable since the principal used it at most of their meetings. She also confessed, she is "getting more used to being challenged by her friends." Angie admits that she is by nature an extrovert but the principal's regular use of discourse during meetings has made her "think more about what she says and is said and challenged during meetings." She remembers the first meeting the principal asked the group to "argue" or use discourse to improve and "having fun

with it, being interested (Angie)." Angie has been teaching school for five years and confirms she knows "what good discourse should look like." In contrast, Brenda another elementary teacher found principal used discourse to be "uncomfortable and difficult." Brenda said, she had not been trained to debate issues with colleagues. She shared, "sometimes, if I am interested in an idea I will watch what is said but not talk." Brenda also admits to, "listening for period of time and then going back to her room to discuss what someone said with another teacher." Brenda likes meetings yet thinks they should more interesting than confrontational. She is a self-proclaimed "watch what I say" kind of person. (Brenda) Brenda also admitted it has been hard for her to get accustomed to principal used discourses which take place during staff meetings.

Carol appears to agree with Angie as she says: "I need time to warm up to the concept of discourse for it to be productive and interesting – but once I am there I think can handle it." "It makes our meetings more productive but feels strange arguing our point with others since we are such a small school (Carol)." Carol also admits to watching more than participating since she is a fairly new teacher to the school. She reconfirmed that she "waits and watches" before challenging another colleague since she admittedly "needs a nudge to do it." She said it is not as much of a "fear of participation" but reported she sometimes does not know how nor when to break into a conversation. (Carol) Carol said, she might be frequently absent from the dialogue since she is still "getting used to whole idea of arguing about issues." Helen the principal said, "I get them used to doing by saying they have to...and they will either say something or sit in silence – that's how I start it."

Dianne says, she "thinks discourse is important" but admits she just "cannot get used to disagreeing with friends about a school problem." "You will get shot down so discourse has too many ups and downs for me (Dianne)." Dianne also said she knows discourse is important and

that she does not have to like it but does need topics to feel worth it and safe. She confessed she

will get more involved once she stops "worrying about all the grudge holding (Dianne)." She

also said that she knows she would do a much better job of "adding her two cents" to the mix if

she convinced herself it was not a problem to disagree (Dianne). Conversely, Elaine said she

"guesses discourse is important" but that is not why she is happy the principal uses it to solve

problems. She sheepishly said, "I love spending time in meetings getting to arguing and I am

totally fine with conflict (Elaine)." Consequently, her face lit up and she became animated when

she described how she and another teacher were leaving the school next year to move to a new

town. She proclaimed, "I don't worry about discourse, I really have nothing to lose – I am

moving anyway." Elaine concluded, "discourse is the best when everyone knows it is expected."

Finally, Frieda also a elementary classroom teacher who finds discourse easy said "the principal

does not spend enough time in meetings making us comfortable with discourse." She admits to

talking too much and "stirring the pot after meetings on purpose (Frieda)." She added tensions

and problems no doubt will occur during staff meetings but it gets everyone to pay attention.

Angie jumped in and asserted, "She said she has no fear of discourse" and admits she "is not

afraid to say it." Freda agreed but confirmed it would be helpful if the principal used discourse

more regularly and "remind ourselves what our purpose is before the fray starts." She says she

only gets frustrated when other teachers and the principal may force the group to stick to the

agenda. She wonders why the principal sometimes provides them the purpose of the meeting

since everyone knows it is to debate topics. Frieda confirmed meeting agendas had little to do

with discourse and wondered if the principal should spend more time talking about how to use

discourse or handle the "hard questions."

Desensitizing to Discourse

There were seven teachers and one administrator that identified a clear need for the

principal to desensitize teachers to "get used to" discomforts associated with discourse. (Angie)

Thus, identifying and describing how the principal uses discourse revealed the subtheme

desensitization. Desensitization is a technique used by leaders to help follower learn to accept

fears associated with discourse and the theory is based upon principles of behavior modification

through repetition (Anderson, 2009). The principal said "teachers have to learn some how [sic] to

handle it skills for discourse before they will really get into it (Helen)." "When teachers get

together and just read an agenda out loud the meeting outcomes are much different than when

discourse just starts to happen (Helen)." Helen said, "she can come up with answers needed to

improve from meetings and conferences but she would prefer answers come from the teachers

themselves." Helen went on to identify the clear need for teachers to "not see the discourse as a

bad thing or negative when they have to argue about something." She (sighed) and concluded , "I

guess some finger pointing is going to happen some of the time, so they need to just get used to it

- over it and go on get on with it." Some of the teachers voices indicated desensitizing to

discourse did need to happen so they could get past fear and worry. Especially concerns of

grudge holding and targeting. For example, Irene said "I think we need to have conversations

about grudge holding and how to get through those rocky moments – at least before we start

arguing with each other at every meeting." Irene was drawing attention toward symptoms of the

tensions associated with discourse rather than the cause which appeared in her opinion to be fear.

She suggested the principal desensitize the group to using discourse. Irene admitted spending

time outside of meetings teaching students to overcome developmental disabilities and she felt

that conflict help her deal with discourse. "What can I say, I teach kids with special needs,

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discourse should not be a problem for me (smiling) (Irene)." Yet, Irene also identified the need for desensitization to discourse when she added, "discourse causes us to have hard conversations and unhealthy finger pointing sometimes makes it feel negative – gotta get used to that." She said, "I find students with special needs do not want to do their homework, yet, when keep making them do it over time we create the habit of doing out of class work and turning it in on time, the problem is not as bad." It is hard for kids to learn to complete their work when they are not faced with the responsibility of doing the work every day. Having tough conversations asks a lot of a small group of teachers so we need a regular structure to get comfortable with discourse (Irene). Irene compared discourse to the different ability and grade levels of the students she worked with and found students' with disabilities had not practiced skills enough to become proficient learners. Similarly, she made a clear connection between uncomfortable discourse and the need to desensitize or "get used to" factors such as "targeting, grudge holding, and finger pointing (Irene)." Irene reported that "there is not enough time during meetings for the principal to teach us all of the tricks and techniques we need to ask the unpopular questions about why we do things." She added just like "student with special needs need time to learn how to get used to learning so do we (Irene)." "When we get upset during meetings it becomes personal, so we need time and reinforcement and positive strokes if we are going to get used to arguing with someone you have a personal friendship with (Angie)." Angie confirmed the principal should help teachers slowly adjust to using discourse.

Another teacher echoed Irene's comment and had a similar outlook toward how the principal used discourse when she said "we need time to and motivation from the principal to not have a problem with disagreeing (Peggy)." "You will say something and someone else will shoot you down – oh well (Angie)." "Most teachers need training if they are going to be motivated to

learn from each other during meetings (Irene)." Each teacher seemed to feel desensitizing to

discourse required time and training from the principal. To summon up comments made by

Helen, she pointed out adults should learn skills for desensitizing to discourse. Consequently, we

could assume educators who are not exposed to discourse with regularity will be less motivated

to debate issues than their counterparts.

I believe that teachers have to adjust to the idea of engaging in conflict during meetings

or they will give into holding grudges – we are a very small school (Dianne). All involved will

need to have experiences that cause them to communicate their thoughts and feelings and have

those ideas confronted by a friend or peer. "If Helen (the principal) is going to create the right

environment for us to use discourse we have to do it a lot or it will always feel weird (Angie)."

Most of all, every teacher should have some sort of self-drive to get better or they will just see

discourse thing as just something else we have to do to create "bad, rocky relationship (Dianne)."

Jacque felt all teachers, especially those who were shy needed many chances and

invitations to use discourse or they would not speak out during meetings. She indicated the

principal sometimes has teachers lead data meetings but not often enough and when she does

there are pros and cons to it. Jacque also identified training and self-drive to be important to how

the principal uses and desensitizes people to discourse. Brenda agreed, she felt there should be

plenty of opportunities for teachers themselves to lead staff meetings since "being in front of the

group presents the kind of risk taking moments you need." Brenda, Carol, and Irene identified

discourse training to create conditions for sensitizing and desensitizing to discourse.

Discourse Training

Most teachers, and especially those vulnerable to having an aversion to discourse "have

to be trained to debate issues during meeting (Carol)." Peggy feels "Helen (the principal) has

used strategies such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Reading First to "train us to use discourse." Michelle and Peggy both agreed saying PLC's set us up to be successful when we had to argue about something or use discourse. Both identified training to be a key factor for how the principal uses "good" discourse and defined it as preventing teachers from heading down a path of failure during talk (Peggy). "I believe a lack of training, and there have been times we were not trained (smiling) – just told to do it, builds a pretty uncaring attitude towards putting your opinion out there at a meeting (Peggy)." I think more of us are likely to be actively engaged and feeling safe with discourse when Helen first gets in front of us and tells us what she really wants us to do (Karen). Laura, Michelle, and Nancy agreed; When we remind ourselves what and how were supposed to debate the whole discourse thing or idea starts to make some sense and meaning to the group.

"Her [the principal] training definitely makes me think more about the words I say during discourse, especially if there is conflict (Angie)." Training and the words said also determine whether the interest will be high (Angie). Interestingly, Helen in an interview held separately echoed Angie's comment "high interest during debate is more likely to happen when the leader first reminds everyone of what our purpose is" (It is important to note during and interview Helen said she had not been trained to use discourse). If it is a high interest topic, training will bring out the groups personalities (Angie). When it is high interest, fun, and interactive, I believe discourse gets some results (Karen). High interest topics are built out of preparation, "to get them talking about good stuff, they have to understand their personalities (Helen)." "We all had training on our personality types and I think it probably helped for us to know our hot button", said Helen. "The group was even developed anger guards which we were taught to use when things really got tense (Helen)." Yet, the principal reported when she first started using discourse

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during meetings she had not been trained herself (Helen). She went on to say that when she first put discourse "out there she felt a little at risk as the leader." "To start, I just put the topic on the table and step back out of the way and let them talk - I guess some would say that wasn't the best thing to do (Helen)." Elaine confirmed Helen's concerns when she proclaimed; "I'm not sure we were ever formally taught a process. I know we started PLC's but that was before I came and I kind of fell into this discourse thing."

An elementary classroom teacher said "teachers are placed in danger when they are asked to argue about out a topic but not told how to do it (Peggy)." Perhaps we should first be mentored to know "what good discourse looks like since I am still not sure any of us really know (Frieda)." Frieda added, "I need to know how do the discourse thing and still to be friends with everyone after it is over since we all have different personalities, I don't want to make anyone angry or have them hold long term resentment because I stood up to them in a meeting." "A clear game plan should be in place by Helen to support the discourse and to make sure what is said, is said to support kids and learning – it ends there (Karen)." The area of training is difficult to pin down since we all came to work here at different points and times (Michelle). The district only provided us with a few days a year to have improvement meetings and we want to spend that time talking about how students are doing in English and Math not learn how to argue with each other (Peggy). Another staff member agreed and said "A healthy environment for disagreement is more of what I need (Angie). "Training should focus on what we do in class not how to argue (Brenda)". The staff member went on to clarify she does appreciate "balanced, realistic expectations of what can be accomplished through discourse at staff meetings (Brenda)." In contrast, Angie disagreed with the concept of having to learn or train to debate important issues.

She said, "I think the best training happens when the group doesn't over think discourse too much but just does it to start to break down stuff."

Elaine spoke up "I think it is fair to say we are all old enough and mature enough to challenge each other without Helen's help." She also added, "we get training every night and day – life is full of agreeing and disagreeing (Elaine) ." When you have a principal that will let discourse really happen you have to look at the idea as one more resource at the disposal of teachers – one more opportunity to get better (Laura). Laura said "don't get me wrong, set up a set of rules or a process, that is fine but it is really not what makes it us talk openly." Discourse happens when we trust each other (Angie). Michelle and Nancy agreed and added it is more important that the group work to be consistent in how they act and respond than for them to follow a prescriptive model. Like Angie, both Michelle and Nancy identified trust to be an important factor to preparing for discourse.

<center>Norms, How, Where, and When</center>

Norms, as used in this study, refer to both formal and informal rules for the direct involvement of educators in principal used discourse. For example, administrators and teachers are diverse individuals and the lenses they use to understand key issues may vary from one another in terms of personal conviction, tradition, and sentiment. During this study, teachers expressed the need for structural rules to feel safe while putting ideas on the table for discussion. More importantly, respondents voiced the need to have autonomy or freedom - a choice which creates its own expectations during talk. People interviewed wanted to be actively engaged with one another, with what they might be debating, yet also be able to exercise collegial freedom to express goals and ideas. Interestingly, this need for freedom of expression during discourse emerged as having norms which dictate how, where, and when it is used. Conversely,

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respondents found themselves split on whether norms were good or bad since they promoted agreement and consensus - something discourses in their opinion should disrupt. (Elaine, Angie, and Frieda)

"Norms should only kick in and take over when something said gets the attention of the group and everyone's imagination starts to run crazy - don't get me wrong we have to have them to make group stay on task." (Laura) The principal voiced the need to have "a conversation safety valves" (Helen), yet the majority of teachers interviewed agreed there were both pros and cons to norms. On the pro side, staff in my study reported norms should provide "zero recourse" during principal used discourse (Angie). If something is said that upsets the principal or other teachers in the room there could be consequences. The meaning behind the term zero recourse surfaced often during focus group conversation and in a myriad of different ways. Respondent's expressed grudge holding to be a major concern. For example, Karen said "rules prevent people from talking about you behind your back outside of the meeting (Karen)." "Norms promote respect and prevent attacking someone else's ideas in the hall later after the meeting is over (Angie)." Norms make sure those in the meeting come prepared and willing to work toward helping students. "When we plan discourse carefully, time does not need to be spent talking about norms we just have a tendency to play fair with each another – does that make sense (Angie)?" Helen said, teacher-to-teacher support can be provided through norms and that is why they probably need to be created. Norms promote good discourse and working together at the same time since "one teacher is less likely to launch an attack on another one if everyone understands the rules (Angie)." It is interesting to note, Helen, the principal was in agreement with teachers who found norms to be restrictive during discourse.

When the primary focus of discussion is on following a norms we are less likely to really work toward improvement (Helen). "Let's face it, different viewpoints don't change too much when what everyone says is super, heavily normed - we have tried it both ways (Angie)." The principal does not always attend our meetings and it is interesting how discourse changes when she is out of the room. "I would say the group doesn't feel quite as accountable or normed as when Helen is in room (Carol)." It was interesting discussing the topic of norms, since not one participant identified their own behavior during discourse nor questioned whether they should act differently. Instead, the group presented norms as something done to them or a linear process used to make talk more productive and improvement focused. One teacher mentioned the principal should use discourse which mandated how every person in a meeting should be involved and just handle it when there was some risk. Respondents collectively expressed knowing about norms with four people admitting attending meetings where common processes for using discourse were discussed by the principal. "We have worked on norms in the past but not this year, it is not fun, I'd rather just end the meeting (Angie)." "I don't like norms, I would prefer they just have open talking, but I've taught them some rules." (Helen) For example, "We have norms against about outside talk, I would say we have talked about norms in the past" (Helen) "I don't like rules so I don't always follow them (Angie)."

Research studies indicate acclamation to norms is a gradual process and diverse groups of people interpret them differently (Sterling & Lister, 2002). In addition, Gordon (2009) said a structural or process oriented approach to using discourse promotes group-wide participation even if people view them as unnecessary. Discourse that is accompanied by norms for participation validates the approach to improvement and makes discussions a cleaner process (Tannen, 2000). With norms, discourse involves progressive engagement and better outcomes

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(Sterling & Lister, 2002). How the leader used norms during discourse to promote engagement

or disengagement is dependent upon mental models people create to define the process (Morel,

2007). For example Carol had this to say:

> "I do like meetings that involve discourse. Especially data meetings, meetings where the
> principal has clearly explained what we are supposed to accomplish. Really, it's much
> easier for me to argue about something with other teachers if the end product is going to
> be useful to a child. Honestly, I don't want to go to meetings anyway where I just sit
> there and have to listen to someone read an agenda at me."

Karen who teaches intermediate elementary students said:

> "Yes, I like discourse, don't get me wrong, but I also have to know how, I mean, yes I
> want norms and rules or I will sit there and worry about whose feelings I am about to
> hurt. We are a small school and everyone knows each other and has to face each other
> daily. I am by nature, my personality, not a casual observer so when I am directly
> involved in a meeting I feel like I am making a difference - doing something substantial.
> But most of the time meetings are boring – a real waste of time."

Eubanks et al. (2006) proposed the use of norms to promote literate participation of people in

knowledge-building discourses. Engagement in discourse by professionals is defined by Chia,

(2000) as having a clear reason for participation, and understanding of the contextual relevance

of discourses. Consequently without norms, it became evident discourse could be problematic in

small school settings. Furthermore, a connection seemed to happen when teachers felt safe taking

part in discourses which caused the school to improve. Chia used the term association instead of

connection to describe belonging. However it is not connection or association during discourse

that was seen as important by participants in this study. It was norms of participation articulated

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by the principal prior to using discourse. Norms emerged as most important to teacher efficacy. Furthermore, teachers who were fearful of hurting feelings expressed they were more likely to disengage from participating in that kind of discourse. These risk factors were expressed by the teachers and represented as a salient reason for disengagement from discourse.

For the leader to use discourse, norms which required a high degree of engagement were found to be necessary since they created explicit links between improvement and dialogue (Porsch & Bromme, 2011). Several teachers did not see engagement in discourse to be a critical factor and therefore did not regularly participate. For example, Brenda didn't see her different viewpoint to factor into change and consequently, admitted leaving meetings with veiled concerns. She said, "I don't see where my ideas really has [sic] anything to do with how we change (Brenda)." Yet, Brenda's cumulative years of teaching children indicate a successful career and a wealth of knowledge to be shared. Another teacher, Karen, had no plans to participate in discourse unless she was forced to. She just wanted to attend faculty meetings and "lay issues on the table - just talk about stuff without arguing (Karen)." Angie admitted she purposefully mixes it up during meetings. However, it is when she feels "the pros of debate outweigh the cons" she might take a step back and just see what others have to say first. (Angie) She assertively stated (serious look), "Don't get me wrong, while I like to debate, I will never let it reach the point it adversely affects my friendships or hurts anyone (Angie)." "Generally, if I get the feeling there will be recourse, I shut up unless Helen forces the issue, and she will do that sometimes (Angie)." Angie admitted to having a personality that could be easily enticed by the leader into discourse – especially when she felt student learning would result. However, if she felt her dominant personality might cause another person undue stress it affected how she "put in

her opinion (Angie)." In other words, it was norms coupled with the potential negative impact of discourse which affected her decision to participate.

The principal chose norms of engagement to ensure discourse took place during meetings. This tactic may have worked well with teachers who were not naturally open and assertive, but it seemed to have the reverse or opposite effect on more passive people. Teachers who voiced concerns about how what they said might hurt feelings, did not perceive discourse to be beneficial or a motivator to improve. In such cases, the principal said she made an extra effort to model why discourse was worth pursuing. I suppose you have to work out common process with teachers to make improvements. You also learn to accept both the pros and cons of using discourse (Helen). Laura said, "I don't like discourse when I see that it has upset or hurt someone." "I know to get better, Helen is right we can't just sit there and all agree all of the time but I also need assurances there isn't going to be some kind of negative consequences – like make the boss mad (Brenda)." I know I have to learn to challenge others but my reasons for coming to meetings are mainly to improve how the kiddos perform (Elaine). Morel (2007) stated, leaders who use discourse should not only ensure people participate, but they must also present a compelling pay off.

Framing Discourse Practice

Leadership frames as defined by researchers Bolman and Deal (2008) are used by the leader to operate in one of four modalities: structural, human resource, political, or symbolic. The structural frame defines clear goals while the human resource frame focuses leaders on the needs of people. The political frame assists the manager in explaining bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise. Leaders who utilize the symbolic frame see the organization through its actors, cultures, and ceremonies. The frames of leadership required for people to use

discourse may not always be understood by directors (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Leaders can also see framing discourse as a trivial or meaningless act. Yet, the literature found in the absence of framed leadership, discourse and the authentic transfer of knowledge between people was less effective (Berkhout, 2007; Gordon, 2009; Bolman & Deal).

How the principal uses framed discourse represents the final sub-theme which emerged under the category of discourse management. Participant responses indicated a requisite for successful discourse was that it had rules (structural), and relevancy to what teachers did on a day to day basis (collegial). Teachers also indicated the need for leaders to symbolically link discourse to improvement. In other words, teachers were not just interested in the sole act of debating issues, but also needed to authentically connect discourse to improvement. In other words, discourse had to be structured by the principal to promote collegial pedagogical exchanges. Collegial procedures were found to benefit educational outcomes and teacher efficacy.

During the first round of interviews, Frieda became notably concerned when she discussed principal led discourse that had meaning to her. She was quick to note the structure and function of building faculty meetings had both negatively and positively impacted her approach to discourse. The performance of Frieda's students had changed over the past five years. After noticing she would tend to hold back, the principal started requiring her to use discourse. She noted, "putting ideas out there and getting opinions did not feel right to me, but admitted discourse caused a strong personal (collegial) connection to other teachers (Frieda)." Frieda taught elementary students, some of her students exhibited learning disabilities and needed additional support. She liked the discourse approach and quickly pointed out "hey, we are like the kids we teach – we need direction (eyes rolling) (Frieda)." The principal should always

be there to structure or plan the talk and make sure teachers help each other. (Frieda) During an interview she expressed wanting a set method or way to offer and challenge ideas that produced "real outcomes in her class (Frieda)." "When Helen starts a meeting by telling us how discourse is to happen, it helps set up a system for airing concerns (Frieda)."

Frieda also admitted enjoying discourse but only if she felt she could use it. She also appreciated loose/tight, collegial and structural leadership from the principal. She was laughing during this admission as if disclosing the furtive was somehow embarrassing. "I especially like discourse when "the boss says this is how I would do it, but you are free to make up your own minds…when she does this, you see there is no pressure to go with the leader (Frieda)." Peggy, who claims to focus in on how her friends react during discourse, grew serious when she described discourse. She portrayed discourse during meetings and remarked, what is said has more meaning when "all the politics that come into play come get out in the open – no secrets or games (Peggy)."

Helen, the principal described how she structured discourse. In a meeting this year we were learning about data teaming and how to use information to identify problems within the curriculum. "It was interesting because data teaming deals more with the facts and not what one given teacher wants to do – you know – go back to their classroom and be left alone (Helen)." "I set up loose rules for debating data and turn them loose (Helen)."

Laura, a reserved individual, was enthusiastic as she described why she wanted to learn more about using discourse during data teaming. She said, she watches other teachers during discussions and identifies the people who make the most compelling points. Later, she inquires outside of meetings to find out what they are doing. Angie said, "I really started engaging in discourse when the topic shifted from Professional Learning Communities to data teams." I was

a part of a data team at my previous district and have background knowledge about them (Angie). Data teaming caused the group to develop a clearer agenda. "We started focusing on content and not each other (Angie)." Interestingly, Angie identified the data teaming approach as a strategy for structurally framing discourse.

During interviews Angie, Frieda, and Laura were active and interested in using discourse since they felt the principal used it to reach their skill set. They could see how principal modeled discourse during meetings related to improvements to what they did in the classroom. All three said, they were more involved in meetings when they were told how the discussion would prove beneficial to them. It is this kind of standardized discourse that attaches itself to them and moves the meeting forward (Helen). Elaine, a new teacher was driven to learn more about educational discourse because of experiences she had in a previous district. Bolman and Deal (2008) asserted relevance and tradition to be symbolic and a motivational force for people to try something new. Lambert (2002) reminded us people are much more likely to participate in what they perceive to be relevant to themselves. Frieda said, "when we need to find a way to improve, keep in mind we are only going to do it if we feel we are part of something valuable."

Teacher voices indicated a need for discourse to be collegial. They also reported wanting to share in selecting topics for engagement to ensure Helen would also see things differently. A few teachers pointed out, Helen sometimes moved to fast. She also spent valuable meeting time telling them over and over again what the solution to a problem should already be. During a focus group, teachers expressed feeling bad for Helen and how she sometimes would fail to understand that she had lost the group while running the discourse. "The principal proposes her idea, she tell us about it, and we sometimes don't get where she is going (Brenda). She may even repeat it several more times at other meetings but we still just don't get it (Angie). Dianne said,

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Data is really hard for us to comprehend and we are at our best when we look at the numbers and connect them to examples in the classroom. "Yes, I agree, when the principal does this for us we may just plain miss it – I think this problem occurs too often in our meetings (Angie).

When I completely give the conversation to teachers, it seems like certain teachers need extra time to catch up to the rest of the group (Helen). Teachers would prefer "Helen just treat us like what we are, subordinates and tell us what to do – but also let us help guide the meetings (Carol). It seems too few leaders collegially approach leadership, and instead, try to design and implement standardized processes or structures appropriate to circumstances (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Chia (2000) explained how leaders hand down elite policy discourses. Angie said, "she (Helen) tries to control the conversation like the volume on a TV." Morel (2007) said, the breakthrough and innovation of discourse occurs when participant fear of control is alleviated, it is then knowledge fuels escalated discussion. Researchers describe how the one-size-fits all approach to discourse fails to meet the needs of a diverse group of people (Berkhout, 2007; Chia).

The teacher's voices confirmed the need to have multiple approaches or frames of discourse to help them sensitize or use it (Anderson, 2009; Bolman & Deal, 2008). Elaine, a classroom teacher currently participating more regularly in meeting discourses said, "there can never be enough modeling" during discourse. She reported doing very little to prepare for meetings where the principal used discourse but asserted disagreement is a must if we are going to improve (Elaine). During an interview Helen was eager to tell me how she appreciated discourse and watching the teachers. This is consistent with what Elaine said about a recent meeting:

A few weeks ago we were talking about reading and a teacher arrived late for some

reason. The teacher jumped right into the conversation and started airing her opinion -

even though she had no idea what had been talking about before she ran in the room.

Normally this would make other women mad but I found it interesting everyone just went

on with the discussion. I came to the reality we were like family, it was like – I get it

now.

Carol admits she has had mixed results taking part in discourse and is not completely

comfortable when the principal lets go of the reigns. She also admits missing many meetings

because of after school tutoring responsibilities. Yet, she liked some of the freedoms associated

with open, free talk, especially when discussions were based on data. She said, those kind of

meetings do not happen often enough (Carol). Sometimes it is much simpler to learn from other

teachers than from Helen but "we do not have that many meetings without the principal (Carol)."

Dianne agreed with Carol's point as she said, "going it alone, without the principal encourages

the kind of disagreement she might not like (smiling)." The principal will sometimes allow us to

meet without her, but it doesn't happen very often and if she has the topic already figured out –

"we don't challenge her much anyway (Carol)."

Angie is outgoing and she likes to start the conversation instead of listening to what

someone else has to say and then respond. She likes visuals of data and feels concrete facts help

her analyze practice. Angie also pointed out data based discourse is "free of feeling" and pieces

of evidence are not shared often enough. "I like it when the principal brings a PowerPoint full of

data to our meetings to talk about (Brenda). We can see them and relate the numbers to what we

do in the classroom. Discourse around data is more productive than those discussions that start

with "I think" and end up leaving everyone upset equally confused (Angie). Usually, we talk a

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lot about how our kids do on state assessments, like how many were proficient and how many were not. "I am not very good at making sense of that kind of data – I get baffled (Karen)."

Related to collegial discourse, Jacque was quick to tell me that it was a first year teacher that produced the most important student learning data at their last meeting. She said, the teacher supported students learning with their hands and she was able to show the group how her approach made a difference (Jacque). The presentation sparked debate about what student engagement should look like. Irene supported the discussion and the value of hands on learning but pointed out it did not happen enough. Interestingly, Michelle a quiet and thoughtful participant directly connected hands on learning to the discussion we were having about how the principal uses discourse. She said "learning with your hands is a lot like discourse at our meetings both [sic] make a product that is yours (Michelle)." Jacque, another supporter of open (collegial) discourse, had this to say "I like it when we decide what should be talked about." I don't want to just sit there watching the principal read an agenda or tell us what to think about." In contrast, Irene added, "I disagree, it is much easier to have the topic come from Helen because it allows me to think about what she feels is most important to the school."

The teacher's voices illuminated a clear need for the principal to use varied frames in order to move discourse along. Several participants indicated a need for discourse to be structural or prescribed. Other teachers expressed wanting discourse to be self-directed, and visual. Increased teacher input during discourse seemed to call for a release of control from principal to teacher. For example, when the principal allowed teachers to suggest topics for discussion and bring data to meetings, this fulfilled the need to be in control. The practice also provided teachers more time to prepare in advance for meetings where the principal used discourse. Carol said, "not every teacher handles discourse the same way or keeps the same pace – it's important for

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Helen to plan the meeting around what the teachers need." I have only taught two years in the district and think I need more time to learn how to handle all the politics that come into play during discourse (Carol). Irene said, "topics are handed out and constructed individually, everyone has some kind of an agenda." We don't always get what we want or like the agenda Helen brings, but discourse certainly makes meetings more interesting and they go quicker. (Peggy) Michelle said, I think in our school there would be more rules and a lot less of our own input if we did not have some degree of discourse.

The need to recognize discourse is a political process also emerged and was not limited to conversations which occurred in meetings. A few of the teachers wanted the principal to mandate what would be discussed, but most called for a high degree of freedom to express individual and group agendas. The teachers were well aware of the political nature of discourse. For one group of teachers there was no single expressed reason they wanted to control the topic and pace of the debate, they just did not want discourse done to them.

Macro-theme Two; Discourse to Inform Decisions; Meaningful Feedback and Purpose

Discourse which lacks meaning and purpose is not engaging and causes the minds of participants to wander (Tannen, 2010). Gibson and Baradae (1999) stated, it is important for the principal to make discourse relevant. The concept of discourse emerges as a multi-faceted structural, collegial, yet cultural phenomenon (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Gordon, 2009). In this case study, different forms of discourse were identified by participants and commitment was often connected to meaning and purpose. During diverse focus groups it emerged that using discourse needed to be contextualized by the principal. How discourse was framed and it's participants sensitized also seemed instrumental in determining levels of teacher participation. This section provides a better understanding of how the principal uses discourse to promote improvement and

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efficacy. Relevance was maintained as a key concept by participants. The teachers and principal interviewed were forthcoming in stating discourse without purpose was "a platform for dominant personalities (Angie)." The principal said, "sometimes I simply tell the teachers to bring in their books, scores, and whatever they have to talk about, we will use their numbers to find our weak areas (Helen)."

I try to work closely with teachers during discourse to be sure "ideas are relevant and not personal (Helen)." Dianne (was the teacher who said she, "thinks discourse is important" but admits she just "cannot get used to disagreeing with others about a school problem") seemed to be concerned about meaningless discourse that focused on principal priority items. She said, "often discourse doesn't include what I think is important (Dianne)." She stated discourse was necessary yet most relevant when "thoughts come out without all the dictating (Dianne)." Her main priority was to make sure discourse made a difference so that students would be successful in her class. I try hard to work with the other teachers when looking at an issue (Dianne)." The principal requires us to bring to meetings whatever we are using to make sure we use discourse to measure student progress (Dianne)." We look at each other's data and set high expectations, "I want to be challenged in meetings (Dianne)." Angie reports meeting time is spent providing meaningful feedback but sometimes talk gets personal because ideas are not always well received. The principal said, "I do anonymous feedback weekly for those who I know hold back their true thoughts (Helen)." Brenda confirmed Helen's concern when she said, "new people get left out of some pretty key trainings and it is no one's fault it just happened (Brenda)."

Getting through an irrelevant meeting where the principal makes us use discourse requires everything in my toolbox (Angie). If we take a closer look at what we have done and how students have learned – "discourse gives the process a little kick (Angie)." Both Helen and

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Irene reported the need for meeting time to be focused and involve direct questioning. Helen said, "Discourse is not complicated, I just try to open up the conversation so we all can get down to the meat of things and why (Helen)." We didn't do it all that well at first but then again isn't the purpose of discourse getting good ideas to hit the floor and get discussed (Angie)? Angie said, "it's best when we get pretty intense good stuff right out in the open (Angie) ."

Teacher's start each meeting by reviewing what was previously discussed and what had been accomplished over the previous month. After these discussions have ended, the group works on parking lot items left unfinished from previous meetings. After these talks have taken place the principal introduces a new topic for group discussion and teachers work forward using what they have learned from those previous meetings. Sometimes Helen will have us do review exercises to help everyone remember where we left off the last time (Peggy).

Helen provides extra opportunities for new teachers to practice using relevant discourse to support improvement. She said, "I will sometimes use direct questioning and address it at and on purpose to new teachers (Helen)." My goal is to provide extra practice talking about important things with the new ones. Helen also said, I feel obligated to include and support my new teachers in discourse. If I see a specific need, I will pull the new educator to the side and tell them to look for something during upcoming meetings or to "use everything they have in their toolbox (Helen)." I remind new teachers they may not feel like they have much to offer at first, but we may not be able to find others who will have better ideas. It is my job to help those educators [sic] right out of college see their opinion counts (Helen)."

It appeared teachers were on the constant look out for discourse that did not change practices that in their opinion were already working. We are very focused and direct with our

questions in an effort to make sure there really is a need for the principal to lead us into discourse (Brenda). "Oh, and by the way we know when she does it, we just want to know why (Brenda)."

The research site is a small rural school where every teacher is very familiar with each other. Many of the teachers attended and graduated only to come back and accept a teaching job at the school. Yet, two of the 14 teachers interviewed admitted they did not feel they fit in. This lack of sense of belonging had an effect on efficacy and meaningful discourse. Carol said, new people have been left out of key trainings where Helen taught us about discourse, it was not their fault it just happened. It may not seem like a big problem but several teachers echoed Carol's concerns. Karen self admitted, she was kind of a loner and found it difficult to provide ideas since there were so many other people with better plans.

It is tough to have meaningful and purposeful feedback sessions when you know what is said is going to end up in the hall later. There are cliques of teachers who are close friends (Jacque). Our "fairly small size all too often determines what is and what is not said (Helen)." Some teachers are able to offer pretty good stuff while others sit back and look for someone else to take the chance (Nancy). Some teachers are not able to make connections, so discourse is probably less relevant to them. "Of course, others move away to new jobs, they come and go, one went to Illinois and I think another to Main Street Elementary (Helen)." Helen went on to say, she did not think of herself as friends to the teachers and pointed out such an arrangement promoted using discourse to find the right idea. She bragged, "I am firm and direct in how I throw out a problem and respond to different points and question (Helen) ." Helen took her feelings about meaningful discourse further when she explained that there were times when a particular teacher treated her differently if a topic hit a little too close to home. "When I ask a hard question and this teacher does not like it, she will avoid me in the hallway (Helen) ." The

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teacher Helen was talking about is a self-proclaimed loner who seldom interacted during meetings. The principal said, when this happens I do not complain about it to the other teachers because I feel bad for the person and hope she will come around.

Carol gave a weak smile and said, she doesn't complain about what is discussed during discourse since she felt it was more important to have common goals, talk about it and not take different opinions personally. "I guess we should be happy the principal is interested in our point of view (Carol)." I get to provide feedback at every meeting, not too many schools work that way (Carol). Carol said she did not like it when the topic of discourse did not directly apply to what was happening in her classroom but in turn at least it is always possible to have a voice. Carol also noted, she had many friends on the staff and felt both comfortable and uneasy with situations that emerged through discourse. "Our size has an effect on the intensity of the discourse but it should not keep us from discussing important issues (Carol)."

Another teacher mentioned she did not feel safe during discourse because she worried too much about "saying the wrong thing (Dianne)." She wanted to help make conversations meaningful but was also fearful she might appear stupid. Teachers come from different backgrounds and have diverse levels of training, relevant discourse comes from all types (Helen). I don't ask them to argue issues that cause people to feel out of place or inadequate. I don't want them to feel out of sorts. Yet, that is exactly what makes improving through discourse so difficult, you do not want to ask them questions that have one set solution – something everyone already knows the answer to (Helen). Yet, it is sometimes much safer not to ask about what is most relevant even though those are the very topics that make us improve (Helen). Angie felt the same as Helen when she said:

I'd like to ask the controversial questions during discourse, but I am afraid to because I don't want to put my friends – colleagues into a situation where they are going to feel stupid. For example, a few weeks ago we were talking and a teacher said we should be writing essential questions. I was unsure what an essential question even was so I asked her to say one to me. Things got real uncomfortable real quick when she could not say or come up with one. The whole room got really quiet and I knew I had started something with good intentions that would probably cause me problems later.

Elaine explained, a teacher was talking to another teacher during a meeting about a comment she made, I thought the comment was very meaningful and important but the side talk sent me a clear message that the two teachers didn't agree. "I guess the topic of the discourse has to be important to everyone or the teachers will probably not say what they really think about it (Elaine)." Elaine went on to say "I had hoped the principal would step in and say something about all the talking on the side." Yet, she finished by saying she appreciated it when Helen told her she was bringing up important issues - "That is really cool (Elaine)." Carol also liked it when the principal told her she was on the right track. It seemed important to her to have the principal recognize the relevance of what she said. "I'd like Helen to tell me when I am doing a good job, I also would not mind it if she said I had to do it better (Carol)."

Meaning and purpose is also known in literature as important to participation and identification during discourse (Tannen, 2000; Morel, 2007; Eubanks et al. (2006). Researchers suggest a feeling of meaning, purpose, and membership to be essential to engagement and participation (Tannen; Morel). For teachers to feel successful during discourse, Tannen (2000) proposed people must value the topic. Morel's (2007) research on meaning points out leaders should provide both structure and discussion protocols which provide for meaningful dialogue.

Bolman and Deal (2008) and Eubanks, Parish, and Smith (2007) found procedures guiding meaningful discourse should range from minimal structure or loosely defined rules, to high structure or well defined, inclusive engagement. Discouraged people who do not feel part of discourse are most likely to feel separated from meetings and may disengage mentally (Parker, 2009). According to Gordon (2009), meaningful discourse is supported by bridging the gap between participant effort and the pleasure felt from expressing ones individual ideology. Adults want to feel part of a peer group (Kirkland, 2002). The need to feel efficacy during discourse intensifies as topics of discourse increase in strength and involve conflict (Brockberg, 2008; Chia, 2000). Observations and interviews revealed, teachers want other educators to accept their point of view and care about them. For example, Brenda said she appreciated it when teachers knew her situation and were willing to help her or pull her back into the conversation. "I was absent from a data meeting a few months ago and was kind of lost at the following faculty meeting, Angie could tell I wanted to be part of the conversation so she stopped and caught me up on what I missed (Brenda)." Teachers connected meaningful discourse to efficacy or a sense of belonging. Jacque said, I do not mind disagreeing with my friends but I feel better when we are able to work through a topic by taking a more positive approach.

When teachers felt at risk during discourse, they reported not finding the conversation to have purpose and meaning. For example, a teacher placed at risk by disagreeing with the majority of the group may not speak up because of her need to belong. This may be problematic to how the principal uses discourse and negatively impact meeting outcomes. A couple of participants said meeting discourse was not relevant to their needs. For example, Michelle had bad experiences in meetings where majority ruled. "To make improvements we have to get the guts to stand up and say I don't agree with that, even when you are out there on your own – I am

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sorry our small size makes that really difficult for me to do that (Michelle)." I am ashamed to say, I actually quit going to grade level data teams for awhile after feeling betrayed by a friend at an all staff meeting (Peggy). Angie said, "the really good ones get pretty tense and those are the meetings where the most important items hit the floor."

<div align="center">Differentiated Discourse</div>

The seventh subtheme that emerged from the data during axial coding was the principal's use of differentiated discourse. The teachers mentioned the need for discourse to be safe, caring, open, and improvement friendly. Participants alleged the principal must include the previous factors to ensure participation by everyone. Several educators concluded the principal could not lose sight of the challenge to include the whole group. Most of the teachers interviewed found discourse to be a powerful tool for improvement but identified the need for equal access.

Nancy gets upset when colleagues get angry during discourse. She said (seriously), "people get angry when their idea is not the one we go with – I internalize that, even if they are not mad at me, anger effects how I act the rest of the meeting." I need to be part of good natured debate to make the experience feel safe. I need a leader who is willing to pry a little but not allow things to get completely out of hand. Yet, Helen is someone who is willing to set things straight when anger erupts (Nancy). When things get tense, I try so hard to keep my face blank even though down deep inside, I know someone may be mad about what was said. "Anger really throws me for a loop – it's very intimidating (Nancy)."

Angie was animated as she remembered how a teacher reacted when one of her own ideas was stronger and accepted. She said, while I rarely do (smiling), I like it when I come out on the losing side of the argument, it makes me grow. Unfortunately, I have experienced firsthand, others do not feel the same way (Angie). Angie said, to do the discourse thing

correctly, you need good spirited colleagues who are cool and friendly with disagreement. When we have ideas in common, we have "priority items" but when "different ideas surface", I want to debate with the people who are there to "focus on improvement – period (Angie)." The principal really tries to get us to do our best and I know she cares a lot about the kids. "It's the kids, that is why I do it, that is why I love to mix it up and talk about the things the rest may not like to – I like that (Angie) ."

Helen the principal mentioned teacher personality had influence on how well she was going to handle the conflict associated with discourse. She had this to say:

> Each of my teachers have a personality and preference for how things should go. Some can have fun with a good argument now and then while others really hate it. Like in data meetings - I hear more about their experiences than I do good ideas. It is when we start to propose solutions the real dominant ones come out. But in the end I am proud we can decide things together.

Carol said, I like it when we can joke around, even if we are disagreeing about something we should or should not be doing – it shows we're human. In contrast, Frieda needed discourse to be concrete and any lack of seriousness during staff meetings where the principal used discourse frustrated her. "I need our meetings to be important and focused on some common goal instead of taking it personally (Frieda)." Karen seemed to need caring discourses where teachers collectively committed to improve in some way. Teachers have to be able to trust one another and provide support if discourse is going to be successful (Karen). Karen went on to point out she was a slow thinker, "Discourse on the spot is difficult for me, I am a processor who does not think on the second, it hits me around the third day after a meeting (Karen)." The ethic of care during discourse is fundamental since open reasoning and efficacy are both interconnected

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(Gordon, 2009; Kirkland, 2002). Parker (2009) argued for norms that promote care. His work

suggested leaders should not sacrifice an immediate solution to a specific situation for the

element of care. Morel (2007) placed emphasis on considering care during discourse and

connected sensitivity to ideal discourse.

Laura said:

> "During a data meeting last year, I proposed to the group my idea for improving our
>
> reading scores. A few days later a teacher thanked me for telling her some new things she
>
> could try. Large meetings do not always allow for careful debate, sometimes it takes
>
> awhile for ideas to sink in."

Angie also related a story where a comment she made helped another teacher make changes in

what she was doing in her classroom. "Discourse, while not always fun, does provide extra

attention to what we do, people have told me that they like my two cents – I am not sure they are

telling the truth (smiling)(Angie)."

> To keep discourse safe and focused on what is best for our students, I give the teachers

activities to do, then sit back and let them work on their communication skills (smiling)(Helen).

To help teachers who are having difficulty with discourse, I will sometimes ask them to be the

leader. At our last faculty meeting, a teacher took the lead on a topic we were talking about - she

led a think, pair, and share discussion on how to use reading data. I think the experience was

good for her (Helen). Frieda who is not the most aggressive person on our team led a data

meeting. "I think the special attention made her feel good about her place here (Helen)." For

example, Karen said,

> Sometimes when we are having trouble agreeing Helen will call a meeting. We will do an
>
> activity that everyone thinks will pry deep into their space, then Helen surprises us and

sits back after asking it, to just hear from our experiences, no one can respond – we call it 360 feedback. It's funny, we all walk into the meeting expecting triage and then pleasantly learn the intent is safe exchange of ideas.

People who have experienced disasters during discourse seem destined to avoid the major issues since they inseparably link unsafe discourse to environmental problems (Stake, 1980). Researchers Porsche and Bromme (2011) found manipulation causes discourse to be unsafe. The pair asserted discourse which results from unnecessary leader control during interaction also caused interference and biased representation which emphasizes negative things. In reporting their needs, teachers described safe discourse as focusing on improvement, asking opinions, and watching what is said. (Observations revealed teachers were receptive, pleasant, and caring during discourse). The participants expressed a preference for discourse grounded in context and understood discourse was not without risk or concern for safety. The teachers' needs can be further described using such terms as discourse without discrimination, differentiated discourse, and discourses which provide products relevant to the classroom. Research also supported the elements to be important to adults who use discourse. (Tannen, 2000; Morel, 2007).

Discourse Standards

The eighth and final subtheme that emerged from the data during axial coding was the need for standardized discourse. Teacher participants seemed to want guidance from the principal but asserted discourse be firmly grounded in improvement. For example, Brenda said, "if we're ever going to achieve good discourse it better - better help students and how they learn - there has to be some standards or norms in place." The staff said discourse was important but also felt they were provided limited standards for how they should use discourse. They expressed wanting more information about what the principal really wanted to them to do. According to

Nissenbaum (2002), a norm is a trend but may not be equivalent to a standard. Furthermore, norms can and do change over time. In contrast, a standard is a correct measure or definition as to what things should be (Nissenbaum). "I don't believe teachers are provided all the ideas they need to have good discourse (Peggy)." We are given a topic to talk about and then told to put in our opinion (Elaine). Angie said, "I am a fairly new teacher to this district so I can say I have never been told what exactly I am supposed to do – but as you can see stating my opinion about things comes pretty natural. I guess, I don't really need instructions for how to discourse – or argue (smiling)." Discourse was generalized by the teachers and I was told it sometimes did not meet the needs of everyone in the room. Furthermore, those who did not speak up during meetings admitted doing poorly with unstructured debate. If rules are a problem, perhaps we should be spending more time comprehending how we should be acting during discourse (Karen). Michelle said, "I do not remember having ever been told exactly what I needed to do, or how discourse was supposed to play out."

Michelle seemed be at loss as to what was expected of her during meetings. Irene felt discourse merely happened at the discretion of the person since Helen had not told her anything different. She said, "if the focus is discourse around something real, I am confused since most of time it is just majority rule." I sometimes allow teachers to tell me what we should talk about and they provide "pretty intense stuff (Helen)." Not too long ago, we were supposed to elaborate and share feelings about a new science program, some of us had problems saying anything because we were not told in advance or introduced to the idea (Peggy). "I would have liked to have known about the science workshop, I'd have come more prepared to give my opinion – I think we should have a rule nothing new can be brought up in a meeting unless everyone is put on

notice well in advance (Peggy)." Brenda felt discourse functioned at the discretion of the principal because "Helen had not told anyone exactly how meetings should happen."

The focus of meetings is targeted discourse around what our students are learning, data teaming, and important school structures (Angie). Helen said, "I sometimes allow teachers to prepare for upcoming meetings by giving them some homework, otherwise they will just sit there like they are lost." Not too long ago we were supposed to research our student's reading level and be prepared to elaborate on data at the next staff meeting (Karen). "I prepared this elaborate response you know, and would have expected to have been called upon to tell the group what I found out, but we didn't even follow a meeting guide during the meeting. I didn't get to share the data I worked so hard to gather up (Karen)." Because teachers are so driven to prepare in advance for discourse, I will give them the general topic but in the end, I prefer to just "start with a [sic] some kind of discussion point (Helen)." Angie said, "she is just trying to open up the conversation and get down to the meat of things and why."

Angie believes the staff should be regularly surveyed by Helen to determine how well discourse is going. Diane said, "Teachers are not always placed in situations where they are going to do well - no one knows it either, they just sit there quietly." Three years ago, the principal initiated a standardized process for discourse, but has since then compromised our original norms. By shifting our understanding of what discourse should look like, Helen unintentially promotes inconsistently understood norms for debate (Angie).

Discourse should fit the situation at hand or the topic being discussed (Helen). Sometimes I lay down clear expectations for discourse but there are other topics that are best talked about flexibly (Helen). Jacque said, "no one has ever told me exactly what we are supposed to do." I regularly talk with three other teachers outside of meetings and tell them I do not have a clue, we

have never been trained to do this. A veteran teacher said, before Helen came along we spent meeting time talking about field trips and recess. "Faculty meetings now are supposed to accomplish something substantial (pause) no one is quite sure what the system or standards for discourse are (Carol)." Carol admitted remembering times she left meetings more confused by discourse than benefited. "Our fairly close size determines what will and is not going to be said and this can be a problem since you know people are holding back – those are the times - moments that leave me baffled (Carol)." I look forward to meetings. "I see discourse as my play time and really like having the chance to have help working out problems I am having with my kids. I do not need strict rules to do that but don't mind them (Angie)." The previous quotes suggest teachers have diverse opinions about the value of standardized discourse. It appears Helen, the principal, has not from the perspective of teacher, established or communicated to the staff different standards for using discourse. Furthermore, flexibility during discourse is received uniquely by teacher.

The potency of discourse is the opportunity for adults to impact how the institution improves (Chia, 2000). Yet, a major concern at the study site was how the principal standardized talk. My worry is the time of day that we have our meetings (Karen). We meet after school when everyone is tired and grouchy, I feel this impacts our ability to participate in a productive manner (Karen). Because we meet after a long day, I asked the principal to give us a system or a plan to how discourse is carried out. "She is way to general with her guidelines (Karen)."

According to Helen, faculty meetings are held for one reason, to improve instruction and impact student learning - I am firm about that. Helen said, "The need for discourse is topic specific and so are standards for discussion." If we are focusing on content, I expect them to attach their comments to data. If we are talking about a given students' strengths and problems

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then what the teachers feel about the situation is good enough. "I want what is best for the kids, period – that is what should be talked about (Helen)." The principal also admitted, "I guess discourse should meet the needs of teachers." The teachers echoed her position since many of them said ideal discourse during meeting is inclusive. Dianne shares, "in an ideal situation, how discourse happens fits for everyone in the meeting, it works for everyone, but I know that completely defeats the purpose of arguing (smiling) so I guess we will never be satisfied, right"? Peggy said, "a conference on discourse would be nice, especially one that sets all of the rules for handling issues that come out." Frieda said, "Ideal discourse during meetings does not place anyone at risk, it appeals to each individual but provides outcomes and products that directly help the kids." Although teachers expressed the need for strict guidelines to keep discourse manageable, they collectively felt outcomes of debate should benefit students. Overall, teacher responses indicated they were coping with the Helen's self disclosed "loose – firm" approach to standardizing discourse."

Teaming around data during faculty meetings took place to develop academic student intervention plans. A clear procedure or standard for discourse appeared to exist around data teaming and was followed in order to provide support to participating staff members. Identified students were discussed and Helen shared standardized test scores while teachers described how students performed in the classroom. The principal hoped that by connecting state and local test scores, constructive conclusions could be reached by using discourse. As Helen states, "Our students test scores tell stories and often it is too late if we wait till the end of the year to do anything about it so we take classroom quizzes and we debate what should be done in meetings – it is really a pretty easy process (Helen)." Usually teachers who worked here the year before understand what I expect during these meetings, the new ones have to learn how to data team

(Helen). "I guess they do sort of learn on the fly (Helen)." Angie said, there is a clear procedure to be followed when data teaming to help students. However, some teachers find the discourse awkward and just sit there and watch.

Angie described the data teaming process, "first Helen has one teacher formally tell the rest of the group about a student who is struggling or in most cases has some kind of a reading issue, then anyone else in the room that wants to weigh in or has something to say does so." Sometimes case managers have extra information to share but it is almost always the classroom teacher that starts the conversation. "Our goal is to get to the source of the problem" (Angie). Once the information is out on the floor, Helen calls on teachers to start making suggestions about what should be done. "I ask them to focus on the student not each other and without interruptions and we get things done (Helen)." Discourse really starts to happen when we discuss each other's ideas and all the opinions of everyone start to flow (Frieda). Depending on the student or situation the process may take a few meetings to complete but the first step of using discourse is to get everyone's ideas in open (Helen).

Carol, a classroom teacher remarked that sometimes the process is not that smooth and it escalates into non-constructive side bar conversations. "Because the data teaming process is so time consuming itself, the need for discourse just drags things out that much more (Carol)." Another teacher said, there are times when I feel Helen should just step in and set rules or standards so that we can finish the conversation – there are so many other important educational issues for us to attend to. "I am pulled from my after school program to attend faculty meetings and as far as discourse goes, the end decision always lies in with Helen anyway (Michelle)." Nancy had similar feelings as Michelle in regard to the amount of time it takes to add discourse to data teaming. She states, I am amazed at how long our debates take and I think that having a

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set procedure would decrease the amount of time we waste talking about a single, irrelevant topic. I am not sure why our group has so much trouble sticking to the topic. "We spend time preparing for data meetings yet in the end your idea is not well received and the highest power tells everyone what to do (Nancy)." "Really, why doesn't the principal just give us a plan and we will all go with it – I am not sure we make the final decision anyhow (Peggy)."

Jacque criticized the timing and impact of discourse without standards. Elementary teachers use assessment results to make decisions. By the time we talk about a student at a data team meeting more than likely the problem has already been addressed (Jacque). Another teacher mentioned she took student problems to data team meetings even though she already knew what she planned to do. "Let's face it, if I feel a student needs an intervention, I make the change, do the intervention, data teams can be a nightmare if everyone thinks we should do something else – timing is everything and I don't always have time to wait for discourse (Angie)." A member of this same focus group (Brenda) also mentioned sometimes it was easier to just address the problem with the student than to go to other teachers for a plan. "Yes, sometimes it is easier to bypass discourse - it gets the at-risk students the help they need more quickly (Brenda)." However, not every student identified to get intervention services is making progress so I guess it makes sense that we ask for help (Angie). Another member of group felt it was more productive to reserve school improvement decisions for large group formats, but pointed out there was no written standard or requirement to do so (Peggy).

Helen, the principal agreed with Peggy, we have processes that we follow and each teacher should be willing to hear what the rest of the group has to say. "The staff has to be willing to listen, that is how a real PLC functions (Helen)." Eight of the fourteen teachers interviewed said the standard of holding to discourse during data teaming was time consuming

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and wearisome. "Sometimes discourse about reading scores will last several meetings before any kind of decision is made, I think Helen should set a limit (Karen)." One of the teachers out of frustration expressed, "discourse itself does nothing to improve us, I'm sorry, I am frustrated because we don't seem to spend enough time helping the kiddos who really need it (Peggy)." The principal confessed to me in a hallway conversation which took place after her scheduled interview, "we do not spend enough time in meetings getting to the core of the issues because they don't always say everything that should be said – I know some talking goes back to the classrooms - I should have a rule against that (Helen)."

Most of the teachers interviewed felt using discourse was needed but expressed frustrations about the amount of time it took. "Avoiding discourse altogether does not make good sense, it is consumes time and energy but I really do think that it is worth it in the end (Angie)." Teachers collectively agreed structural standards and processes were desired to ensure time was well spent.

<div align="center">Summary of Research</div>

The primary research question was: How does the principal use discourse? In reaction to this question, teachers answered both similarly and dissimilarly than the principal. Data collected pointed toward the need for the principal to frame, manage and standardize discourse and use outcomes to inform important decisions. Analysis of data revealed the need for teachers to (a) sensitize and desensitize to the rigors of discourse, (b) follow imposed norms, (c) be trained, (d) receive meaningful feedback, (e) follow standards, and (f) see discourse as purposeful. Data also indicated the principal should use standardized discourse where teachers are actively involved but not placed in situations where grudge holding or targeting might occur. Teachers noted flexible, yet interesting discourse was desired and the principal should explore diverse

approaches to using discourse. The research site consisted of a small, Missouri elementary school where teachers knew one another well, and interacting often outside of meetings. Consequently, respondents emphasized the schools small size was a concern when using discourse. Teachers expressed wanting the principal to use discourse that was free of resentment. According to teachers interviewed, the principal used discourse that was not accusatory but promoted purpose. Teachers also stated they felt the leader should be part of successful discourse. Teachers defined successful discourse as structured, safe, and purposeful interaction. The teachers and the principal perceived safe discourse to be important. Only a few teachers felt they had nothing to lose during discourse while others said they had trouble getting used to the conflict.

Responses from teachers were not limited to just the need to feel safe when the principal uses discourse. Some felt there should be extra time to become acquainted and comfortable with the kind of conflict discourse demanded. Interestingly, other teachers centered in on the need for training and a strict agenda. An outline handed down from the principal that would anchor the purpose of discourse to improvement. The principal identified sensitization or repeated exposure to be important to becoming comfortable with discourse. Responses from teachers supported this notion and confirmed repeated contact formalized the discourse process while limiting deviant anger or finger pointing. Ironically, the principal said using discourse to promote improvement required training. Yet, teachers felt discourse training happened infrequently. Teachers expressed wanting the principal to impose norms that would prevent participants from harm. According to teachers, formal and informal rules should include zero recourse for what is said, not holding a grudge, and sticking to the agenda. Consequently, it could be concluded, how the principal used discourse was dependent upon how much participants felt they had to lose.

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Data related to norming discourse resulted in substantial differences between the responses of the teachers and the principal. The mismatch of perception indicated the need for a clear system of talk but also freedom for expression. The research indicated that a small group of teachers wanted structure yet also extended amounts of freedom to challenge the principal about key issues. A second group of respondents were fearful of hurt feelings and wanted to lay issues on the table within the safety of norms and rules. According to the research, a disadvantage to being a small school was exposure in front of peers (Parker, 2009). Resentment resulting from discourse was a reoccurring concern of teachers. Teachers said, discourse should be normed by the principal to prevent trust problems and long term grudge holding. Interestingly, the principal agreed with teachers who said they needed structure but disagreed conflict was a bad thing. The administrator said, repeated exposure to discourse through loose rules allowed the teachers to learn to avoid anger and resentment. "Some will like the norms and some will not but to hold real discourse, structures must be both loose and tight" (Helen). The data indicated that in this rural elementary school teachers had limited background knowledge about how to participate in discourse.

The teachers mentioned active discourse was relevant to practice but also wanted the principal to tell them what to do. Respondents mentioned needing firm structures for how to act during discourse. In contrast, the principal and one outspoken teacher agreed, agendas should be loose enough that the group decides together what was needed to be talked about. Furthermore, the principal promoted self-directed discourses which were not prescribed but directed toward improvement. Respondents agreed, agendas exist and without open debate meeting control could be taken over by an elite group of teachers.

Related to the factor of direct questioning, the data indicated a marked difference between the responses of teachers and the principal. The principal reported using direct discourse as a tool for drawing out conflict and thoughts without dictating. In contrast, several teachers saw discourse as an opportunity to feel a greater sense of efficacy in the decision making process. Classroom teachers avoided discourse that would cause them to worry about saying the wrong thing - something that might cause bad politics. A majority of teachers focused on how discourse could help them avoid hazards, in contrast the principal indicated risk to be an important factor. The teachers perceptions confirmed motivation to use discourse came exclusively from wanting to be part of the group and to feel some sense of making a difference or efficacy. In other words, if grounded ideas were heard by others without resentment, support and trust prevailed. Yet, the data also indicated a few teachers felt confident and did not need prompts to weigh in on matters. Interestingly, a majority of the respondents expressed wanting discourse norms, guidance, and validation from the principal. The principal expressed repeated exposure to discourse should help teachers desensitize to fearing conflict.

In addressing the research question, how does the principal use discourse, several teachers noted the leader did not communicate the leader provided clear standards for discourse. Others accused the principal of using discourse which was too flexible and open. The teachers felt they needed firm rules, reason and purpose before using discourse. The respondents exhibited an understanding of the reason for using discourse and often connected it to PLC's or data teaming. The data indicated teachers felt levels of participation in discourse increased when they had time to process information before and after meetings where conflict took place. In contrast, the principal preferred using discourse that was spontaneous and she also noted "the good ones are tense (Helen)."

The majority of the teachers said they depended on the principal to frame or standardize discourse since they wanted firm rules for discussing issues. I think this happened for three reasons. The first, getting used to discourse or sensitizing to arguing about key issues is challenging and difficult. Second, the school's small size caused teachers to feel they had something to lose if they offended a colleague during discourse. Finally, some of the teachers found discourse to be time consuming and easily replaced with existing data teaming protocols. Consequently, teachers wanted the principal to use discourse that was safe, carefully planned, and meaningful to student learning.

At one point, teachers were confused because they did not see the principal as a discourse leader but someone who asked adults to take risks without a "safety valve (Brenda)." Carol said, "the principal does not spend enough time teaching us how to accept the controversy", and Angie said, "I see the point of discourse – I like it, but I don't want to take things so far that I hurt feelings. I like to argue - but fairly." Elaine and Frieda wondered why the principal did not teach them a simpler approach to discourse before asking them to debate issues. Michelle, Nancy, and Peggy agreed discourse should be relevant and less time consuming. Karen said, "we don't spend enough time in meetings talking about at-risk students." In response to the previous perceptions, some of the teachers felt they had too much influence over discourse and that the principal should provide the structures. Furthermore, other staff members expressed frustration during discourse was due to unorganized and time consuming meetings. The principal agreed discourse must be safe but flexible. She went on to say, "They want rules for discourse - me to tell them exactly how to talk around the issues but you can't standardize the talk and at the same time allow them to determine what you do – they can't have it both ways" (Helen). The principal went on to point out, I work closely with staff to determine our needs and while the conversation

might seem endless we do come up with some creative solutions (Helen). (Smiling) "I guess there is more I could do to help them understand how discourse should play out, just like our kids, I guess we don't want the new ones to fall through the cracks at meetings (Helen)."

According to the principal, training wasn't a requirement for using discourse but she recognized issues arise when teachers feel at risk. "If they feel there is a problem – it's real – there is a problem (Helen)." Furthermore, desensitizing to concerns of safety could be necessary before every teacher will be ready to participate in meeting discourse. Could it be all teachers are not ready to improve if it means they must be placed at risk? The teachers and principal collectively seemed to understand they are responsible for managing and using discourse to improve. Yet, for the teachers to feel efficacy, it became evident they needed to sensitize and desensitize to fear of hurting feelings. Furthermore, teachers said the principal should always use discourse that is meaningful and improvement oriented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this single case study was to discover how the principal uses discourse. A literature review was completed to see how principals use discourse. The researcher also examined the literature and identified conceptual frameworks for better understanding the use of discourse in the single elementary school studied. To collect data, the researcher used qualitative methods which included structured interviews, focus groups, and observation. Multiple sources of data were purposely examined to ensure triangulation and improved trustworthiness of conclusions. Data was organized categorically by themes which emerged during open and axial coding. The researcher qualitatively identified patterns and relationships between points of data to ensure participant voices came into clear view and views materialized. Teachers and the principal provided varied and unique perspectives related to how the principal uses discourse. Furthermore, the research site was selected upon the assumption participants would bring to light data related to the research question.

Findings from this study supported previous research conducted by Anderson (2009) and Bolman and Deal (2008). Without a doubt, the selected theoretical frameworks furthered the researchers understanding of how the principal used discourse. It was found sensitization and desensitization were important precursors for participants to use discourse (Anderson, 2009). Leadership frames were also found to be undeniably true for ensuring teacher participation in discourse and outcomes of efficacy. In addition, the research of Morel (2007), Rachlin (1991), and Tannen (2000) found the engagement of people in discourse was dependant on how the leader used discourse. Consequently, all teachers consented they wanted the leader to use

carefully managed discourse, talk that was not loosely structured but clearly framed. This was found to be true for all 14 teacher participants, especially those who felt discourse could be unsafe. It is important to note, this study supported past research related to how leaders should use discourse. (Berkhout, 2007; Porsch & Bromme, 2011).

Discourse Frames

Structured Discourse and Collegial Discourse

Participants stated they needed the principal to use structured discourse, specifically framed talk that focused on key issues not people. A sample of teachers agreed improvement through discourse required a clear sense of unity and direction. Teachers expressed how the principal used discourse should be structured, yet also open and accessible to the entire group. Conversations and resolutions that recognized group difference were preferred over top down structural directives or leader exclusive decision-making. Some teachers were shy and inactive during observed meetings while others dynamically participated when the principal used discourse. For example, Carol reported having to warm up to discourse, Dianne to disagreeing, and Irene feared grudge holding. In contrast, Angie and Elaine found discourse to be interesting when well structured. Furthermore, both participants reported feeling like they had nothing to lose by participating in managed discourse.

In addition, the fourteen participants indicated they (the teachers) needed the principal to use discourse that was engaging and meaningful to them. Bolman and Deal (2008) and Follett found collaborative, purpose driven decision-making promoted open systems of talk. Furthermore, the literature was clear that collegial discourse was more relevant to professional groups of people and such talk more often led to better informed decision-making (Black, 2004). Three of the 14 teachers discussed how their participation increased when the principal used

discourse they were able to directly connect to student learning or improvement. The teachers also expressed an explicit understanding that discourse was relevant and valuable when meeting agendas were within their control.

Political Discourse and Symbolic Discourse

Principal-used discourse was political and required the leader to re-distribute and exercise power. Discourse also positioned teachers to bargain and make their interests known (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Consequently, the principal employed discourse to create an arena where issues were renegotiated and coalitions formed around a central group focus. The majority of teachers interviewed admitted arguing and negotiating should relate to improvements in student learning. Peggy said, the politics will come out when the principal uses discourse. Angie, Brenda, and Elaine voiced appreciating discourse but also agreed there should not be winners or losers during discourse. Irene confirmed conflict, competition and politics are difficult and complicated when working in a small school setting. Helen, the principal, occasionally allowed politics to develop and run a course, but voiced most of the time she encouraged the group to negotiate important points in the spirit of improvement (Side bar conversations during meetings and hall talk after the principal used discourse were identified by participants as political outcomes of discourse that should be normed against).

The principal developed shared values and used discourse to create a culture of improvement and efficacy. In order to increase teacher participation Angie and Jacque voiced the need for the principal to establish systems for using discourse. The literature supported the need to inspire and transform meeting cultures to support discourse (Stake, 1980). Gordon (2009) stated heterogeneous groups self-construct cultures of discourse differently and with varying degrees of success in order to connect risk to outcomes. Frieda and Dianne's accounts illustrate

how the teachers' perception of culture influenced their rates of participation in discourse. The pair said, we don't want to make others angry or cause grudges to form we are a tight group where everybody knows everyone else. During observations, I noticed the group tended to communicate similarly. If the principal took a given position, groups of teachers would often agree. The behavior confirmed Helen's concern, highly normed or restricted discourse encouraged bandwagoning and a culture of agreement. Helen preferred using loosely structured discourse. Helen pointed out that she had started anonymous feedback. She continued by saying, anonymous feedback is to promote talking about unpopular issues and it gets the group to adjust (sensitize) to a culture of authentic, open discourse.

<p style="text-align:center">Sensitizing to Discourse</p>

In order to increase participation, Helen, the principal, said teachers would first need to learn to use discourse and use it often. Anderson (2009) referred to this kind of learning from repetition as sensitization. "Teachers need to get used it, they need more time for talking about the hard questions (Helen)." Research by Anderson, Porsch and Bromme (2011), and London (2008) support leader-led sensitizing and desensitizing of teachers to discourse. Sensitizing and desensitizing in the context of this study meant the leader assisted followers in balancing the fun-to-do exercises associated with discourse with the arduous desensitizing to emotional tensions. Anderson asserted, without this kind of balance, people will become frustrated during discourse and pull back. In support, research by Diefenbach (2007) found leaders who provided clear structural guidance sensitized followers to discourse.

The literature supported Helen's claim teachers need to become comfortable with discourse before they will use it as an improvement strategy. Anderson (2009) and Peck, (1997) said teaching safe, flexible, and decision oriented discourse required simplifying the sensitization

process. Social scholars agree keeping it easy minimizes frustration (Anderson, 2009, Peck, 1997). Brenda's story reminded me of how people tend to become frustrated when they feel they do not understand what is being asked of them. She said, "We are not trained, so discourse is uncomfortable and difficult (Brenda)." The most effective strategy for motivating people to learn is to decrease the barriers (Porsch & Bromme, 2011). To sensitize adults to engaging in discourse, leaders must first afford teachers time to clearly establish the relationship between discourse and improvement. Applying the research of Anderson and Peck, behavioral sensitization to discourse is associated with acceptance of difficult dialogue as a tool for causing change. Consequently, eight of 14 teachers stated this kind of acceptance of discourse through sensitization was necessary to increase their participation.

Research by Lieb (1991) found several critical elements must be addressed by leaders who use discourse, (a) motivation, (b) reinforcement, and (c) transference. In other words, teachers must be motivated to use discourse as a tool for explaining and understanding student learning. According to Elaine, when the principal provided praise and support she was more willing to challenge the ideas of other colleagues. Most importantly, Elaine confirmed it was important for her to be able to transfer discourse in meetings to positive, productive changes in student learning. Elaine's comments supported the need for the principal to keep discourse simple and motivating. Similarly, sensitization theory afforded the investigator a theoretical lens for understanding large amounts of discourse will result in teachers being less sensitive to using it as a tool.

London (2008) stated epistemological belief influenced discourse since the contextual circumstances of those participating is unique. An individual's epistemological belief is the underlying assumptions that influence how they see the world (Anderson, 2009). This study

explored how sensitization to discourse made participants more likely to participate when the principal used it. Jacque and Carol's comments that discourse took place around common goals or beliefs illustrated an awareness people construct understanding differently. "When Helen starts the meeting with a common focus discourse is better." (Carol) In contrast, Helen disagreed with this and stated in an interview, "I throw out a problem-hard question, then ask them to dive in and take some chances." Lieb (1991) asserted epistemological belief promotes differences in context during discourse, thus conclusions were drawn according to the degree teachers were sensitized to discourse (Anderson).

The theoretical lens of sensitization assisted the researcher in understanding how repeated exposure to discourse reduced teacher anxiety. London (2008) and Anderson (2009) found educators by nature were relatively easy to sensitize to new learning, because people instinctively were programmed to survive. Furthermore, if people were moved from the familiar toward the unfamiliar such as using large amounts of discourse, adults would be less sensitive to the new learning. For example, Helen said she did not find fault in her staff for not wanting to use discourse since they were a small group of teachers in a small school. Instead, she blamed herself for not using it often enough. "Norms are restrictive – been there, they didn't work, but the teachers need to learn to argue too (Helen)." Hence, Helen confirmed it was when they used discourse with regularity teachers understood how and what they were supposed to do. Five teachers confirmed Helen's assumption people need to sensitize to discourse. Angie said, "Debate makes us better when we get used to it." "I need time to warm up to discourse" (Carol). "Getting used to it is hard, I need more time (Frieda)." "I have to know exactly what good discourse looks like (Peggy)." "it's good to have a clear picture of what it looks like to argue good (Brenda)."

According to the literature, leaders who perceive how to help adults adjust to using discourse, tap the collective knowledge of the learning community to address the most confounding school improvement issues (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011; Lambert, 2002). If teachers are not in the habit of the leader using discourse, then it is unlikely they will develop feelings of membership or efficacy. Peters and Waterman (1982) found simultaneously being firm/hard and loose/soft successfully helped people become accustomed to discourse (Porsch & Bromme). Researching America's best managed companies, the duo demonstrated how loose/tight rules helped people adjust to discourse and shared decision making (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Helen admitted being firm about talking in the hall, outside of the group but "flexible and nonrestrictive in meetings (Helen)." Teacher participants were split on their feelings about the principal's use of loose discourse. Frieda said, "We need direction." Without a clear agenda or some guidelines we will focus on each other and not the content (Angie). Carol expressed wanting the principal to use discourse but also to "standardize the process."

Helen said she was not trained to use discourse. Yet, Anderson (2009) asserted leaders needed training to employ tactics which sensitize others to new ideas. Consequently, teachers expressed discourse training was important. As mentioned in chapter four, two teachers reported not having had any training related to how they should use discourse. In contrast, three other teachers said they had participated in what they considered to be discourse training. For example, Carol said, "new people were left out of trainings that Helen used to prepare us for discourse." Effective principals recognize discourse is influenced by the leader's ability to plan (Kirkland, 2002). The literature confirmed leaders who perceive how to familiarize or train people, tap the collective knowledge of the learning community and address the most confounding improvement issues (London, 2008; Porsch & Bromme, 2011; Lambert, 2002). Yet, Anderson (2009), Hickey

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(2008), and Lencioni (2002) stated training is just part of the overall process since leaders should desensitize people or reduce adult sensitivity to conflict.

<p align="center">Desensitizing to Discourse</p>

Desensitization involves reducing a person's sensitivity to discourse through repetition (Davey). In the field of psychiatry, desensitization is used as a behavior modification technique for treating phobias and other emotional responses to a stimulus. Desensitization is achieved through repeated exposure (Davey, 1980). Gill and Spencer (2008) found the easiest way for leaders to desensitize workers to use discourse was to first model the process themselves. The act of demonstrating the art of desensitization is best accomplished when the leader willingly listens to and tolerates varied points of view (Anderson). Yet, Bolman and Deal (2008) and Ruiz (2005) found few structural leaders to be capable of managing such complicated and abstract reasoning. Nevertheless, leaders who desensitize teachers to the discomforts of discourse increase participation (Anderson, 2009; Checkley, 2000; London, 2008).

Desensitizing people to engage in and accept discourse is impacted by temperament and the willingness of professionals to risk making mistakes in front of peers. Helen said, "teachers should learn to argue with one another and not see anger or healthy finger pointing to be a problem." During the first focus group, seven participants reported feeling unsafe or at-risk when the principal used discourse. Dianne said, "I can't get into discourse without worrying about holding grudges." "I need help with grudge holding rocky moments" (Irene) Another teacher said, "discourse causes arguing which could end with someone holding it against you." (Karen) Three teachers said, in-depth training for getting accustomed to disagreement was necessary. During an interview, Helen agreed "training might be helpful", but said she didn't see the need to provide it. Instead she said, she liked empowerment and acting as a role model to help teachers

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become at ease with discourse. Interestingly, Helen's statement supported Gill and Spencer's (2008) claim, people need to see the leader act as role model.

Teachers identified the factors of grudge holding and anger to be points of concern or areas the leader might need to desensitized the group to accept. Helen, the principal also acknowledged exposure to be important to becoming accustomed to the discomforts of discourse. Research by Anderson (2009), Morel (2007), and Bolman and Deal (2008) aligned with the notion staff involvement in difficult dialogue hinged on group capacity to adjust or desensitize to seeing issues differently. Using inductive case study based on interview, Morel discovered when people were consistently led to use discourse as a problem solving tool, desensitization to the processes improved. Thus, transferred into the language of school leadership, leaders who use discourse often desensitize teachers to better manage discomforts and concerns that result.

Along with concerns about grudge holding and finger pointing from colleagues, the data indicated some teachers did not feel safe enough in meetings to risk sharing a conflicting view. For example, Dianne stated:

When a meeting gets really tense, I don't make comments or ask questions about what other people say or their views in front of the rest in meetings - I think most of the other teachers know I could but I just don't. I guess I think it's just much safer not ask and risk causing a problem that I am going to lose sleep over or worry about later. We are a small group where everybody knows everyone else too well.

Dianne decided to pull back from discourse where she would risk hurting feelings. She is afraid to confront ideas in meetings due to anxiety that the feelings of others could be hurt. The small number of teachers at the research site appeared to impede the leaders use of discourse

since school size, something out of her control was limiting Dianne's ability to desensitize to discourse. It also appeared to be a difficult situation for Dianne because overcoming her fear to challenge colleagues and ask questions could have helped improve practice. London stated, repeated exposure to discourse during meetings reduced anxiety through systematic desensitization. However, desensitization to the fear of being "thought of as a problem" or perhaps the potential for alienation seemed too hard for Dianne to manage. Dianne's account represented a no win situation yet confirmed Anderson's (2009) research related to the importance of desensitization.

As mentioned previously, teacher efficacy or the capacity to cause improvement develops in settings where educators use discourse to access group tacit knowledge (Brockberg, 2008; Berhhout, 2007; Parker, 2009). Yet, causing change through difficult dialogue might require desensitization, training, and mutual praise for thoughtful discourse (London, 2008). Using discourse where a strong sense of belonging exists, promotes desensitization to discourse (Anderson, 2009; Stake, 1980). The teacher participants in this study said they needed the principal to train them and then praise incidents of thoughtful discourse because they perceived both strategies to make dealing with the negative easier. When the teachers talked about their principal using discourse it was very clear that they responded more positively when they felt they had adequate guidance and commendation. For example, Brenda, Michelle, and Peggy were enthusiastic when they talked about training and the "lack of preparation" they experienced prior to using discourse. In contrast, Angie identified Professional Learning Communities and Reading First training to be helpful approaches to using discourse. Teacher actions during meetings supported the principal's assertion, "teachers have learned to argue." Other observations suggested the teachers appreciated and responded to praise for taking part in discourse. This was

the case for Angie who said she appreciated another teacher's understanding of her need to hear things out and have a clear understanding of the plan before proceeding.

Teacher experience with desensitization to discourse varied depending on how long they had worked at the research site. Elaine a new teacher said she often felt anxiety since she was not employed by the school when others were originally trained to accept and participate in discourse. She stated, "It is my understanding that the principal spent time talking about discourse and that there was nothing wrong with disagreeing with her or anybody else. She always says the goal is to get better (Elaine)." Elaine also said, "Don't get me wrong though, I like discourse but I have not gotten used, and probably won't, to staying focused and involved when I thought another teacher actually got mad or things got out of control." Even though Elaine was not the direct recipient of training or had been taught to desensitize to discourse, she felt a degree of efficacy to participate.

The research is clear, desensitizing to the rigors of discourse can lead to improved participation by people (Anderson, 2009). Furthermore, in the case of this study, desensitization theory better positioned the researcher to understand how the regular use of discourse by the principal caused participants to be less sensitive to its discomforts. In contrast, other participants reported small school size made desensitization to discourse more difficult.

<center>Training and Guidance</center>

The participants made it apparent they felt they were asked by the principal to use discourse, yet were not provided a specific process to follow or set of outcomes to accomplish. In response to not knowing how to use discourse, the teachers reported allowing their "thoughts to come out without someone dictating what they should say (Jacque)." Angie said, I base my opinion on what I thought the principal wanted me to say." The data from the study indicated a

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majority of the teachers felt they lacked clear targets of what was expected in terms of using

discourse to cause improvement. For example, Helen made statements such as, "teachers learn to

argue" and "regular exposure provides purpose and know how." Yet, one teacher said, we are

sometimes give a problem and asked to debate the solution or come up with an intervention but I

don't believe we have the specific skills needed to use discourse. "I have never been told by

Helen how to use discourse or just what it is I am supposed to be doing in meetings" (Irene).

Angie and Brenda said, "we need training." Consequently, several teachers identified discourse

as a generalized process and in Irene's case the principal had not met her individual needs.

Frieda said, "I don't remember ever having been told what I need to do when we have a faculty

meeting where were supposed to discourse something." Elaine noted, "…and I sometimes sit

back and let others start the conversation to understand what I am supposed to do." Both Frieda

and Irene agreed "…don't want to make anyone angry so we echo the same sentiments as the

people we tend to agree with." The data also revealed teachers felt less isolated when they

engaged in discourse that was structured in advance and posed clear outcomes.

"The teachers seem to hold back and put limits on what they think they have to offer

during the discourse." Helen recognized teachers had difficulty using discourse when she did not

provide them with clear strategies for talk. Brenda, Peggy, and Elaine expressed needing extra

help from the principal during discourse. The trio also said training or special attention to help

them feel more confident when the principal used discourse made the process more practical.

Other participants reported sitting back and watching others when the talk lacked structure from

the principal. In response, Helen preferred using discourse that was open-ended and loose, yet

admitted offering alternative cooperative strategies to teachers. Strategies such as 360 feedback

were used by Helen. The feedback activity afforded more reserved teachers opportunities to use

discourse in what was perceived to be, a safe confidential manner. The principal also asked

teachers to lead faculty meetings where discourse was used. Several teachers reported these

approaches to using discourse were more safe and sensible. Helen reported teacher led meetings

worked best and one might assume the teachers learned more from the authentic application of

discourse since the outcomes made more sense and held meaning for them.

Training

Training in using discourse could help the teachers and principal distinguish the factors

that the literature found inspired safe and productive discourse. For example, Eubanks, Smith,

and Parish (2006) and Tannen (2000) reported leader led discourse must suit the changing needs

of workers, such as greater teacher control of talk, whole group training, and assurances dialogue

will not negatively impact teacher - teacher relations. Furthermore, whole group instruction from

the leader was found by Gordon (2009) to increase the use of problem solving with discourse.

Berkhout (2007), Kirkland (2002), and Lambert (2010) found worker efficacy increased when

the leader directed attention and emphasis toward structural activities associated with how to use

discourse.

As the principal and teachers used discourse more frequently, they found their training

needs began to change. Teachers reported wanting to have more increased autonomy in what the

group chose to discuss and decided upon and also expressed wanting the final say in how

outcomes of discourse impacted what they did in the classroom. In contrast, the group pressured

the principal to use carefully framed and structured discourse. In other words, teacher

respondents collectively offered evidence that when the principal used discourse they moved

toward independence and self-regulation. Furthermore, when the principal used discourse

teachers placed importance on the need to feel acceptance and belonging. The constant changing

needs of the teachers posed a mismatch between how they and the principal perceived training for discourse should occur. Consequently, both the principal and the teachers were in favor of training which included creating norms for using discourse.

For example, one teacher expressed less desire for discourse when the final decision would be principal determined. Dianne, Carol, and Frieda said, they valued learning how using discourse provided them access to the decision-making process but also felt the process was at times artificial, since they felt Helen had already had made up her mind. In other words, teachers expressed a desire to use discourse but only if the principal would allow their input to impact final outcomes. Research conducted by the Research Center for Leadership Action (n.d.) found declines in adult participation in open discourse when participant input did not change the leader's preference for outcomes.

Scheduling Discourse

The principal used discourse exclusively at scheduled faculty meetings. The current faculty meeting schedule caused professionals to meet after school. Respondents voiced concern about holding meetings at the end of the day when the group was tired yet did not advocate for interrupting the school day or pulling teachers from the classroom. Perhaps creative scheduling of meetings where discourse is used could be a solution. The principal may want to consider making scheduling changes so that faculty meetings where discourse was used would occur more sporadically. This may be a salient way to use discourse and catch teachers when they are more fresh. Karen expressed concerns about the value of using discourse at meetings toward the end of the day when everyone was tired and grouchy. Angie agreed, meetings late in the day had adversely impacted using discourse in a productive manner. Professional development days

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scheduled into the district calendar might be an outlet for the principal to use discourse. These days might be especially important if meeting before school is not an option.

Teacher Involvement

The principal reported using open-ended strategies but to increase teacher involvement, the principal may want to more regularly share information about how to use discourse. This may eliminate questions and concerns voiced by the teachers about not knowing what the principal wanted them to do. The principal reported involving teachers when using discourse to develop improvement plans. This, of course, would take a considerable amount of time to make certain all fourteen teachers were provided research supported strategies. Yet, participant voices expressed offering teacher development opportunities around using discourse would ensure the group operated on the same page. More importantly, training could increase teacher efficacy since the group would have a collective hand in developing the plan.

Using Discourse to Improve

As noted throughout this study, the principal and teachers used discourse to improve. Furthermore, the participants identified how the principal used discourse did impact improvement. Teachers were able to directly connect using discourse to making improvements since the process reduced incidents of artificial agreement between the educators. Essentially, how the principal uses discourse determined how productive the exchange of ideas between teachers might be. Elaine confirmed what other teachers said, "my reasons for coming to meetings are to improve how the kiddos perform (Elaine)." Teachers also said in lieu of discourse, educators were more likely to hold back during meetings where the principal did not use it. Thus, the principal used discourse to invest in and access authentic teacher tacit

knowledge. Discourse also offered benchmarks and expectations for productive meeting participation.

Implications for Future Research

This is a case study of how the principal used discourse in a small rural Missouri elementary school and for that reason the findings are not generalizable to all schools throughout the state, let alone the nation. In spite of this, the literature on using discourse has developed well founded research supporting how it increases one's capacity to improve. This study revealed two major categories of emphasis, (a) how the leader uses multiple frames of leadership to manage discourse, and (b) how discourse is used to inform decisions. How the principal is trained and how participants are trained to use discourse is worthy of further research. To what extent are the findings from this study potentially found in other school districts? According to the data found in this study, teachers expressed the desire for the principal to use discourse which included explicit instructions and expectations for using it. The teachers felt discourse should be safe and levels of risk proportional to the size of the school. Most notably, how the principal used discourse impacted how teachers felt they were making a difference and improving. For example Brenda said, "I know to get better, Helen is right we can't just sit there and all agree all of the time if we are going to get better and improve." Finally, principal training programs might consider this topic worthy of further study.

Conclusions

One of most interesting and significant insights the data revealed was the substantial difference in leader and teacher perception related to when discourse should be tightly structured and when the reigns should be held more loosely. The teachers focused on wanting the principal to use discourse that was safe, meaningful, and structured. Discourse was portrayed as a tool for

holding the group, yet it also promoted efficacy or belonging. Respondents expressed wanting the principal to tell them how to use discourse but the principal did not seem to think tightly structured norms helped sensitize teachers to discourse.

According to the literature, norms and standards symbolize how people respond to principal led discourse. Norms ensure people will exercise care for one when the leader uses discourse, however according to Geddes and Stickney (2011) such rules should not restrict emotion. Furthermore, when leaders employ strict norms and sanctions; followers tend to be more suspicious of groupthink (Anderson, 2009; Geddes & Stickney, 2011). Consequently, difficulties experienced by the principal while using discourse did not meet the needs of the whole group. Observations revealed a one size fits all approach to using discourse could be difficult to achieve when working with diverse groups of people. Similarly, the literature supported discourse which encouraged safe, self-critical dialogue but without excessive norming, since such actions caused quiet obedient staff members who looked to the leader for direction (Gill, 2010; Peck, 1997; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007). According Davies (2007) and Ruiz (2005) pre-established structures for using discourse is the leaders' duty because they weave a common purpose and direction for talk. Thus, the principal might consider working with the staff to develop norms which include quantity, quality, relation, and the manner for which input is communicated.

The principal (Helen) in this study shared that using discourse needed to be framed in a loose-tight manner to meet the needs of individual teachers. Nevertheless, despite the depth and scope of this study and the small size of the research site, the principal identified key factors so eloquently articulated by the research. For example, Dufour (1998) and Bolman and Deal (2008) established how loose/tight rules promoted shared decision making during discourse. While I

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believe the participants of the study had the best intent, most expressed the leader did not provide

them the specific skills they need to use discourse effectively. Consequently, intent alone does

not help knowledge communities better understand how the principal uses discourse. Strong

leadership is needed while using discourse to ensure teachers feel safe and productive. This

means taking a closer look and understanding how leadership skills impact how the principal

uses discourse. Can the factors identified by teachers be circumvented through strong leadership?

The researcher concluded the leader should not assume teachers are apprised of how discourse

should be used since group constructed policy could better direct processes. This would require

taking a much closer look at the personalities and needs of the teachers. Furthermore, the leader

should not assume teachers are aware of how the leaders expects them to participate in discourse.

The principal used discourse with and without providing written or verbal instructions.

Furthermore, the leader was observed using discourse which did not include written

documentation about topics to be discussed. Eleven of the teachers interviewed felt discourse

was less effective when it was used without written direction. However, three respondents

expressed a preference to participate in open, unrestricted talk. Thus, when participants were not

provided guidelines, they admitted pulling back or refraining from using discourse.

Consequently, the principal may want to consider providing verbal and written guidelines prior

to using discourse since doing so might ensure these teachers did not fall through the cracks.

The data in this study seemed to be consistent with research related to the use of

discourse to improve the school and promote efficacy. Teachers expressed a collective need to

actively engage in discourse that was perceived to be relevant, purposeful, and significant to

making a difference in the lives of students. The teachers in this study of how the principal uses

discourse in a small, rural elementary school reported the need to be safe, yet structurally

engaged in talk that informed decisions. However, two respondents recalled attending meetings where discourse was used superficially to validate an end decision ultimately made by the principal. Consequently, data revealed teachers valued discourse where important decisions were collectively determined by the group. This meant how the principal used discourse to collaborate with her staff towards achieving mutual outcomes was found to be important. Research and the voices of participants were consistent adults should feel welcome to participate in discourse since every teacher is a necessary member of the learning community. The principal should identify ways to use discourse which increases the teachers' engagement. When providing instructions to teachers for using discourse, the principal might consider making sure they are differentiated and formally taught. Instructions for discourse were identified by teachers as important or integral to feeling their time spent in dialogue was useful. The principal could relinquish some control when using discourse and provide teachers the choice to select topics that are interesting and engaging to them. Observation data revealed, small school leaders might have the affluence to accommodate the needs of teachers since group size is reduced. Research by Parker (2009) indicated a small group of people needed freedom yet structure to address important issues.

The data in this study appeared to both agree and differ from other research studies related to how leaders use discourse. However, the teachers in this study were concerned about similar issues that impacted people who participated in discourse (Things like challenging ideas and having your own thoughts confronted without worrying about grudge holding or negative tensions resulting). The small size of the school studied may have presented issues and contributed to teachers concerns about discourse leading to resentment. Earlier in this study, I

reported London (2008) and Lambert (2002) found factors which placed teachers at risk during principal led discourse included disagreement, grudge holding, and unhealthy targeting.

What this means for the rural elementary school is teachers expressed needing the principal to use discourse which increased how adult voices impacted improvement. It was also expressed that talk should occur in a safe environment which diminished risk and promoted efficacy. This might mean using scheduled professional development days to further explore how the principal could use discourse to meet the diverse needs of the group. Perhaps hiring substitute teachers to increase the amount of time for teacher development would be an option. Nevertheless, some targeted collaboration between teachers and the principal could provide the group information on how to best use discourse. It is important to note, small rural elementary schools are the center of community hope and identity, thus strategies which increase the capacity to improve could change the lives of stakeholders – an authentic reason to consider using discourse to improve. Finally, the school's professional library might include non-fiction titles related to how to use discourse.

It is my hope this case study will contribute to existing practice related to how leaders use discourse. Conversely, it must be confirmed, generalizations should not be drawn from this study of how the principal used discourse at one small rural elementary school. Yet, findings could be of use to school leaders using discourse in similarly sized schools.

Based on experiences at the research site and a critical examination of previous research, the following may be useful to principals who use discourse (a) employing structural, collegial, political, and symbolic leadership frames improves teacher participation in discourse and outcomes of efficacy (b) providing sensitization and desensitization to participants prior to using discourse reduces fear of participation, grudge holding, and targeting (c) learning about the

specific needs, belief systems, and sensitivities of participants increases the leaders ability to connect discourse to improvement (d) offering training in how to use discourse, helps people better distinguish factors which promote safe and productive discourse (e) scheduling discourse beyond traditional meeting times increases neutrality, and (f) maintaining awareness of teacher engagement addresses anxieties that arise from diverse discourses. Above all, research found discourse can promote efficacy and improvement (Lambert, 2002). Leaders who use discourse display a greater awareness of how interactional processes tap the tacit knowledge of the entire learning community (Geddes & Stickney, 2011). When improving student learning is at stake, contrasting opinions of people should be heard. Finally, discourse offers principals one more strategy for redistributing power to teachers for the purpose of improvement (Gordon, 2009).

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Appendix A

Principal Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the school?

2. How do you use discourse?

3. How do you manage discourse?

4. Tell me how you use discourse?

5. Where and how often does discourse happen?

6. What processes of discourse occur?

7. When planning to use discourse, how do you prepare?

8. What measures do you take to encourage teachers to participate discourse?

9. What training do you provide teachers before using discourse?

10. What information do you gather from using discourse?

11. How do you use this data to plan future meetings?

12. Can you provide examples of how you used discourse to improve? Explain?

Appendix B

Teacher Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the school?

2. How does the principal use discourse?

3. How does the principal manage discourse?

4. Tell me how you have participated in discourse?

5. Where and how often does discourse happen?

6. What processes of discourse occur?

7. When planning to use discourse, how does the principal prepare you?

8. What effects how you participate when the principal uses discourse?

9. What training have you participated in before using discourse?

10. What information do you gather from using discourse?

11. How do you use this data to improve?

12. Can you provide examples of how you used discourse to improve? Explain?

Appendix C

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. When you hear the word "discourse" what does it mean to you?

2. How are you involved in using discourse? How are discourse processes used?

3. Provide examples of discourse?

4. What does using discourse look like?

Appendix D

Principal Recruitment Letter; Permission to Participate in Human Subject Research

11/26/2012

Dear Principal,

As a requirement for completion of my doctoral degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia, I am working on a dissertation entitled "A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY PRINICPAL'S USE OF MULTI-FRAMED DISCOURSE." My data will require input from one Missouri public school principal and ten teachers through interview, focus group and observation.

It is not anticipated that you or your teachers will personally experience neither risks nor benefits from this research. Through your participation in this study, principal training programs will better understand the multi-frame processes principals use to engage teachers to discourse.

It will take your teachers approximately ten minutes to answer 12 interview questions and 20 minutes to participate in a single focus group. Interview and focus group questions will deal with opinions about the multi-frame processes principals use to engage teachers to discourse. All answers will be kept confidential and will be used only for this study. No school district or person will be named in this study.

Your schools participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study will be published, but your name will not be used.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and consideration of this study. There is no reward for your participation.

Please contact Dr. Carole Edmonds (816-803-7058 or CAKE@nwmissouri.edu) with any questions or concerns. If you have questions about your rights as a research project participant, you may contact the MU Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585.

Kind Regards,

Michael C. Bartig
(660) 488-5757 (Home), (660) 626-1440 (Work)
email: mbartig@kirksville.k12.mo.us

Appendix E

Superintendant Recruitment Letter

3/31/2012
Elementary School A
Missouri Town
Zip Code

Re: A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY PRINICPAL'S USE OF MULTI-FRAMED
DISCOURSE-Mike Bartig

Dear School A:

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study, A CASE
STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY PRINICPAL'S USE OF MULTI-FRAMED DISCOURSE.
This study is being conducted by Mike Bartig at the University of Missouri-Columbia. This
study will inductively examine how the principal uses four frames of leadership to engage
teachers in discourse.

We recently discussed the topic of the study about how the Principal at One Small Elementary
School Used Discourse. At that time, you indicated an interest in possibly participating in the
research. I am writing to tell you that I believe you may be eligible for an approved research
study about the multi-frame processes principals use to engage teachers to discourse.

There will be a follow-up phone call to this letter and if you choose to participate a personal
consultation to provide further details about the study. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled at
your convenience. After the phone call, Public School A may opt out of the study by requesting
that no further contact be made. Agreement to be further contacted or a request for more
information does not obligate you to participate in the study.

If you would like additional information about this study, please call or write;

Mike Bartig
20772 Potter Road
Kirksville, MO 63501
Home Phone: 660-488-5757
Cell Phone: 660-988-4186

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Bartig

Appendix F

Participant Informed Consent

A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY PRINICPAL'S USE OF MULTI-FRAMED
DISCOURSE - Michael Bartig

Participant Informed Consent
University of Missouri – Columbia
This form requests your consent to participate in a research study that explores A CASE STUDY
OF AN ELEMENTARY PRINICPAL'S USE OF MULTI-FRAMED DISCOURSE. Data
collection and analyses will be completed under the direction of Dr. Carole Edmonds, Professor,
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. The focus group will take
approximately 20 minutes.

Project description: This research project involves one observation of an employee meeting and
focus group interviews with "Public School A" teachers and leaders. The study is to explore
perspectives that expand the researchers understanding of how the Principal at One Small
Elementary School Used Discourse within Public School A.

Potential Benefits and Concerns: Findings of this project will be integrated into reports,
presentations, and publications will inform a local principal training program. Findings will not
be used in articles, presentations, and other publications to inform a national and international
audience.

Confidentiality: All information associated with project participants will be kept in a locked
office accessible only to the researchers. In accordance with the Federal regulations, the research
materials will be kept for a period of two weeks after the completion of interviews, focus groups
and observations. No comments will be attributed to you by name in any reports or publications
related to this study. You may be identified by category (e.g., Principal or Teacher), but a
pseudonym will be used in place of your name in all reports.

Audio recording: All interviews, focus groups and observations will be audio recorded, unless
you prefer to have the event conducted without recording. If you agree to have the interview
recorded, you have the right to request the recorder be stopped at any time—either to stop the
interview completely or to continue the interview unrecorded.

Participation is Voluntary: Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can decline to
answer any questions you do not wish to or withdraw your participation in this study at any time
without penalty. You can freely withdraw from the project at any time without negative
consequences, and all data pertaining to you will be destroyed.

Questions: Please contact Dr. Carole Edmonds (816-803-7058 or CAKE@nwmissouri.edu)
with any questions or concerns. If you have questions about your rights as a research project
participant, you may contact the MU Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585.

Please check the appropriate line to indicate that you have read and understand this letter:

_____I agree to participate, and I give consent that the observation and focus group can be audio recorded. At any time I may ask that the recorder be stopped.

OR

_____I agree to participate, but do not give consent to audio tape the observation and focus group.

Signed: _____ (Date) _____

VITA

Mike Bartig earned a B.S. in Biology from Southwest Baptist University, a M. Ed. in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri –St. Louis, an Ed. Specialist in Educational Technology from the University of Missouri –Columbia, and an Ed. D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri – Columbia. He currently serves as director of curriculum and assessment for the Kearney R-I School District. Bartig, 47, previously served as director of curriculum and instruction and middle school principal for the Kirksville School District. He spent 14 years as a science teacher, high school assistant principal, middle school assistant principal, and coach in Troy, Missouri. During those 25 years, he had experiences that confirmed we make our choices and those choices define who we are. He learned what ultimately matters is that our imagination of what we want to achieve in life is unbounded. Education has allowed Mike to become the man he wanted to be, it provided the space to incorporate the unknown and the unpredictable into his life; it instilled in him a sense of responsibility as well as adventure. Mike is looking forward to the next wonderful possibility since what matters most is that we do certain things not just experience them.

Mike's wonderful wife Amy and two children, Laura and Carter, provide an incredible support system which has without doubted increased his capacity to live a flourishing life.