

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP CULTURE DIMENSIONS
TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN A RURAL SOUTH TEXAS SCHOOL
DISTRICT

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are influential when it comes to improving students' academic success, and teacher leadership is the foundation of these efforts as it is based on the ability to communicate meaningful information and build relationships among staff. While schools have embraced the concept of teacher leadership, the quality of professional development required to change and reform the way teachers learn and develop professionally, academically, and socially has limited teachers' ability to explore their leadership potential. The significance of teacher collaboration and teacher leadership plays a vital role in the development of school culture and overall school improvement.

The study involved a rural South Texas school district that has been implementing teacher leadership initiatives. Teachers from all campuses completed an online survey that entailed both the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale and open-ended questions. The research aimed to examine how teachers perceived the teacher leadership culture in a rural South Texas school district. The study analyzed the relationships between the teacher leadership culture and teachers' perceptions across three foci: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment. The results of the Bivariate Correlation indicated the strongest relationship evident between the dimensions of Administrative Support and Supportive Working Environment ($r=.571$; $p<0.1$). Additionally, two important factors that were found in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses entailed student need and teacher voice.

DEDICATION

This Record of Study is dedicated to the teachers of Jim Hogg County ISD for their commitment and dedication toward their personal and professional goals. May this research inspire each of you to continue growing collaboratively with the support of your campus and district leaders in meeting the instructional, social, and emotional needs of your students.

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This work was supervised by a Record of Study committee consisting of Dr. Trina Davis [Chair], Dr. Mónica Vásquez Neshyba, and Dr. Radhika Viruru, [Committee Members] of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. Dr. Randel Brown of the Department of Educational Programs at Texas A&M International University also served as a committee member.

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NOMENCLATURE

AS –	Administrative Support
JHCISD –	Jim Hogg County Independent School District
PC –	Professional Collaboration
RQ –	Research Question
SWE –	Supportive Working Environment
TLCS –	Teacher Leadership Culture Scale

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION

National Context

An awareness for improved student achievement outcomes has become an underlying concern for global competition in the United States (Schneider & Keesler, 2007). Consequently, school reform has been a call in the American education system as substandard national scores continue to prove there is a desperate need for change in education to close the achievement gap. Over four decades ago, a demand for improving the quality of teaching was reported to the United States Secretary of Education by the National Commission of Excellence in Education through a letter entitled, “A Nation at Risk” (Gardner, 1983). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) continued with the demand of attaining quality teachers across the nation, as well as ensuring every child is achieving academic success (Murnane & Steele, 2007).

These staggering issues have become problematic nation-wide as high-quality and high-performing teachers are limited, specifically in schools with low-socioeconomic status ratings and highly diverse student populations. Yet, despite the matter of student demographics, this level of accountability rests on the shoulders of school leaders – and teachers. Teachers matter to student success, and the quality of teacher professional development is imperative as the demands of facing several challenges in meeting learner needs continues to grow.

To challenge the disparity and inequalities across the nation, school administrators and teachers need to work collaboratively to improve teaching strategies and transforming schools, specifically in professional development (Demir, 2015). Darling-Hammond (2010) asserted an understanding of the practices and principles of professional development with a need to build a foundation and culture of continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Becoming accustomed to the practices of professional development and the principles of its implementation is vital in providing teachers with opportunities to attain the knowledge and skills for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, an urgent approach in providing effective professional development to teachers is expected to be on-going, campus-specific, and content-specific (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2010). Additionally, the perspective of adopting a mission to enhance the equivalence of practices and principles of professional growth for teachers reinforces the necessity of understanding teacher professional development and instructional needs (DuFour, 2004a). Such principles and practices in professional development have given rise to determining its effectiveness across public education campuses serving grades levels K-12th.

While professional development sessions are needed and required for school improvement, school leaders are moving towards avoiding trainings that are redundant in having teachers participate in workshops, in-service, and meeting room discussions (Gusky, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; DuFour, 2004a). Moreover, school leaders perceive one-size fits all trainings often result in ill-equipped resources for teachers to implement strategies fully. The traditional

practices of having teachers participate in staff development occasionally throughout the academic year have evolved to providing effective training opportunities to teachers at “their workplace rather than a workshop” (DuFour, 2004a. p. 63).

Providing teachers with on-going professional development at their workplace allows teachers to work collaboratively with each other in developing curriculum and instructional approaches, common assessments, and consistent analysis of student progress in efforts to identify strengths and weaknesses (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2010). The collective efforts increase a consistent and focused system in building the capacity and shared knowledge of teachers through teacher cooperation, teamwork, communication, and dialogue, as well as organizational structures that change the behaviors of teachers which will impact teaching and learning. (Gusky, 1986; Little, 1993; DuFour, 2004a; Penuel. Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). The teacher behaviors and perceptions of this process are meaningful when determining the cause and relationship between professional development-school improvement strategies on professional development and school culture factors.

Research on teacher leadership has increased momentum in European countries. The research provides conclusive and strong relationships between teacher leadership, student learning, and school culture and climate (Harris, 2000a, 2002b; Grant, 2006; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). Specifically, inquiries conducted by Kamile Demir (2008, 2014, 2015) have studied in depth transformational leadership and teacher leadership initiatives which have produced increased professional collaboration,

administrative support, supportive working environments, and teacher self-efficacy. In all, such initiatives have improved school culture.

The empirical research on leadership techniques involving teacher leadership initiatives is highly studied in countries such as Turkey. However, similar research is needed to measure and account of the specific factors associated with teacher leadership and their relationship with school culture in schools across the United States. Hence, this study intends to focus precisely in a small rural school district in South Texas where teacher leadership initiatives have existed.

Situational Context

Because the roles of administrators can become complicated (Barth, 1990), schools have embraced the concept of allowing teachers to contribute to the overall school initiatives, such as professional development (Harris, 2002a, 2002b; Gordon, 2004; Frost, 2008). These efforts are consistent within the scope of leadership expectations for student achievement, positive school culture, and the overall understanding and acceptance of change (Gordon, 2004; Kılınç, Cemaloğlu, & Savaş, 2015).

A need for improved student achievement outcomes has increased, and the need for schools to implement change to meet the demands of student achievement has become the forefront of school improvement requirements. Teacher quality was further emphasized with the reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) of 2015. Efforts in developing the quality of teachers was introduced within Title II of ESSA where instructional coaching and mentoring, school leadership and

school improvement are heavily tied to federal funding (ESSA, Title II, Section 2101, Part A, c 4 B vii I). Yet, the professional development approach in implementing change towards school improvement requires “investing and cultivating teacher leadership as the foundation of a comprehensive system (Killion, Harrison, Colton, Bryan, Delehant, & Cooke, 2016, p. 6) to ensure high-quality growth.

The attempt to change schools through the implementation of leadership models began with the origination of the site-based management that was comprised of not only administrators but also teachers, parents, and community members (Barth, 1991; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Tsai, 2013). This approach was studied and determined by Liebermann (1995) to be one that enhanced the needed collaboration between the campus leadership and teachers in designing improvement practices school wide. Selected teachers assumed the roles of committee members, department chairs, grade level leaderships, and curriculum writers (Killion et al., 2016).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) posited that principals as the sole campus leaders are no longer effective models of leadership. As such, school leaders have recognized the impact teachers have among each other and have taken strides in capitalizing the change and impact it has in building models of excellence in the campus culture (Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011). The development of teacher leadership capacity has also given rise to the needed collective leadership roles in instructional practice, operational responsibility, and school improvement (Fullan, 2014).

This increased shared collaboration has prompted the use of teachers to assist in providing assistance and leadership in teacher professional development and other

campus tasks. In doing so, this collective and shared vision between campus administrators and teachers has been found to contribute to a positive working environment (Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B., 2005) that sets priority in promoting collaboration and professional growth among teachers, creating teacher career advancement, facilitating school improvement, and facilitating student success (Schein, 2010; Roby, 2011; Killion et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016). Rather than discovering new teaching practices to implement and evaluate student growth, school personnel are moving towards a more-refreshed outlook of professional development (Meirer, 1992; Little, 1993; Poekert, 2012). The school improvement approach and initiative to shape the professional development process in addressing every child's instructional need is suggested to come from in-house teachers that are well-resourced to provide struggling teachers with instructional strategies, materials, observation feedback, and mentoring (Cherkowski, 2012; Cherkowski, 2018).

In all, teachers represent the vast majority of people in the field of education who are capable of affecting, endorsing, and modeling school reform. According to Cherkowski (2018, p. 63), "Teachers play a strong role in school improvement efforts." Improving the quality of teaching requires the need to change and reform the way teachers learn and develop professionally in their instructional delivery (Muijs & Harris, 2006). In doing so, the effects of professional development should coincide with the challenges and needs teachers experience so as to build their capacity in communicating a vision of teaching and learning and impacting the overall organizational culture (Little, 1993; Donaldson, 2001; DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Relevant History of the Problem

DuFour and Eaker (1998) posited the American school system as an overwhelming task that requires schools to provide an effective and first-rate education to all students. With the expectations of school improvement and performance, campus leaders are challenged in all aspects of school operations and instructional leadership. As the emphasis on student achievement continues to be a strong component nation-wide, schools are in need of having a robust implementation of improvement efforts. Yet, the initial challenge school leaders encounter is the complexity of schools in itself. Regardless of its location or the economic status of students the school serves, school systems are complex organizations with an abundant source of factors and relationships that connect staff to one another, which produces the connections of cooperation, support, and networking (Morrison, 2002).

Past school administrative structures of management had school leaders and teachers working independently from one another (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000). There was little to no interaction or flexibility to effectively operate a school. Leadership initiatives, such as distributed leadership and transformational leadership, have created opportunities for school employees to share a consistent vision and expectations for themselves and students (Bass, 1990; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbech, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Demir, 2008). Donaldson (2001) asserted American schools do not benefit from the traditional leadership practices and models; rather, an undertaking for strong stance for shared leadership. The professional relationships that exist in shared leadership experiences assists schools in developing practices that impact

all staff and overall student achievement. The positive and professional relationships that exist within the systems are developed primarily by the interacting individuals, grade level teams, and content departments (Bass, 1990; Senge, 1990; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood, 2000; Demir, 2008).

For decades, the increased accountability and scrutiny for higher student achievement scores have resulted in various improvement methods that have drawn the attention of school leaders for numerous years (Barth 1991; Glickman, 2002; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Seritanondh, 2013). While there continues to be no true model that has the answers for school improvement (Fullan, 1993), school leaders have taken a collaborative approach with lead teachers to support principals in various areas of need (Angelle, 2011). This approach, as described by DuFour & Eaker (1998), asserted the method of a team and collaborative approach presumably produce more effective communication and support to operate schools. Thus, a change towards increased and healthier teacher interactions through teacher leadership roles are expected to impact student achievement (Barth, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tsai, 2013).

Whether change is required, schools are complex organizations (Morrison, 2002). Notably, as principals lead the operations of complex educational institutions, the leadership role can also be regarded as multifaceted for change to occur (Glickman, 2002; Glickman, 2004). In efforts to promote action from another colleague, a leader must possess skills to influence others for the progress (Morrison, 2002; Marzano, et al., 2005; Tsai, 2013) by “mobilizing others to improve practice” (Sinha, Hanuscin, Rebello, Muslu, & Cheng, 2012, p13).

With the growing change of leadership models to facilitate school improvement and student achievement, school systems require transformation within the cultural and professional learning practices (Killion et al., 2016). The cultural and professional development changes of how teacher leaders assist principals with both children and adults through organizational and differentiated skills and qualities have garnered support (Glickman, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) to inspire, guide, and problem solve matters. As such, teacher leadership is a catalyst for school improvement and reform, as well as student achievement (Barth, 2001; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Glickman, 2002; Poekert, 2012; Demir, 2015; Tsai, 2017).

The implementation of teacher leadership provides opportunities for teachers to develop one another's skills and impact positive change in the school organization (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Danielson, 2006; Demir, 2015). This strategy strengthens the professional as teacher leaders share a responsibility for the success of their school, students, and communities with their colleagues (Killion et al., 2016).

Teacher Leadership Phases

For numerous years, teachers assumed leadership roles, such as department chair, lead teacher or master teacher to assist in managerial tasks and system effectiveness (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). However, this configuration of teacher leadership responsibilities created a level of control and separation that mounted on the idea of power. Because the phase did not focus on the influence teachers and other campus personnel needed for the development and improvement of instruction, a lack of instructional leadership generated false interpretations of the teacher leadership role as

being collaborative. This initial phase of teacher leadership was individualized and tailored which generated barriers between teachers and administrators.

Phase One. Because of the gaps imposed by the first phase in teacher leadership, Silva et.al.(2000) identified the second phase of teacher leadership as with an instructional leadership element focused on the development of teacher collaboration and communication. Benefits of teacher leadership during this phase included the development of relationships and partnerships within the school community. These changes in leadership roles addressed the void of instructional leadership which prompted new teacher leadership roles in curriculum design and professional development.

Phase Two. While the second teacher leadership phase is a customary trend that continues to be prevalent in many schools today, Silva et al. (2000) acknowledged a second phase that blends the instructional leadership role into increased levels of collaboration and informal leadership. This teacher leadership phase became a positive and constructive model of leadership as the partnership and teamwork among teachers takes both formal and informal roles. The flexibility of the leadership enabled opportunities for teachers to assist other teachers in all matters. Administrators capitalized on the movement of this phase in teacher leadership, and it increased a shared responsibility that emphasized opportunities to mobilize visionary work and attitude towards school improvement (Seritanondh, 2013).

Phase Three. The need for teacher leadership has been in existence for many years, and the calling for teacher leaders requires a commitment to understand the

increased responsibility and effective communication in collaborating the shared leadership roles. The shared leadership, in turn, affected school improvement and change towards expectations. As a result, the improvement of student achievement prompted further use of teacher leaders in assisting principals and other teachers with accountability factors and campus decision-making (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Donaldson, 2001). The teacher leadership roles in utilizing their knowledge, skills, and experiences became an important and productive approach in generating a positive school culture focused learning (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001).

Relevance

Teacher leadership effective behaviors in student learning and school improvement impact the remaining school staff to accept change for quality instruction (Gordon, 2004). In all, school-leadership practices transform from isolated actions to shared leadership practices to build upon the expertise of teachers in improving student success and school improvement (Demir, 2015). Related research conducted by York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Poekert (2012) identified school leadership practices to support the characteristics of teacher leadership. However, these studies from 1980 to 2004 (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and 2004 to 2012 (Poekert, 2012) solely characterized the teacher leadership dimensions qualitatively. Despite recent research that identified a positive relationship between teacher leadership implementation that focused on developing positive school culture and climate (Kılınç et al., 2015), a significant amount of the recent research is studied outside the United States.

Hence, a gap remains in understanding the relationship between teacher leadership and school culture in rural school districts where the significance would be challenged in promoting a school improvement strategy to a community of teachers with a variety of experiences in the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore this relationship in a South Texas rural school district. The research in examining the teacher opinions towards teacher leadership culture of the campuses and district will provide data to make more-informed decisions in teacher professional development and overall campus/ district culture.

Significance of the Problem

School systems continue to be challenged with the rising demands in the accountability of teacher and administrator performance as measured in the success of student achievement (Lieberman & Miller, 2005; Schneider & Keesler, 2007; Murnane & Steele, 2007). Schneider and Kessler (2007) explained that school leaders tend to focus on the changes of leadership rather than to focus on cultural structures and practices that make an environment successful.

Fullan (2001) noted a strong correlation between school leaders and the culture of schools they led. School leaders are responsible for the culture being positive and negative, and the cultural perspective on school improvement between staff members, students, and parents is dependent upon the influence of leadership practices (Fullan, 2014). School leaders influence school culture, and school culture influences the staff's perceptions on cultural shifts towards meaningful, productive, and sustainable school improvement (Schein,2010; DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Bolman & Deal (2008) asserted that cultural patterns characterize, shape, and influence all aspects of a school. The impact of leadership in shaping school culture plays an important role in influencing a common and shared vision. A collective purpose between campus administrators and staff can contribute to establishing a positive organizational culture that is built on collaborative problem solving and shared decision making to improve the school (Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B., 2005). Past and recent related research highlighted the improvement of student achievement through initiatives such as the implementation of school reform professional development through teacher leadership roles, systemic change in the dynamics of organizational culture results in greater success (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Cherkowski, 2018).

Demir (2015) stated that significant and sustainable change for school improvement required a cultural change, which is considered to be the most challenging aspect of teacher leadership. However, teachers are influential in the advocacy of student academic success and teacher collaboration (van den Berg, 2002; Haynes, 2011). A leadership shift in teachers evolving into leadership capacities is valuable to the school improvement process because they are capable of seeing the big picture for school improvement (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). Likewise, the needed professional communication and self-development of teachers and principals aim at initiating the new approaches, information, and experiences that involve their reflection of school improvement strategies related to teaching and learning (Demir, 2015). Sinha *et.al.*

(2012) stated teacher leadership should be practiced in meaningful ways as the definitive goal above anything else while student learning remains constant.

Therefore, I have chosen to use two definitions to drive the purpose of this study. The initial definition, derived from the work of Patterson and Patterson (2004), was chosen because of its detailed difference between the delivery of leadership as formal or informal. Patterson and Patterson (2004) stated the following:

We define a teacher leader as a teacher who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or an informal capacity. Formal teacher leaders are generally identified by the school principal. They serve as department heads, grade-level chairpersons, team leaders, mentors, for new teachers, peer coaches, or members of curriculum development task forces. Informal teacher leaders are those recognized by their colleagues because of their credibility, expertise, or relationship-building skills. These teachers may offer support to beginning teachers, design and implement staff development activities, make recommendations regarding new teacher candidates, write grants to gain needed resources, or even act as technology experts within the school (p. 76).

The second definition I selected was from the work of Katzenmayer and Moller (2001) due to the functionality of teacher leadership. The definition of teacher leadership provides a foundation in understanding the impact teacher leadership may have on teacher perceptions. Katzenmayer and Moller (2001) defined teacher leadership as:

Teachers who are leaders within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice (p. 5).

The empirical literature identifies several definitions that are fitting for this study. In most cases, the shared responsibility is the lead process of reaching the expectations of student achievement and school accountability (Lieberman & Miller, 2005; Seritanondh, 2013). Roby (2011) claimed that teacher leaders are capable of contributing to the overall cultural shift in their schools due to the reinforcement and effect they have on instruction and student achievement. Furthermore, Xu & Patmor (2012, p. 252) posited the concept of teacher leadership as “empowering teachers to take a more active role in school improvement” with an emphasis in teaching and learning. The opportunities to build and foster positive change in teaching and learning for themselves and their colleagues are dependent upon the effective communication among colleagues (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Kiliç, 2014).

In all, teacher leadership is the foundation of school improvement initiatives as it is based on the ability to communicate meaningful information and build relationships among staff (Silva et al., 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). If teacher leadership builds a foundation for cultural change and reform, how do school leaders attest to the relationship of its professional development approach in meeting teacher needs and building a positive school culture?

This mixed-methods study provided insight to the existing literature based on a rural school district’s implementation of teacher leadership as a model for professional

development, which in turn builds collaboration and continuous support for school improvement. Most if not all current literature builds on the quantitative analysis utilizing the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). However, this study also included a qualitative analysis of teacher perceptions regarding the TLCES dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support and Supportive Working Environment. The teacher responses generated from the online submission provided teachers opportunity to express their thoughts and points of view. As such, this study was able to merge both analyses to succumb to factors teachers find most important.

Research Questions

School leader actions have become more reactive than proactive in their attempt to sustain effective school settings (Spillane, 2004), and as the demands of the numerous responsibilities continue to exist, new responsibilities have made the school instructional operation more complex (Morrison, 2002). Changes in school improvement and reform have resulted in organizational change, particularly in how leadership models have evolved towards teacher leaders' acceptance of administrative roles (van den Berg, 2002). In fact, the increased expectations created a movement of shared leadership that is attributed to the vast responsibilities that affect a greater accountability measurement (Donaldson, 2001).

As such, school administrators and teacher leaders view culture as a priority in the school and understand it is a product of leadership (Schein, 2010). When campuses utilize a shared leadership responsibility, teachers are able to contribute and influence other teachers and students in addressing school improvement (Kılınç et al., 2015). In

doing so, teachers experience effective professional development in student learning, teacher collaboration, and analysis of school data (DuFour, 2004b) resulting in positive gains in school culture.

However, the available research is limited in determining the relationship in small rural school districts that have practiced professional development through teacher leadership for over 2 years. Using a mixed-methods approach, data will be collected via a Likert survey and open-ended questions. In this study, I examined the overall teacher leadership culture at a rural Texas school based on teachers' perceptions across three foci: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment (Demir, 2014, 2015). The following questions will guide this research:

- RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Professional Collaboration?
- RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Administrative Support?
- RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Supportive Working Environment?

Researcher's Role and Personal History

As a career-educator for the last 20 years, I have continuously challenged myself to attain the needed education, credentials, and experience to pursue leadership roles that impact student achievement and overall school culture. I am a first-generation graduate from both the University of Texas at San Antonio and Texas A&M International University in Laredo, TX. I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary

Studies, and a Master of Science degree in Education Administration, respectively. I also possess certification credentials in teaching and school leadership in the state of Texas. Working towards the completion of a Doctor of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction is a milestone I have challenged myself to achieve particularly because of my vision in school improvement.

For the majority of my career, I have devoted myself in working with at-risk children and families of low socio-economic status. My desire to ensure of educational institutions' optimal service to children and families is well-noted within my capacities as a career-educator in teaching, counseling, and leading public schools as a principal and district administrator in South Texas communities. I began my career as an elementary teacher in Laredo, Texas. As a representative of the campus grade level committee and site-based decision-making team, my role in teacher leadership impacted my overall attitude and appreciation for the work that is needed in providing effective professional development, as well as implementing quality, cross-curricular instructional practices. The resilience to remain unfailing towards teacher leadership practices and positive school culture assisted the campus in achieving the highest accountability rating in the state of Texas for numerous consecutive years.

My career then took a step towards leadership in grant writing and reporting under the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate (GEAR UP) programs with both the Texas A&M University System and the Region One Education Service Center. These roles allowed for me to fill the void of college preparedness for disadvantaged students and families. Through practices in professional development,

teacher collaboration, and parent outreach, the outcomes from both programs were successful in assisting students and their parents to attain the needed tools and resources for post-secondary enrollment. This process entailed collaborative work with teachers and administrators in planning and implementing student interventions. Teachers were involved in their professional development plans which included content-specific and organizational change in school improvement sessions.

Journey to the Problem

Upon receiving a master's degree in educational administration, I pursued a leadership role as an assistant principal in an underperforming high school. I was able to assist the campus principal in restructuring the master schedule and implementing professional learning communities for lesson studies and data analysis. These practices permitted teachers to provide targeted instruction for struggling learners. Within one year, the campus reached state standards. Similarly, in my tenure as a high school principal in two different school districts, I was able to employ and model shared leadership practices that permitted the collaborative efforts of teachers to fully engage in practices that capitalized on their knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Furthermore, with the support of the district and community, I was able to implement the Texas Education Agency's designation of Early College High School initiatives and goals as a high school principal. These strategies helped result in 100% of students meeting graduation requirements and acceptance in post-secondary education institutions.

In addition, my leadership experiences as a Migrant Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) Project Director strengthened my knowledge and ability to administer and evaluate multi-million dollar budgets under federal and state requirements. My steadfast approach in operating numerous MSHS centers across multiple states are evident in my records of success, compliance, and service in meeting the day to day needs of our most vulnerable children and families. My ability to meet the demands of regulations, policies, and procedures while maintaining an effective approach of teacher leadership expectations across all campuses stems from the core of my leadership, organization, and communication skills.

During the course of this study, I served as the Director of Special Programs with oversight in the accountability and compliance of Special Education, Section 504, Bilingual/ English as a Second Language, Gifted and Talented, and Response to Intervention. Although each program requires extensive attention for school improvement and student achievement, a constant factor that has contributed to the success of the school district is the implementation of shared leadership within the district and campus. The implementation of teacher leadership roles and responsibilities in all three campuses across the district continues to create an environment of collaboration in instructional planning and high-quality delivery. Lastly, the shared leadership, teacher initiatives, and data analysis have created opportunities for teachers to recognize the instructional gaps and need for intervention.

In all, my school administrative experiences continue to include the implementation of teacher leadership and data-driven practices. However, I have not

been able to produce both qualitative and quantitative teacher leadership culture data.

While the implementation of teacher leadership roles can be the expectation at the school district, neither the empirical research or locally-developed evaluation communication have studied the implementation in such a way as this study intends to evaluate. As such, I have a high interest in studying the perceptions of teachers regarding a shared leadership model and its relationship to school culture.

Pursuing the concept of teacher leadership in rural school communities may come with its own challenges due in part to the minimal number of teachers employed in comparison to urban school districts. Therefore, my role in the participating school district's leadership team and as the primary investigator of this study was to explore the relationship between teacher leadership culture as a means of teacher professional development. This research was designed to allow teachers to provide feedback on their perceptions of professional collaboration, administrative support, and a supportive working environment.

As a reflective practitioner and investigator, I had the opportunity to reflect on the results of both the quantitative and qualitative responses. It required that I collect and determine meaning of the results from both analyses. The reflections included additional communication with teachers via phone or face-to-face interviews, which permitted a detailed analysis of teacher perceptions regarding teacher leadership culture. The findings of emerging themes articulated the examples and characteristics teachers believed were important, which may positively impact school achievement and school improvement.

Significant Stakeholders

The rural school district involved in this study is a participant district in the Region One Education Service Center's Project *RISE* grant. The U.S. Department of Education awarded the Region One Education Service Center (ESC) the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) competitive grant, which provides an effective collaboration between the Region One Incentive Strategies for Educators project (Project *RISE*) and the participating school districts, including the school district partaking in this study (Region One ESC, 2018).

“The goal of Project *RISE* is to create a K-12th grade pipeline of highly-effective teachers, leaders, and educators to increase ALL students' academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment,” (Region One ESC, 2018, p. 4). The project provides ongoing support to teachers' pedagogical growth, instructional improvement, and student achievement. The rural school district began its participation in the Project *RISE* grant during the 2017-2018 academic year. In this initial year of funding, the school district along with other participating school districts, initiated the selection teacher leaders expected to become key stakeholders for school improvement through on-going professional development. The project is supported by teacher leaders in the capacity of master and mentor teachers, campus leadership, professional learning and Project *RISE* staff (Region One ESC, 2018).

Teacher leaders identified as master and mentor teachers serve as on-site peer instructional coaches. The primary role of a teacher leader at the research site is to provide continuous and targeted professional development and guidance utilizing a

variety of techniques such as mentoring, pedagogical, and constructive feedback to improve instructional practices and facilitate positive environments (Region One ESC, 2018). Hence, this study intends to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to measure the perceptions of teacher leadership culture.

The data collected will not only be helpful in supporting the literature regarding teacher leadership and school culture, but the data will also provide school leaders of this rural South Texas school district with evidence of their teacher perceptions regarding the current practices and the impact it has on the staff's judgment. There are two groups in this study that have an important role in acquiring substantial data to make informed decisions. These groups include the school leadership teams and campus teachers.

The first significant group of stakeholders are the district and campus administrators of the rural South Texas school district. While the school leaders will not participate in the data collection methodology, the school leaders' participation in this study is valuable as it creates opportunities and permission for the study to occur. The goal for school leaders who possess a vision and expectation on the implementation of teacher leadership is to establish long-lasting values and beliefs of shared responsibility and accountability for student success. School leader access to the data collected in this study, as well as an artifact to be presented by myself as the research investigator to pertinent staff, will permit leadership teams to evaluate areas of strength to celebrate the accomplishments of positive implementation and growth.

In addition, the data analysis will provide key points that may be of benefit to assist in developing school improvement initiatives. A school leader's deeper foundation

of organizational culture creates consistent processes for school leaders and teachers to engage in collaborative data-driven conversations that are focused on instruction, support, and achievement. School leader access to the findings of this study will enable them to respond to the areas of need by engaging in evaluating areas of needed improvement and developing future strategies in efforts to accomplish district and campus goals.

The second most significant stakeholder in this study are the teachers themselves. Teacher perceptions and attitudes towards teacher leadership are a result of the internal and external forces of the initiatives resulting in positive and negative mindset towards campus climate. These observable behaviors and habits fluctuate and impact the campus culture, improve student learning, and influence other teachers to join in the practice. Every teacher has the ability to possess some level of leadership that best fits their talents and interests. The data derived from this study will provide teachers with substantial information regarding the organizational culture and climate. Utilizing the empirical research along with the academic student achievement data, teachers will be capable of recognizing and implementing shared leadership roles towards school improvement.

Above all, the collaboration between school leaders and teacher leaders enhances a team-oriented approach with more effective communication and common-visionary goals for school improvement. A shared leadership approach promotes the improvement strategies in capitalizing on the ideas, skills, and expertise in and out of the classroom (DuFour, 2004b; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Poekert, 2012; Demir, 2015; Kılınç et al.,

2015). Teachers not only build on campus-wide initiatives for leadership development but also latch onto leadership opportunities within the classroom without having to leave the classroom. The essence of classroom leadership helps teachers build on effective classroom management that strengthen classroom routines and procedures.

Both school administrators and teacher leaders are the significant stakeholders in this study. The opportunities in utilizing the data derived from this study are influential to the leaders when determining action steps and school improvement goals in building capacity and relationships among staff.

Important Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used:

- I. *Teacher Leadership* – (a) A teacher who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or an informal capacity. (b) Teachers who are leaders within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice.
- II. *Formal Teacher Leader* – Generally identified by the school principal and serve as department heads, grade-level chairpersons, team leaders, mentors, for new teachers, peer coaches, or members of curriculum development task forces.
- III. *Informal Teacher Leader* – Recognized by their colleagues because of their credibility, expertise, or relationship-building skills. These teachers may offer support to beginning teachers, design and implement staff

development activities, make recommendations regarding new teacher candidates, write grants to gain needed resources, or even act as technology experts within the school.

- IV. *Professional Development* – Equal opportunities to gain and improve the knowledge and skills important to their positions and job performance in helping students thrive towards goals and expectations. Educators have a decisive voice at every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development. It allows teachers to learn new learning styles, techniques, and instructional tips, but also how to interact with other educators to improve their own teaching.
- V. *School Climate* – Refers to the school’s character and quality of school life based on the effects of students, including safety, teaching practices, respect, diversity, and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.
- VI. *School Culture* – Refers to the way teachers and other staff members work together and the set of beliefs, values, relationships, attitudes, and assumptions they share.
- VII. *School Improvement* – The process to improve student achievement levels through high expectations, constructive feedback, and valuable professional learning experiences in a positive environment for learning.
- VIII. *Shared Leadership* – A style that broadly distributes leadership responsibility by expanding the number of people involved in making

important decisions related to the school's organization, operation, and academics. A common form is a leadership team composed of teachers.

Closing Thoughts of Chapter I

With the accountability standards on the rise, school leaders employing professional development strategies that promote redundancy of workshops, in-service, and meeting room discussions will likely face poor teacher commitment and growth (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). School leaders are challenged in determining which school improvement or reform strategy will get their staff to accept and promote the vision and mission in meeting learner needs. As such, school improvement initiatives require methods of teacher professional development that is on-going, campus-specific, and content-specific (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2010).

Significant improvement where school leaders are accommodating the collective, consistent, and focused approach in building the capacity and shared knowledge of teachers constructs a pathway of school improvement opportunities for teacher collaboration, dialogue, and organizational structure (Barth, 1990). Furthermore, the empirical research finds that the change of teacher behaviors towards effective and collaborative teacher professional growth in school improvement impacts teaching and learning. (Gusky, 1986; Little, 1993; DuFour, 2004a; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Hence, school leaders' initiative in allowing teachers to contribute to the overall school initiatives, such as professional development (Harris, 2002a, 2002b;

Gordon, 2004; Frost, 2008), is expected to create a positive school culture, and the overall understanding and acceptance of change (Gordon, 2004; Kılınç et al., 2015).

Teachers are influential in the students' academic success (van den Berg, 2002; Haynes, 2011), and a paradigm shift in leadership, which entails the implementation of a shared school improvement process, is likely to impact teachers and the organizational culture and climate (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). Therefore, improving the quality of teaching requires the need to change and reform the way teachers learn and develop professionally in their instructional approach (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Hence, this study intended to add to the current literature by addressing teacher leadership as a school improvement model. Teacher leadership is an optimistic and productive model of school leadership because the partnership and teamwork among teachers both formally and informally mobilize the vision and attitude toward school improvement initiatives (Seritanondh, 2013). With the support from campus administrators and the positive work environment, teachers will be able to conduct positive and productive collaborative meetings to address student and teacher needs. The flexibility of teacher leadership model enables on-going professional development opportunities for teachers to assist their colleagues in various matters and settings.

While recent research exists indicating a positive relationship between teacher leadership and school culture (Demir, 2014, 2015; Parlar, Cansoy & Kılınç, 2017), minimal research has been addressed to study the relationship in a small rural South Texas school district's attempt to implement a teacher leadership culture as a school

reform strategy. More specifically, minimal research has been conducted in school systems that operate teacher leadership initiatives.

Therefore, this research not only analyzed the descriptive statistics and correlational data, the study further analyzed teacher responses in qualitative study. The responses were critical to the garnering an in-depth analysis of individual teacher perceptions beyond the quantitative results. It permitted teachers with flexibility to describe professional collaboration, administrative support, and supportive working environments in their own way. Similarly, it opened reflective observations and points of view on current practices at each campus. The end result is that this study provided important descriptive-statistical data, and quality in-depth teacher responses for school leaders and teachers to utilize, prepare, and implement continuous teacher support, which potentially will impact school improvement initiatives.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

The management and leadership of school organizations have undergone significant change and progress, specifically in revamping leadership roles (Harris & Muijs, 2004). School leadership models have shifted from traditional leadership approach to a distributed and shared model that engages teachers to become leaders in assisting principals (Silva et al., 2000; Spillane, 2004). The shared leadership model has been employed for several years in developing a collective approach and strategy through teacher collaboration, dialogue, and structure (Barth, 1990; Demir, 2008).

In such models, teachers play a vital role in the student learning process (van den Berg, 2002; Haynes, 2011), their own perceptions of professional growth (Hofstein, Carmeli & Shore, 2004) and school improvement (Cherkowski, 2018; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). Their responsibilities continue to develop in meeting the individual demands of teaching and learning. The process by which teachers professionally grow in skill to face the challenges of quality remains constant while streamlining the school culture and climate towards a goal of school improvement (Muijs & Harris, 2006; Seritanondh, 2013).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) described teacher leadership as the “The process by which, teacher, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (pp. 287-288). Hence, the

supporting literature review aims to provide a conceptual framework and significant research to theorize the potential outcome of understanding teacher leadership as a model for positive Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment.

Relevant Historical Background

Adult Learning Theory

When considering teacher leadership as an option for shared responsibility in developing a positive campus culture through the collective efforts of teachers working collaboratively warrants a need for teamwork, discussion and organizational structure. School administrators need to provide the support and structure for teacher leaders to maximize their potential to impact teacher growth and student achievement (Donaldson, 2001; Donaldson, 2007).

Effective communication among staff and the professional growth of teachers are considered a form of andragogy. The strategies adults employ while learning creates the variability of increased independence and self-directed learning (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1984). Understanding the process of how adults learn allows for school and teacher leaders to facilitate the process of professional development with more accuracy in meeting adult learner needs.

Teaching involves the learning process of the emotional, psychological and intellectual being of teachers, which is often understood to be the theory of pedagogy. Andragogy is a set of assumptions that are often mistaken to be identical to pedagogy. The pedagogical model is a content-specific model designed to transmit information and

skills as aligned to the abilities of thinking and intellectual development, which is often observed in grade school settings (Piaget, 1926; Bruner, 1960; Bruner, 1966). Teaching a specific content for the mastery of an objective is a deliverable in which the instructional strategies incorporate processes of conveying the application of newly attained knowledge and skills.

Consistent with the constructivist theory of teaching to the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the adult learning theory is similar when addressing an approach that will impact the learning process of adults. This model is a process of providing procedures and resources for helping the adult learners acquire the information and skills needed to progress (Vygotsky, 1962; Knowles, 1970). Adults need to be a part of their learning standpoint, progress, and outcomes. The Knowles (1984) identified key principles of andragogy to further describe adults and their learning and professional growth:

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults are relevancy-oriented
- Adults are practical
- Adult learners like to be respected.

Adults learn best when they are involved with the diagnosis of their professional growth areas of needed improvement, the development of their learning objectives and action plans, and the evaluation of their learning outcomes. In other words, adult learners

prefer to choose what, when, and how they want to learn. Regardless of the approach in providing professional growth to adults, their involvement and engagement in discussions is valuable and beneficial to the group. (Knowles, 1984; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

In consideration of teacher capacity building, teachers in their professional growth-planning have the capability of assisting teachers in discovering the needed ownership and self-reliability to improve. In sum, andragogy sets the principles of trust, respect, support and humanness so that adult learners may become insightful in their preparedness to being creative, innovative, and adaptive their learning needs (Knowles, 1984; Little, 1993).

Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is becoming a viable approach to improving schools and student learning as the roles of teachers as leaders continues to impact the professional collaboration, support and environment (Killion et al., 2016). Both formal and informal teacher leaders have existed for numerous years from within and outside of the classroom, such as assigned positions as mentor, department head, and grade level team leader (Little, 2003; Killion et al., 2016). Classroom teachers have emerged as experts in various capacities and work together with other colleagues with respect and professionalism (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Danielson, 2006). However, researchers continue to seek a better understanding of the teacher leadership concept based on the influence and transformation teachers can provide (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Katzenmayer & Moller's (2001) finding that teacher leadership has no single definition can be attributed to the various roles (Silva et al., 2000) that have surfaced since the onset of shared leadership (Senge, 1990; Little, 2003). The roles of teacher leadership are informally determined as professionals able to influence other teachers in such a way that impacts institutional change and progress (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Silva et al. (2000) explained the various teacher leadership roles beginning with a new wave of school improvement initiatives that included managerial roles which challenged teachers to control other teachers and often leave the classroom resulting in tasks being undermined or unresolved (Lumpkin, Claxton, & Wilson, 2014). The role of teacher leadership then shifted towards an instructional improvement pathway where curriculum development emerged and teacher leader roles became distinctively different. Eventually, the teacher leadership role took to a more favorable approach that created advantages for campuses to employ both formal and informal capacities in redesigning schools, teacher mentorship, and collaborative professional growth (Silva et al., 2000; Lumpkin et al., 2014).

A trend in supporting teacher retention and anticipated teacher shortages was found to be connected to the plans of Every Student Succeeds Action (2015) in supporting teacher leadership. This trend of teacher leadership resonates strongly with school improvement efforts as the development of teacher collaboration and school culture are impacted positively (Harris & Muijs, 2004). Furthermore, teacher leadership provides teachers with continued mindsets of professional growth (Hofstein, Carmeli &

Shore, 2004) and confidence in pursuing more formal leadership roles within the school (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012).

The pathway for distributed and shared leadership focuses on collaboration, inspiration, and empowerment in challenging teachers to take a lead role in critical matters of responsibility (Spillane, 2004; Smeets & Ponte, 2009; Seritanondh, 2013).

Harrison and Killion (2007) identified the following ten roles teacher leaders undertake:

- Resource Providers
- Instructional Specialist
- Curriculum Specialist
- Learning Facilitator
- Mentor
- School Leader
- Data Coach
- Catalyst for Change
- Learner

In all, teacher leadership has evolved into a prevalent school improvement model. Harris & Muijs (2004) assert teacher leadership as a factor in the development of collegial relations among teachers due to the improved and shared practices that impact school improvement initiatives (Harris & Muijs, 2004). In addition, recent research has identified teacher leadership roles to positively benefit the self-efficacy of teacher leaders which contributes to the overall school improvement efforts (Cherkowski, 2018; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017).

Impact on School Culture

The values, beliefs, norms, and practices create and shape the culture of the school organization when teachers' voice and engagement benefits the school organization (Killion et al., 2016; Kalman & Balkar, 2018). When teachers and campus leaders believe change in culture requires the perceptions of culture to also change, the teacher learning process must be improvement-oriented (Gagliardi, 1986; Harris & Muijs, 2004; Kalman & Balkar, 2018). School principals are responsible for the operations of a school and for ensuring goals and expectations are met despite the large scope of detailed responsibilities that are associated with leadership and teacher professional growth (Bass, 1990; DuFour, 2004a; Danielson, 2006; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Wilson, 2016). By inspiring others and advocating the school mission and vision, school leaders are able to empower teachers to take on leadership roles (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001).

School improvement is no longer the responsibility of solely the campus principal or leadership team (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The implementation of a shared leadership model contributes to the continued work towards teacher collaboration that enables colleagues to collaborate towards school improvement, which includes the reshaping of school culture and ability to achieve desired outcomes (Harris & Muijs, 2004). When teachers and administrators share a vision and responsibility of teaching and learning, the influence of continuous development, professional learning, and collaboration positively impact the trust and collective effort to refine the teaching profession altogether (Demir, 2015; Killion et al., 2016).

Katzenmayer and Moller (2001) define school cultures that support teacher leadership as an environment that accepts teachers for their contributions to school operation and improvement efforts. A school culture that features communication, care, and reflection of shared experiences is suggested to enhance the development of teacher leadership implementation (Danielson, 2006; Roby, 2011). Killion et al. (2016) identified relational trust, collective responsibility, commitment to continuous development, teacher recognition, and teacher autonomy as factors that contribute to a healthy culture. Communally, campus culture characteristics for teacher leadership include the following:

- Care
- Collective Responsibility
- Commitment to Continuous Development
- Constructive, Encouraging, and Optimistic Environment
- Continuous Support
- Cooperation
- Effective Communication
- Functional Democratic Norms
- Participation
- Relational Trust
- Risk Taking
- Sharing of Experience
- Solidarity in School-wide Decisions

- Teacher Autonomy
- Teacher Recognition (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Danielson, 2006; Roby, 2011; Killion et al., 2016)

Because of its constructive, encouraging, and optimistic environment, teacher leadership enables stronger autonomy and professional solidarity in school-wide decisions, effective communication, and continuous support (Katzenmayer and Moller, 2001; Demir, 2015). With the effective teacher leadership, the relationship to school culture can impact schools academically and socially (Kalman & Balkar, 2018).

As indicated in various related literature, leadership models inclusive of teachers, parents, and community members (Barth, 1991; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Tsai, 2013; Lumpkin et al., 2014) produce more effective methods of communication and collaboration between the campus leaders and stakeholders (Liebermann, 1995). Because this approach enhances teamwork, trust, and cooperation among staff, it also provides opportunities for the campus culture to be impacted positively (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Nola & Palazzolo, 2011; Roby, 2011; Demir, 2015). Poekert (2012) asserted the enthusiasm and commitment towards continuous learning and professional development through the energy and drive of teacher leadership to be contributing factors for professional relationships in the campus (Poekert, 2012).

School leaders have the opportunity to empower teachers when teacher leaders have time to meet with colleagues and build relationships (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). When campus leaders empower teachers with the implementation of teacher leadership, communication among campus leaders and teachers reinforces the

underpinning values of a shared vision and campus culture. Teachers become influential by embracing school-wide change through their involvement in problem-solving, decision-making, and assisting students achieve their academic goals (Lumpkin et al., 2014). For example, communication skills that incorporate active listening, sharing ideas, and honoring diverse needs reinforce the school culture (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001).

School leadership contexts that provide opportunities for school improvement teaching and learning to occur are expected to strengthen a collaborative effort and collective approach in acquiring the support for teacher leadership initiatives (Harris, 2011). When teacher leadership is supported among teachers, the relationships and transformation become embedded and fostered (Barth, 2001; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Donaldson, 2007). Harris and Muijs (2004), and more recently Demir (2014, 2015), studied the benefits of teachers' effectiveness when they are supported and collaborate with each other. The teacher-to-teacher relationships are navigated through the contexts of shared leadership and the implementation of teacher leadership that encourages communication, trust, on-going professional development towards school improvement (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Demir, 2014, 2015).

The relationships, behaviors, beliefs, and dynamics of schools undertake a pivotal role in the supportive environments for teacher leadership and culture (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Demir, 2008). Trust is an element that can promote solidarity and team spirit among colleagues as it is the basis of compatible and productive relationships (Danielson, 2006). Support of school administrators creates opportunities

for teachers to gain trust in their campus leadership team and take risks and innovative applications to benefit the school (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Barth (2001) posited on the expectations of campus principals to empower teachers to take lead by assigning them responsibilities, encouraging successes, and recognizing their successes as important milestones to the overall goal.

Consequently, organizational trust is the key element for strong and continuous professional development through teacher leadership and the realization of a positive campus culture in schools (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Danielson, 2006; Demir, 2015). The trust and collaboration between teacher and campus leaders, as well as between teachers themselves are vital as the mutual respect stimulates productive relationships and cooperation (Demir, 2105).

Alignment with Action Research

Transformational Leadership

The essence of transformational leadership is to convert personal ideas and self-interests to common and shared ideas and collective goals (Bass, 1990; Demir, 2008). Teachers collective- efficacy is created by the individual self-efficacy of teachers, and the collective efficacy is the ability of teachers working collaboratively together to overcome their individual challenges. Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) and Spillane (2004) asserted norms of collective responsibility and continuous improvement actions where teachers talk, observe, critique, and lesson plan together. Hence, these norms enhance the concept of a collaborative culture where teachers' shared goal setting, supportive

cultural changes, and shared leadership delegate and distribute power to communicate a common vision (Silva et al., 2000; Spillane, 2004; Demir, 2008; Poekert, 2012).

Campus leaders possess characteristics in developing a collaborative culture where staff work together by sharing and reflecting on each other's practices, problems, and successes. Ross and Gray (2006) identified four systems that influence teacher efficacy: setting feasible goals, clarifying standards, developing a collaborative school culture, and linking actions of teachers to student outcomes. In sum, when teachers work collaboratively and share beliefs and instructional expectations improved student academic performance is projected (Spillane, 2004; Poekert, 2012). Therefore, the value of transformational leadership significantly contributes to the overall outcome of teacher performance based on the development and support of their individual collective efficacy and collaborative efficacy (Demir, 2008).

Distributed Leadership

Due to the increased complexity of roles principals have had to deal with, the principal roles shifted to impact teaching and learning, as well as collaborative inquiry (Spillane, 2006). The collaborative inquiry is described as an approach and shared concept that supports one another (Harris, 2011; Cherkowski, 2018). As a leadership model that supports collaboration among peers and colleagues, the shared responsibility establishes, creates, and builds teacher leadership capacity in both informal and formal roles. (Spillane 2004; Spillane 2006).

Helterbran (2010) asserted shared leadership to be a point of view in which teachers are viewed as partners through the interaction with leaders and given situations.

The shared leadership between campus principals and teachers becomes “relational and organic” due in part of the mechanism for continued professional development (p. 364). The distributed leadership model is a key and influential method of professional development as both teacher and campus principals work collaboratively, both formally and informally, to enhance others’ performance (Spillane, 2004).

The link between teacher leadership and teacher learning is described by Collinson (2012) as a symbiotic relationship as the connections and professional growth in leadership spreads to colleagues. When principals provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn together, a sense of purpose and teamwork in achieving a common goal that includes a focused aim towards school improvement. (Donaldson, 2007; Demir, 2008; Harris, 2011). This ongoing professional development which engages teachers in collaborative relationships based on shared goals for school improvement models growth in all leadership capacities (Poekert, 2012). Hence, teacher leadership definitions that encompass concepts of shared or distributed leadership represent the relational ties that benefit professional growth and overall school culture for student achievement (Goleman et al., 2002; Spillane, 2004; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Collinson, 2012).

Teacher Collaboration

Teachers working together has a positive impact on one another which would also contribute to the school improvement initiatives and reform (Silva et al., 2000). The idea of teacher collaboration should be referred to the notion of revealing the leadership capabilities of all teachers (Barth 2001; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Gordon, 2004).

Lambert (2003) asserted that every teacher possesses the capability and responsibility to be leaders in their individual circumstances, and it is imperative that campus leaders encourage the opportunity for all teachers to have some of the expectations.

Campus leaders and other school administrators have discretion in implementing a shared leadership model where teacher leaders engage in professional learning communities (PLCs) as a way of identifying student needs and instructional strategies to accommodate the learning process accordingly (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). The overarching goal of student learning is a focal point in providing teachers with access and guidance to improve mastery. Rather than avoiding restrictive and intimidating approaches, the promotion of collegiality among teachers enhances teacher and instructional leader behaviors to be more effective towards positive school culture and improvement (Blase & Blase, 1999). Furthermore, the partnership established between teachers and teacher leaders has been studied to also establish systematic strategies for continuous professional development in collaboration, administrative support, and supportive environments (Demir; 2014; Lumpkin et al., 2014; Demir, 2015).

The role of teacher leadership in professional development has positively motivated campus leaders and other educators to collectively accept collaborative inquiry as a lead process in changing efforts for professional learning (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). Teacher professional development that goes beyond traditional workshops and conferences and instead employs practices of shared teacher leadership that strengthens the in-house, job-embedded, continuous, and collaborative approach in building capacity is understood to cultivate teachers into a mindset of on-going learning

(Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Poekert, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2013). Heubner (2009) suggested the important elements of supporting teacher learning made possible through ongoing reflective opportunities and conversations about their practices on new instructional approaches. These consistent and effective approaches toward teachers' professional growth in developing and implementing quality instructional practices have a great impact on student learning (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017).

Teachers' self-reflection and collaborative activities in discussion of instructional practices requires time, space, and protocols for professional growth and student improvement (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Butler, Schnellert, & MacNeil, 2015). Darling-Hammond (2006, 2010) asserted the element that promotes quality teacher professional learning are those that are job-embedded where the learning occurs in the context of the school's schedule. Ongoing and active learning throughout the school day empower the development and relationship between teachers positioning the learning community to improve school improvement initiatives and campus culture (Barth, 1987; van den Berg, 2002; Haynes, 2011; Poekert, 2012; Kılınc, et al., 2015).

In all, collaboration between teachers and teacher leaders increase opportunities for continued professional growth as the feedback and reflective ideas and suggestions fully enhance the elements of structured expectations, professional collaboration, administrative support, organizational trust, and a supportive working environment (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Demir, 2008; Poekert, 2012; Kiliñç, 2014; Demir 2015). Through the development of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014), studies have found that the behavior of teachers, colleagues, and campus leaders are

consistent and relational when it comes to the factors and characteristics of teacher leadership cultures. Hence, teacher collaboration boosts the perspective of further commitment and assurance to internalize the vision and goals of the organization (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijssel, 2011).

Theoretical Framework of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership has been in existence for decades, and it is not a concept new to schools or the realm of professional development. Because frameworks are used to generalize an abstract idea (Maxwell, 2013), the conceptualization of teacher leadership was coined metaphorically by Silva et al. (2000) as a way of “sliding doors open”. A theoretical framework of culture affects the interactions between individuals, and the intentions of this study acknowledge and adopt the conceptualization of teacher leadership as the leading professional development practice that bonds teachers to help achieve goals. Gagliardi (1986) asserted the change of culture is indicative of the change of perceptions in the organization that is only possible through learning and growth opportunities.

Positive perceptions of an organization can contribute to a positive school culture, support systems, collaboration, and school effectiveness and improvement (Penuel et al., 2007; Roby, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Kalman & Balkar, 2018). As such, the intention of this context is to develop opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other, discuss common problems, share various instructional strategies and approaches, and to explore motivational strategies to engage students into higher-level learning.

Education in the 21st century has become increasingly and heavily embedded with the teacher leadership model (Wilson, 2016). The context of the model has evolved into a leadership distribution based on formal roles, instructional expertise, and school reform on teacher collaboration (Silva et al., 2000; Harris 2000b; Spillane, 2006). The teacher leadership concept became a practice in part of the paradigm shift from a single-leader or principal role to a dedicated shared leadership approach (Spillane, 2004). With the high-level instructional demands and lack of job-embedded professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2010), school leaders have immersed themselves and their teachers in actively taking leadership roles to develop a school environment focused on collaboration and on-going professional development that impacts teaching and learning (Gusky, 1986; Little, 1993, 2003; DuFour, 2004; Penuel et al., 2007).

For example, Lumpkin et al. (2014) affirmed the assistance teacher leadership provides to colleagues and principals with their specialized knowledge, content expertise, and experience. Four essentialities associated with teacher leaders were also identified as a framework towards the expectations and beliefs of teacher leadership: a focus on student learning, along with the importance of empowerment, relationships, and collaboration (Lumpkin, 2014).

In another study, Danielson (2006) theorized an effective teacher leadership approach in capitalizing on teacher expertise in classroom instruction. Danielson (2006) further claimed teacher leaders are effective in usage data to make informed decisions,

recognize initiatives, mobilize people and resources, monitor progress, adjust approaches towards change, and contribute to the learning of students.

In short, a professional development approach through teacher leadership models or teachers assisting teachers employs the leadership characteristics needed to challenge all stakeholders in increasing teacher capacity (Lambert, 2003) through strategies that emphasize data-driven instructional planning, constructive feedback, and ongoing professional development (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). As such, the plausible constructions and understanding of teacher leadership has led this study to find empirical research that provides a framework used to interpret and use data and evidence to confirm a knowledge deficit or gap. (Maxwell, 2003).

Thus, a theoretical framework in analyzing the implementation of professional development and its relationship to teacher leadership is expected to provide additional evidence in school improvement strategies that align to the significant research. Consequently, this study is expected to produce holistic data from teachers in discovering the influence teacher leadership roles have towards professional development and overall school improvement opinions.

Most Significant Research and Practice Studies

Leadership in Inspiring Collaborative Relationships

Schools with successful teacher leadership practices emphasize collegiality, communication, and collaboration (Angelle, 2011). The context of the teacher leadership practices that build around professional relationships find strengths in organization commitment towards goals and expectations (Senge, 1990; Goleman et al., 2002;

Morrison, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Roby, 2011). Donaldson (2001) identified a significant factor of placing relationship building at the center of leadership activities and skills. The dimension acknowledged by Donaldson (2001) provide a thorough understanding of leadership practices that foster trust, openness, and influence in committing to the organizational goals through a common and shared vision.

In a study conducted by Vernon-Dotson and Floyd (2012), schools working towards school improvement utilized a teacher leadership model to connect teacher leadership to collaborative relationships. The essence of a shared commitment towards school improvement and student achievement influenced stronger communication and collaboration between teachers. The study focused on teacher leader perceptions on the ongoing, job-embedded professional development in empowering colleagues to problem solve and work in partnership through campus-wide.

The notion of promoting all teachers as leaders supported school improvement initiatives and objectives. The findings aimed at transforming teacher roles, improving professional development, and increasing teacher efficacy (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Because teachers were valued, the study found that teachers were motivated to prepare and provide expertise in school improvement initiatives. Their involvement and role in professional development and curriculum innovation can be seen as reflective practitioners, active researchers, collaborators, mentors, instructional experts, and risk-takers (Wynne & ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, 2001).

Teacher leadership fosters the ability for collaborative teams to empower others, promote a shared vision, structure an organization, promote collaboration, exhibit high

expectations, influence ownership, and provide adequate resources. The team approach in problem solving is supported in the literature provided by Harris (2002a, 2002b) where the school success can be attributed to the shared leadership approach versus leading in isolation, inclusive of administrative support and a supportive working environment (Demir, 2014, 2015).

Leadership in Promoting Professional Growth

While a correlation exists between principal leadership and student achievement, Fullan (2014) contended a need for principals to implement teacher leadership to promote success and teacher development by creating a culture where every teacher has the urgency to influence the achievement of all students. The first step in this process for principals to view themselves as a team member and not the lead problem-solver (Fiarman, 2017). Collaborative efforts in modeling teamwork, reflective behavior, creativity, innovation, and peer coaching encourages approaches for redesign and school improvement rather than restrictive and intimidating approaches (Blase & Blase, 1999).

The collective and shared responsibility in developing effective instructional practices offers teachers a sense of efficacy that reinforces the culture for continuous professional growth (Haynes, 2011; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012; Kılınç et al., 2015). Teacher leaders that provide professional development to colleagues, observe and examine instructional practices, and provide feedback to improve teaching and learning, are examples of job-embedded professional development is expected to be well-received and positive in developing a shared vision (Smeets & Ponte, 2009; Poekert, 2012).

Teacher leaders themselves engage in their own professional growth as learning is inevitable when continuously discussing teacher growth (Poekert, 2012). Teachers have the capability of observing and determining whether the campus leadership has improved and whether it is meaningful in reinforcing the culture and professional growth of staff (Fiarman, 2017).

Moreover, campus principals have a vital role in promoting the professional growth of teachers. Blase and Blase (1999) identified the following principle strategies in promoting professional growth:

- emphasize the study of teaching and learning;
- support collaboration efforts among educators;
- develop coaching relationships among educators;
- encourage and support the redesign of programs;
- apply the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of professional development; and,
- implement action research to inform instructional decision making.

The reflective teacher leadership behavior includes keeping up to date the latest research and literature, encouraging teachers' attendance at workshops and conferences, and encourage reflective and collaborative discussions with other teachers. Blase and Blase (1999) identify key strategies that continue to reflect in recent research, such as in Demir's (2014; 2015) studies regarding teacher leadership dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment.

Commonalities between the two include collaboration, coaching, building relationships, program design, instructional decision making, and professional development.

Leadership in Empowering Teacher Leaders

The restructuring of schools that includes a shared decision-making approach towards investing and empowering teachers as professionals in coaching, reflecting and lesson studies, and risk-taking considerations and efforts to problem solve are reported to have influenced positive outcomes (Barth, 2001; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Harris & Muijs, 2004; Demir, 2014). Instructional leadership behavior that is purposeful, appropriate, and nonthreatening provides teacher leaders opportunity to make suggestions, give feedback, model effective instructional techniques, inquire and solicit opinions, and give praise to reinforce reflective behavior, self-esteem, and efficacy (Blase & Blase, 1999; Demir, 2008; Cherkowski, 2018; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017).

This approach strengthens the vision of shared leadership, in which the belief that one leader can address the needs of all members of a school community is no longer adequate as the accountability of student achievement and school improvement are rising (Schneider & Keesler, 2007). Schools that embrace the collaborative approach towards a shared leadership, specifically distributed leadership, have the capability of empowering others to structure effective communication, trust, support, and care among collaborative team members (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Xu & Patmor, 2012; Kılınc, 2014). The contribution teacher leaders provide impacts student academic achievement (Wynne & ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, 2001).

Angelle (2011) asserted that “empowering others to lead along the principal builds collegiality and active participation in the improvement of the school” (p. 232). The distributed approach towards leadership responsibilities for school improvement can be cultivated and molded to meet the needs of individual campuses. Distributed leadership is not a fixed approach; rather, it is fluid and evolving as the diversity and dynamics of a campus foster the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders (Harris, 2002a, 2002b).

The culture of continuous learning through a shared vision of ongoing, job-embedded professional development (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Poekert, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2013), builds upon the needed collaborative leadership and professional relationships that support school improvement and student academic achievement (Barth, 1987; van den Berg, 2002; Haynes, 2011; Poekert, 2012; Xu & Patmor, 2012; Kılınç et al., 2015). Schools that promote lifelong learning and high expectations for students and teachers results in continuous and active learning (Danielson, 2006). In sum, the context and contributions towards school improvement boost team-building activities, teacher confidence, effective professional development, and positive teacher interaction (Donaldson, 2007; Fullan, 2014; Butler et al., 2015; Cherkowski, 2018).

Leadership in Understanding Teacher Leadership Culture

Demir (2014) studied the school development and change that emphasized the need for teachers to extend their roles into leadership capacities to influence their colleagues (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Demir, 2014). Because teacher leaders can be

considered as mentors, their ability to influence instructional practices, school policy, and the retention of teachers has become an asset to school improvement strategies that include the shared and distributed leadership concept, which in turn enhances their motivation and self-efficacy in various roles as teachers (Harris 2002a, 2002b; Spillane, 2004; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Demir 2008).

Demir (2014) developed the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale to measure the cultural perceptions of teachers towards the implementation of teacher leadership. In recent research, the Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment had a high influence towards teacher leadership respectively, PC: $\beta=0.83$; $p>0.01$; AS: $\beta=.76$, $p < .01$; SWE: $\beta=.97$; $p < .01$ (Demir, 2015).

Professional Collaboration

Professional Collaboration measures the level of how teachers work together towards a common purpose in the school and measures the observation of a collaborative environment where teachers learn from each other. The importance of teachers working together and supporting one another effectively benefits the cooperation and concept of shared purposes (Harris & Muijs, 2004). The development of positive and professional relationships through the efforts campus leaders providing time for teacher collaboration are strengthened, especially when teachers take advantage to share their thoughts and ideas about instructional needs or student misconduct. With consistent approaches for collaboration, the teamwork between teachers and administrators become natural, strong, and spontaneous when problem solving campus concerns (Danielson, 2006).

Administrative Support

School administrators are the main factors in developing teacher leadership (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Barth, 2001; Donaldson, 2001; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 2003, Demir, 2008). Administrative Support measures the level to which principals provide opportunities to teachers for their development and practice of leadership roles. The administrative support includes the encouragement for teachers to undertake leadership roles. Besides the campus principal efforts to provide professional development opportunities, teachers are able to give one another professional growth by increasing self-confidence and self-efficacy. Collectively, all teachers would benefit with the support, encouragement, trust, and support (Demir, 2015; Cherkowksi, 2018; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). The influence of administrative support empowers teachers, delegates responsibility, and encourages teachers to take risks (Demir, 2014).

Supportive Working Environment

Supportive Working Environment measures the level to which a school has a work environment that encourages teacher leadership and professional development. An environment where trust-based and positive communication is evident. Furthermore, a school environment where teachers are encouraged to take risks and be innovative through strong teacher relationships, communication, support, and trust influences teacher leadership development and culture (Barth, 2001; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001; Harris & Muijs, 2004; Demir, 2014). Teacher leaders are able to influence colleagues to improve instructional skills, develop leadership capacity. A working environment that

encourages teacher leadership and trust influences change and school improvement (Demir, 2015; Cherkowski, 2018; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter II

Van den Berg (2002) and Haynes (2011) asserted the influential advocacy for student academic success based on the optimistic shift towards teacher leadership. As teachers shift towards evolving into a valuable school improvement process (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001), a significant cultural change in collaboration and support is likely to be noted and evident (Demir, 2015). School leaders are responsible for the either positive and negative cultures, and the cultural perspective between staff members, students and parents on school improvement is dependent upon the influence of leadership practices (Fullan, 2014). However, school leaders cannot do it alone. Teacher leaders play significant roles in developing a culture of continuous improvement, specifically in teacher professional growth (Danielson, 2006; Demir, 2008; Cherkowski, 2018).

By allowing teachers to have a voice through professional collaboration, teachers feel comfortable, worthy, and appreciated in the line of work towards meeting student needs (Harris, 2002a, 2002b; Gordon, 2004; Frost, 2008). Furthermore, the administrative support enhances the level of commitment teachers will have towards their planning and instructional delivery (Fullan, 2014).

The formulation and implementation of teacher leadership cannot work in isolation. Teacher leadership has existed around for decades, and the evolution and development of its functionality in empowering teachers by supplementing professional

development, professional relationships, and school improvement have considerably drawn attention to the possibilities that distributed leadership and collaboration can do for campus leaders. The imperative acknowledgement and promotion of andragogy and school culture can assist campus leaders in developing the organizational structures in which teachers have access and motivation to share information, resources, and ideas (Angelle, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Cherkowski, 2018).

In all, the development of teacher leadership and its path forward have given rise to the needed collective leadership roles in instructional practice, operational responsibility, and school improvement (Fullan, 2014). Hence, the empirical research and this quantitative and qualitative analyses intend to further investigate teacher leadership in relation to the perceptions of teachers regarding professional development, school culture, relationships, and school improvement. The investigative process mirrors past research quantitative methods having used the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014), as well as research methodology that entails the qualitative coding of feedback received via short answer questions.

CHAPTER III

SOLUTION AND METHOD

Proposed Solution

Outline of the Proposed Solution

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher leadership culture in a rural South Texas school district which operates three campuses: an elementary, junior high, and high school campus. The study focused on three concepts of teacher leadership culture (Demir, 2014): Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment. The proposed solution for this research produced both a quantitative and qualitative record of perceptions across the rural school district, as well as an elaborative extension of teacher open-ended responses to support the numerical findings.

Specifically, the empirically validated Teacher Leadership Culture Scale protocol incorporated a Likert type scale to measure the perceptions of teachers at each campus (Demir, 2014). The TLCS (Demir, 2014) was provided to all teachers electronically with their responses remaining confidential. The quantitative results were quantified and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to produce measurements of distribution, the central tendency, and correlation coefficients of each variable and dimension. The estimates of central tendency included the mean, median, and mode for each campus and the overall district perception of teachers.

Similarly, after the completion and administration of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale, a qualitative exploration of teacher perceptions included nine open-ended questions was conducted to further capture and describe the teacher leadership culture. Each campus was represented by participating teachers with each level of experience. As the researcher of this study, I served as a data collection instrument, subsequently analyzing collected responses and determining meaning. Reflective practices in determining the emerging themes not only included teachers' online responses but also included face-to-face and phone conversations to further clarify responses. The open-ended questions yielded comparable data, as well as an overall exploration, reflection, and analysis of district teacher perceptions for organizational culture and school improvement.

Justification of Proposed Solution

The collective purpose between campus administrators and staff was understood to contribute to establishing a positive organizational culture that is built on collaborative problem solving and shared decision making process to improve the school performance (Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B., 2005). Bolman & Deal (2008) asserted that cultural patterns characterize, shape, and influence all aspects of a school. Hence, research continues to be necessary in the field of teacher leadership and how campus staff perceive the practices that influence a positive school culture.

Fullan (2001) noted a strong correlation between school leaders and the culture of schools they led. School leaders influence school culture, and school culture influences the staff's perceptions of cultural shifts towards meaningful, productive, and

sustainable school improvement (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). The implementation of school reform-professional development through teacher leadership roles can result in greater change if systemic change in the dynamics of organizational and teacher leadership culture is evident (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Cherkowski, 2018). A leading factor of systemic change are the teacher leadership initiatives (Demir, 2015; Cherkowski, 2018). Systemic change in the dynamics of organizational culture results in greater success when student achievement and school improvement are associated with such teacher leadership initiatives.

Therefore, when research focuses and narrows the inquiry to studying the impact of leadership in shaping school culture, the discoveries convey an important message when determining the influence when teachers lead each other towards a common and shared vision. As such, the teacher perceptions of teacher leadership culture are understood to have a significant correlation to the factors that affect a school reform approach (Demir, 2008, 2015). In other words, the influence of campus and teacher leaders is linked to the implementation strategies of teacher leadership development and implementation (Demir, 2014).

Hence, this study intends to investigate the teacher leadership cultural dimensions that result in the overall structure and development of a school reform culture. As the researcher, the data analyses will include reflective practices in determining emerging themes based upon the teacher responses. From the research outcomes, campus and district leaders will be able to utilize the data to make informed decisions regarding school reform initiatives.

Study of Context and Participants

Participant Recruitment and Selection

The research site is a rural school district located in South Texas and is the only school district in the county, and operates an elementary, junior high, and high school with a total student enrollment of approximately 1,150. This school district was chosen for two reasons: 1) This school district was a participant district in the Region One Education Service Center's Project *RISE* grant at the time of the study; and, 2) This school implemented an on-going, job-embedded professional development supported and delivered by the district's teacher leaders.

This school district was chosen for this investigation and research study because of the shared leadership experience and full implementation of shared leadership for two consecutive years. The teacher leadership approaches identified in the Region One ESC Project *RISE* (2018) initiatives and implemented in this school district mirror the teacher leadership culture expected to be determined through the use of the Kamile Demir's (2014) Teacher Leadership Culture Scale.

Teachers and teacher leaders have participated in professional development for the past two years. Project *RISE* supports the on-going professional growth through the support of teacher effectiveness and improvement of student outcomes as defined in Figure 1: Connecting Professional Learning. Continuous support and guidance are provided to all teachers and leaders.

The expectation of teaching and learning extends beyond the classroom, particularly with the staff and their professional learning opportunities. Because of the

variety of topics addressed through the teacher leadership model of professional development implemented at this school district, the study intended to examine the opinions of the teachers employed regarding the culture established through the implementation of teacher leadership. Utilizing Demir’s (2014) TLCS, the research analyzed the surveys submitted by all teachers across the district (N=88) with a focus on Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment.

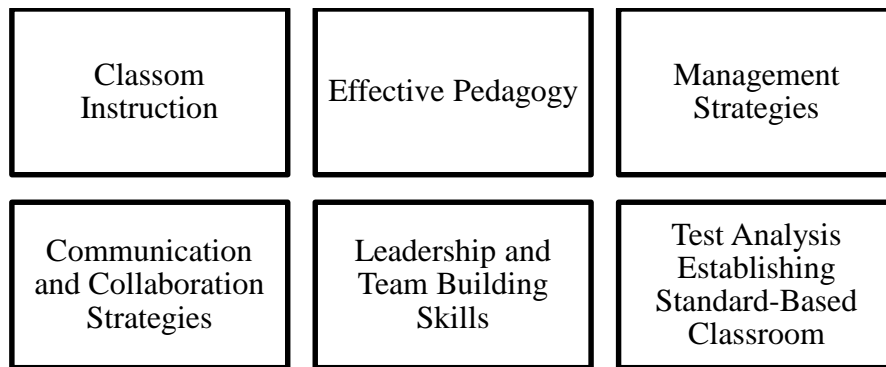


Figure 1: Connecting professional learning (Region One ESC, 2018, p. 24)

In an effort to extend the findings of the TLCS, the study also built-in short answer questions to inquire on specific factors of Demir’s Teacher Leadership that have impacted the teacher’s professional growth.

Student and Teacher Ethnicity

Based on the 2018-2019 Texas Academic Performance Report released by the Texas Education Agency (2019), the student ethnic distribution is primarily Hispanic. The Hispanic distribution was 97.2%, while White is 2.3%. In addition, 39.7% of the

student population have been identified at-risk, 88.1% students are Economically Disadvantaged, 8.8% are special education, and 8.0% are English Learners. (TEA, 2019).

Similarly, based on the 2018-2019 Texas Academic Performance Report released by the Texas Education Agency (2019), the total number of professional employees was 121 of which 45.7% represent the teaching staff. The teacher ethnic distribution is represented by Hispanic at 93.0%, White 5.8%, and Asian 1.2%. The school district employs more female teachers (80.2%) than male teachers (19.8%).

Context of Participants

The rural school district met requirements in the 2019-2018 Texas Academic Performance Report scoring an accountability rating of a letter B (TEA, 2019). Teachers were administratively led by approximately 7 campus administrators and 5 district administrators. Approximately 89.5% of teachers possess a bachelor’s degrees and 10.5% hold a master’s degree. Table 1 displays the years of teacher experience throughout the school district. The school district employed a majority of teachers with experience as opposed to beginning teachers.

Table 1: Teachers by Years of Experience (TEA, 2019)

Years of Experience	Percentage
Beginning Teachers	4.7%
1-5 Years	12.8%
6-10 Years	22.1%
11-20 Years	29.1%
Over 20 Years	31.4%

At the time of the study, the school district was in its third year of participation and implementation of a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant awarded to the corresponding Regional Education Service Center. The grant entitled Project *RISE* assisted districts and campuses by supporting initiatives of teacher leadership. The district initiated several teacher leadership roles including master, mentor, and content area lead teachers, which are intended to support both experienced and inexperienced teachers with instructional strategies, data-driven lesson planning and delivery, and classroom management.

Proposed Research Paradigm (Study Procedures)

School District Permission Procedure

As the principal investigator of this research, I visited with the Superintendent of Schools on multiple occasions to review the proposed study. During each visitation and conversation regarding the research procedures, the process of the data collections for both the quantitative and qualitative studies were addressed. In addition, the benefits of the data to assist the district and campus leaders in making informed decisions regarding the professional development and teacher leadership initiatives was highlighted in anticipation of teacher participation.

I also provided the Superintendent of Schools with a copy of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale developed by Demir (2014) and explained the three dimensions to be studied: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment. With the school district's approval and support for

the study, I informed the elementary, junior high, and high school principals about the research and the expected data collection.

Participant Input Procedure

Upon the Superintendent of Schools' approval of the date and time to release the scale to teachers, teachers received an email in their school district inbox which is username and password protected. The email included a link to the Texas A&M University Qualtrics only survey so that submission can occur. The initial communication to the teachers entailed a letter to the teachers. This introductory letter identified the purpose of the study, the process of the data collection, and the expected outcomes to help teachers make informed decisions for instruction, intervention, and cultural change. The Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) was transcribed into an online format so as to maintain teacher confidentiality and the collection of data submissions consistent. Teachers were advised that the completion of the scale should take no longer than 20 minutes and do have the option to not participate.

The data collection also included open-ended questions regarding teachers' perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership culture. With the data collection, the coding of open-ended responses will be categorized by each campus and into three levels of experience: novice, midpoint, and seasoned teacher. The novice level ranged from 0 – 5 years of teaching experience, while the midpoint level ranged from 6 – 20 years of teaching experience. The seasoned teacher range included teachers with over 20 years of experience. Teachers were advised that the completion of the short answer questions should take no longer than 10 minutes.

Data Collection Methods

Descriptive Statistics

In this study, I examined the teacher leadership culture in a rural South Texas school district which operates three campuses: an elementary, junior high, and high school. Specifically, the scale used for this study is the empirically validated Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). The study focused on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership across three dimensions of professional collaboration, administrative support, and supportive working environment as studied and validated by the empirical research conducted by Demir.

For the purposes of understanding the factors studied in each focus of the survey, the scale questions were separated into matrix tables to match the emphasis of the three research questions. Table 2 presents the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale where descriptive statistics will be collected. This multifactor teacher questionnaire was designed with a total of 27 items constituted into three scales: 8 items on Professional Collaboration, 10 items on Administrative Support, and 9 nine items on Supportive Work Environment. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The categorical research questions yielded comparable demographic data from each campus, as well as an overall exploration of district perceptions for organizational culture and school improvement. The TLCS (Demir, 2014) was provided to all teachers electronically with their responses remaining confidential.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Collection (Demir, 2014)

Research Question	Data Collection
RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers experience the most strongly for Professional Collaboration?	PC1: Teachers talk to each other about teaching strategies. PC2: Teachers find creative solutions to classroom problems. PC3: Teachers are influenced by each other's work. PC4: Teachers examine each other's work. PC5: Teachers share new ideas and methods. PC6: Teachers share core materials. PC7: Teachers help each other solve their problems. PC8: Teachers talk about ways to do what's best for students.
RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Administrative Support?	AS1: Campus leaders work with teachers. AS2: Campus leaders value reaching a consensus with teachers. AS3: Campus leaders and teachers make decisions on various activities. AS4: Campus leaders want to learn teachers' thoughts and ideas. AS5: Campus leaders work with teachers to solve academic and behavioral problems. AS6: Campus leaders respect teachers. AS7: Campus leaders make decisions about the use of time with teachers. AS8: Campus leaders ensure teachers benefit from professional development. AS9: Campus leaders trust teachers. AS10: Campus leaders support teachers with changes in their teaching strategies
RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Supportive Working Environment?	SWE1: Teachers work as a team. SWE2: Teachers discuss ways to better the situation. SWE3: Teachers behave in a professional manner. SWE4: Teachers are satisfied with the work environment. SWE5: Teachers trust each other. SWE6: Teachers use time to solve problems in meetings. SWE7: Teachers reach a consensus before making decisions. SWE8: Teachers celebrate success. SWE9: Teachers value each other's thoughts and ideas.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to produce descriptive statistics such as distribution, mean, and standard deviation for each campus and overall district. A correlation coefficient analysis was also conducted to study the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) dimensions and variables.

Open-Ended Questions

After the completion and administration of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale, teachers responded to the open-ended questions to further capture and describe the factors of teacher leadership culture at each campus. Table 3 displays the open-ended questions included in the online survey.

Table 3: Open-Ended Questions

Research Question	Data Collection
RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers experience the most strongly for Professional Collaboration?	PC-I: Describe what professional collaboration means to you. Which professional collaboration factor is most important to you? Provide an example of an experience or characteristic you found to have been beneficial at your campus.
RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Administrative Support?	AS-I: Describe what administrative support means to you. Which administrative support factor is most important to you? Provide an example of an experience or characteristic you found to have been beneficial at your campus.
RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Supportive Working Environment?	SWE-I: Describe what a supportive working environment means to you. Which supportive working environment factor is most important to you? Provide an example of an experience or characteristic you found to have been beneficial at your campus.

This section of the data collection continued to center on the three foci represented in the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment. Each participating teacher was able to utilize the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale to narrow the short answer framework to the factors leading to the three dimensions represented on the scale.

The open-ended questions allowed for an elaboration or extension to the descriptive statistics and yield comparable data from each campus. Furthermore, an overall exploration and analysis of the district teacher perceptions concluded for continued research in teacher leadership culture and school improvement, as well as for the participating district's professional development goals.

Justification of Use of Instruments

The research study aimed to attain descriptive statistics from a rural South Texas school district regarding the implementation of teacher leadership culture factors that impact school improvement. The school district selection studied was based on the implementation and continued professional development of teacher leadership practices. In choosing the school district, the determination of which scale to utilize was carefully studied to assure that all components of collaboration, leadership support, and a supportive environment were included. After several analyses in determining an appropriate scale for the study, Kamile Demir's Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (2014) was the most fitting in meeting the research questions.

Because the research was expected to study the teacher leadership efforts in cultivating a school culture, Demir's (2014) Teacher Leadership Culture Scale was found to be suitable as an all-in-one scale that provided valuable data. Its concise factors in three areas of interest made the empirically reliable Teacher Leadership Culture Scale appropriate and beneficial for the analysis of the research questions. Each dimension included an efficient number of questions to measure the overall dimension opinion. As such, the ability to measure Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment made the research focused on assessing not just teacher leadership but the cultural factors that support the initiative.

Throughout the development of research and determination of utilizing the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014), the access and authorization acquirement involved communication via electronic mail. Permission was requested and granted from Kamile Demir to utilize the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale. Through electronic communication, full authorization and permission to utilize the scale was received and recorded for the study.

Data Analysis Strategy

This record of study utilized a mixed-methods research design, which entailed quantitative and qualitative analyses. The initial component of the study included the collection of demographic data from teachers participating in the study. The quantifiable data also included an analysis through the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). The last data analysis involved a qualitative exploration through teacher

responses to short answer questions. Descriptive analysis was performed on the themes determined in the protocol.

Demographic Data

The purpose of conducting a demographic study was to analyze the relationships between the demographic variables of the study and the outcome of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). The demographic results were structured to filter campus information, specific to race/ ethnicity, age, gender, teaching experience, and district experience, teacher preparation, teaching area, and certification.

The data collection was analyzed and interpreted through descriptive statistics. While some demographic variables did not require specific coding, there are other demographic variables that were coded to better suit the study's intentions of reporting the findings. For example, the campus variable encompassed the elementary, junior high, and high schools.

The other demographic variables recorded a similar approach utilized in a qualitative analysis of teacher leadership perceptions by Cemaloğlu and Duran (2018). The age ranges included: 35 and below; 36-40; 41-45; 46-50; 51 and above. The educational level included: No Degree; Associate Degree; Undergraduate; Master's Degree; Doctorate Degree. Years of Teaching and Years in the District included: 1-5; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20; 21 and above.

The demographic data collection contained the following variables as noted in Figure 2: Demographic Data Variables:

Research Number	Campus	First Name	Last Name
Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Age Range	Years of Teaching
Years in the District	Teacher Preparation	Teaching Area	Certification

Figure 2: Demographic data variables

Quantitative Data

The descriptive statistics were used to describe the summaries attained for each demographic variable and scale factor reported in the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). Utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the data collected were analyzed and represented accordingly. The SPSS was utilized to perform statistical functions and visually design a variety of representations that describe the overall culture of the campuses and district of teacher leadership culture.

In doing so, a descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were conducted to depict the variables for each factor of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) and represented in tables or figures. The analysis entailed the central tendency or estimate of the center of distribution of values, such as mean, median, and mode for each dimension studied in the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment. In addition, the study utilized the data collected to measure the variability for each factor – the spread or dispersion of the values around the central tendency. The range was calculated to show

the spread of the highest value and lowest value. The standard deviation measured the relation of the set of scores has to the mean of the sample. Lastly, this study provided campus and district numerical and visual representation of correlation coefficients to help leadership teams evaluate the impact of teacher leadership culture dimensions and factors that are found in all campus.

Qualitative Data

The third component of the research entailed open-ended questions expected to reveal the perceptions of teacher leadership culture at each of the campuses and overall district perceptions. Of the 78 teachers participating, a purposive sample of nine teachers was identified. Table 4 presents the nine teachers selected to represent all three campuses and the three levels of teaching experience. Novice teachers were identified as having 0-5 years of experience. Midpoint teachers were identified with 6-20 years of experience. Seasoned teachers were identified with over 20 years of experience. The nine teachers were selected to represent the various levels of experience and campuses.

Table 4: Sample of Teachers' Information

Teacher Pseudonym	Yrs. of Exp	Gender	Age Range	Campus
Ted	0-5	M	36-40	Elementary
David	0-5	M	35 and below	Junior High
Katherine	0-5	F	35 and below	High School
Elsa	6-20	F	35 and below	Elementary
Sandra	6-20	F	36-40	Junior High
Leyla	6-20	F	35 and below	High School
Jessica	Over 20	F	51 and above	Elementary
Rachel	Over 20	F	51 and above	Junior High
Abigail	Over 20	F	51 and above	High School

All participating teachers were provided an opportunity to reflect on each dimension and their corresponding factors. The qualitative approach in having teachers respond to open-ended questions allowed participants to express themselves in detail. Teachers either mentioned the factor they believed was most important, or its importance was inferred if the teacher described the factor, or included it in their example. Codes and themes were generated via campus representation and outcomes, as well as the overall summary of teachers' opinions based on variables, such as teaching experience in the district, educator preparation, and teaching area.

Each theme included an exploration of each dimension: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment. Teachers were asked to define each dimension and select one factor of each dimension that is the most important. Lastly, teachers were asked to provide an example or experience in which they observed or experienced a dimension factor was evident.

As teachers provided responses to the open-ended questions, teachers were able to reflect on their own definition of each dimension. In addition, teachers were able to reflect on examples and characteristics of collaboration, administrative support, and supportive working environments. The teacher responses to the open-ended questions produced codes and themes to identify and mark the highest factors that led to qualitative outcomes which further substantiated the quantitative data. The codes and themes were then analyzed against the results of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) to provide a more meaningful representation of the results for each

campus and the district-wide number of statistics. Codes and themes were produced to further reflect and analyze the results and findings.

To conclude, this study utilized the data to reach conclusions about the rural South Texas school district participating in the Region One Education Service Center Teacher Incentive Fund grant that emphasized Teacher Leadership as a source of quality professional development. Teacher responses were documented and organized to represent the perceptions of teachers from each campus and level of experience. The responses also allowed for additional reflections to not only include examples of practices occurring at campuses but also the characteristics teachers desire for stronger collaboration, administrative support, and a supportive working environment. The school district was able to utilize a reliable and valid scale, as well as the qualitative research to reflect and prepare for high organizational culture and school improvement.

Timeline

Because the data collection was based on teacher leadership culture, the timeline for the collections was imperative in determining the opinions of teachers. The research intended to study a rural South Texas school district that had implemented teacher leadership initiatives for over two consecutive years and intended to continue with the implementation throughout the duration of the study. As such, the middle of the school year was found to be an ideal time of year based on the continuous professional development activities that have been on-going during the summer months and into the fall semester. Table 5 displays a timeline to of the data collection and data analysis.

Table 5: Timeline of Data Collection and Methods

Date of Collection	Method	Validation
11/14/19	Obtained approval from the IRB	Secured compliance with collection guidelines
01/06/20	Acquired access to TAMU Qualtrics	Received written confirmation
02/03/20	Submitted request for research project to school district	Received written confirmation from the Superintendent
02/06/20	Submitted TLCS via email to all school district teachers	Collected data in secure file
02/20/20	Closed the TAMU Qualtrics Survey access	Began data analysis
03/14/20	Finalized SPSS data	Developed visual representations

The data collection method was consistent with the satisfactory completion and approval of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The data collection method used to obtain teacher opinions on the teacher leadership culture in their respective campus required on-going communication and oversight on the completion status of the protocol.

Because the school district was located in a rural community, the number of teacher participants was manageable to complete the data collection timely. The Likert scale and open-ended components of the data collection were obtained within a two-week window. Upon the completion of short answer coding, the data entry and development of visual representations of both the survey and open-ended outcomes of the study were made possible by utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The data representations were prepared and analyzed within an additional two weeks.

Reliability and Validity Concerns or Equivalents

This record of study was fixated on the teacher leadership culture established in a rural South Texas school district that had implemented teacher leadership initiatives for two consecutive years and was implementing its third year of such initiatives throughout the study. Because the dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment create an all-in-one protocol to use for the study, the valid and empirical research conducted by Kamile Demir (2014) was the basis of the data collection. Demir's Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (2014) presented the characteristics of a school culture that supports teacher leadership. The scale's 5-point Likert scale was used to indicate degrees of agreement. In this study, teachers indicated whether they *strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agrees, or were undecided.*

The scale was analyzed, studied and determined to be a significantly reliable as an instrument in teacher leadership research. The Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) concluded structural coefficients of the items on the scale between 0.74 and 0.89. Demir's (2014) study of the scale resulted in the dimension of Professional Collaboration at 72% of the variance at the school supporting teacher leadership, while Administrative Support explained 84% and Supportive Working Environment explained 89%. The α -value and composite reliability value of all factors exhibited a value greater than 0.88; thus, exhibited a convergent and discriminant validity.

Both trust and professionalism were two factors that were highly referenced in the empirical research as they were factors that impacted cultural perspectives. The

element of trust among colleagues was expected to create productive and collaborative environments (Danielson, 2006; Parlar et al., 2017). Similarly, the efforts to gain trust through innovative practices (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & DiPaola, 2006), have been studied to determine the correlation of each dimension of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014).

In a study conducted by Kamile Demir (2015), the TLCS was studied utilizing correlation statistics between the observed dimensions (Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, Supportive Working Environment) and the Comprehensive Trust Scale (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2006). Demir found a correlation between Professional Collaboration and Administrative Support. Professional Collaboration and Supportive Working Environment indicated a stronger or higher correlation. Demir found the highest correlation between the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale dimensions of Administrative Support and Supportive Working Environment.

In a different study conducted by Parlar et al., (2017), teacher leadership culture was measured for its relationship to teacher professionalism. The findings of the study revealed that Professional Collaboration and Supportive Working Environment had a neutral sample mean, whereas Administrative Support was above average.

Furthermore, Parlar et al. (2017) compared the relationship of each teacher leadership culture dimension and determined that the variables of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment showed significant and positive relationships. Professional Collaboration and Administrative Support indicated the lowest correlation; whereas, Professional Collaboration and

Supportive Working Environment showed a higher correlation. The study also found the strongest relationship to be between Administrative Support and Supportive Working Environment.

In both Demir (2015) and Parlar et al. (2017), the coefficient relationships involving Administrative Support and a Supportive Working Environment were higher than the Administrative Support and Professional Collaboration dimensions. The two studies suggest that a positive teacher leadership culture is strongly influenced by the campus leadership approach and practice of transformational and distributed leadership.

In all, the available literature pertaining to Teacher Leadership Culture Scale was measured was found to be reliable and valid; hence, this study intends to measure the teacher opinions of teacher leadership culture of a rural South Texas school district. The study determined whether similar teacher opinions in the overall dimensions, as well as within the factors found in each dimension. In all, the study provided the school district and the existing literature with relevant data to continue improvement practices that impact organizational culture and climate.

The delimitations or features of the study center on the fact that study is being conducted in only one rural school district versus several school district. The purpose behind conducting the research with only one school district was to learn the factors that are associated primarily with the teachers that have been a part of a continuous professional development provided by the teacher leaders of the campus and/or district.

The limitations or weaknesses of the study revolved on the completion of the short answer questions. Each teacher was asked to complete the short answer questions

online after the TLCS matrix tables were completed. Because it entailed a written response, some teachers were short on their responses. Another limitation of the study was the fact that principals at each campus have only been assigned to their role for 1-2 years. Therefore, the weakness found within some dimensions were identified to further examine teacher leadership culture beyond the lens of just teachers.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter III

This study intended to bring documentation and data to support the current research of teacher leadership culture by addressing the relationships of dimensions. The dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment captured the possibilities of potential discussions from which the school district can utilize to shape the organizational culture and climate. Therefore, the methodology of the research was consistent with the work of Kamile Demir in utilizing the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (2014) as a tool to measure the teacher perceptions of the school district. In addition, the qualitative study permitted a thorough review of teachers' thoughts and points of view regarding each dimension. It generated potential reflections on examples of practices occurring on campuses, as well as characteristics teachers desire. The research design in the data collection and analysis provided important statistics for the school district, as well as for continuous teacher leadership research.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Introduction of Analysis

This record of study utilized a mixed-methods research design, which entailed a quantitative and qualitative data collection method and analyses. The initial component of the study included the collection of demographic data from teachers participating in the study. The quantifiable results also included an analysis through the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). The TLCS focused on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership across three dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment as studied and validated by the empirical research conducted by Kamile Demir (2014). This multifactor teacher questionnaire was designed with a total of 27 items constituted into three scales. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to produce descriptive statistics such as distribution, mean, and standard deviation for each campus and overall district. A correlation analysis was also conducted to study the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) dimensions and variables. The last data analysis involved a qualitative exploration through teacher responses to short answer questions. A qualitative analysis was performed through the use of codes and themes.

The categorical research questions yielded comparable demographic data from each campus, as well as an overall exploration of district perceptions for organizational culture and school improvement. The TLCS (Demir, 2014) was provided to all teachers electronically with their responses remaining confidential and secured under Qualtrics program.

The research questions entailed the three foci from the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale, and as such, guided the study format and analysis. The study intended to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Professional Collaboration?
- RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Administrative Support?
- RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Supportive Working Environment?

Presentation of Data

Demographic Results

The data collection and analysis commenced with an understanding of the school district's teacher demographics and characteristics. A total of 88 teachers (N=88) responded to the survey quantitative and qualitative questions during the span of approximately two weeks. Teachers were provided a link to the Texas A&M University Qualtrics survey via electronic mail, and were guided to provide consent to participate. All data collected were held in confidence to protect the identity of participants.

The demographic component was requested a collection of teacher information regarding the campus teachers are assigned to most of the instructional day, ethnicity, gender, age group, highest level of education, years of teaching experience, and years of teaching experience at the school district participating in the study.

Campus assignment. Approximately half of the entire responses represent the largest campus of the school district. Hebronville Elementary School teachers had the highest number of teacher participation as noted in the teachers' campus assignment in Figure 3. This survey question pertained to the location or campus teachers spend most of their time during the instructional day.

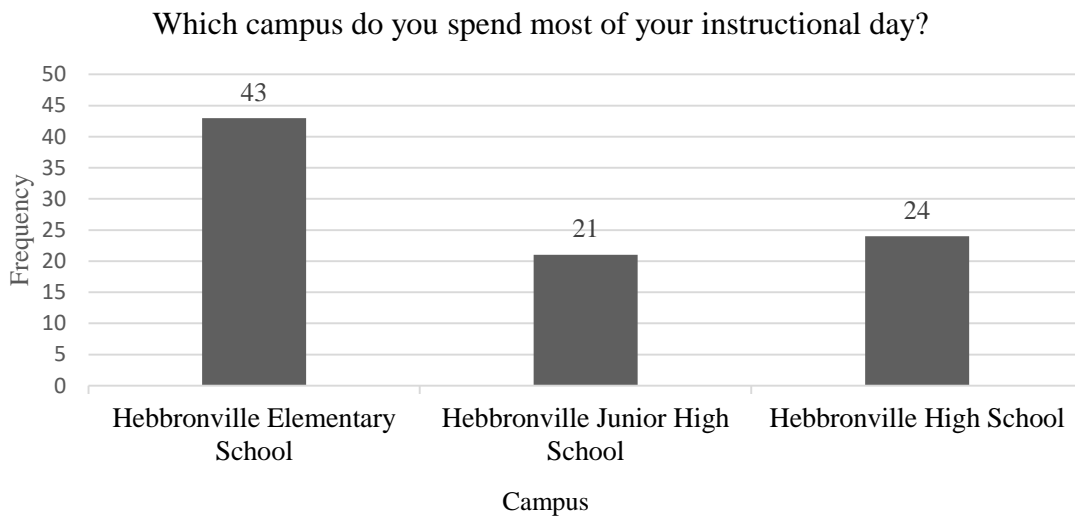


Figure 3: Teacher's indication of campus assignment

In most cases teachers are assigned to only one campus. However, the school district does have some teachers that teach in multiple campuses; hence, the purpose of requesting the campus most of their time spent at during the school day. The overall

campus assignment demographics is represented by the percentage of participating teachers per campus.

Ethnicity. Teacher participation (N=88) in the survey included a data collection question regarding the teachers' ethnicity. The ethnicity breakdown district-wide identified as Hispanic with highest percentage of approximately 94.%. A total of five teachers indicated either White or Two or more races with a combined percentage of approximately 6% of the 88 participating teachers as noted in the ethnicity breakdown of teacher participants on Table 6.

Table 6: Ethnicity Breakdown of Teacher Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hispanic	83	94.3	94.3	94.3
	White	3	3.4	3.4	97.7
	Two or More Races	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Gender. Similarly, the proportion of male and female teachers was generated by the teachers indicating their gender. The gender breakdown was found to be primarily female at all campuses. Among all teachers in the district, 83% of the research participants were female. A total of 15 out of 88 teachers (17%) district-wide were male.

Table 7 presents the school districts' gender breakdown of teacher participants and highlights the vast difference in gender.

Table 7: Gender Breakdown of Teacher Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	15	17.0	17.0	17.0
	Female	73	83.0	83.0	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Age group. The school district’s teacher participation analysis included an identifying age group. Comparatively, all age groups in the school district’s teacher participation had 10 or more participants. The majority of participants aged 51 and over, whereas the age group with the least amount of participants were 46-50 years of age. Figure 4 represents the teacher age groups district-wide and further identifies the commonalities of age-groups from below 35 to 50 years of age.

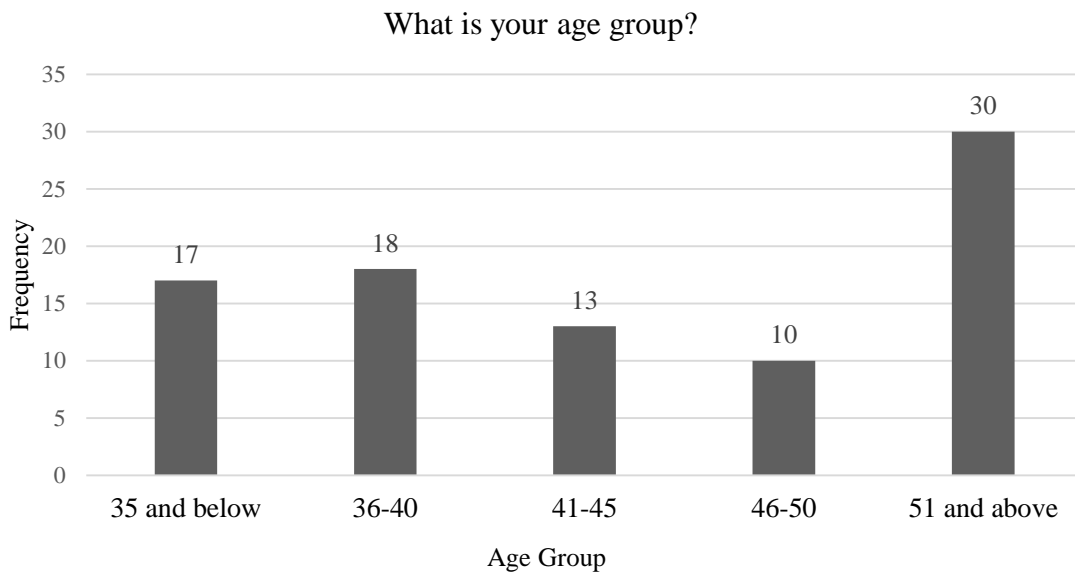


Figure 4: Teacher age groups district-wide

Level of Education. The study included a data collection that addressed the highest level of education from each participant as noted on Table 8. One teacher indicated no degree attainment based on the teacher’s instructional assignment in Career Technology Education. Teachers with a minimum of a bachelor’s degree was 76%, while a master’s degree was approximately 23%.

Table 8: Highest Education Level of Participating Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Degree	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Bachelor's Degree	67	76.1	76.1	77.3
	Master's Degree	20	22.7	22.7	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Teaching experience. Teacher demographic data included the number of teaching experience the research participants possessed. Of the 88 teachers participating in the study, 59 out of 88 teachers either had 11-over 20 years of experience; whereas only 29 out of the 88 teachers represented 0 to 10 years of experience. The 11-20 years of teaching experience represented 30 teachers in the district; whereas, the over 20 years of teaching experience represented 29 teachers in the district. Teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience represented only nine teachers. The 0-5 years of teaching experience represented 20 teachers in the school district.

Figure 5 displays the teachers’ years of experience and depicts a representation of the 20 teachers having only 0-5 years of teaching experience.

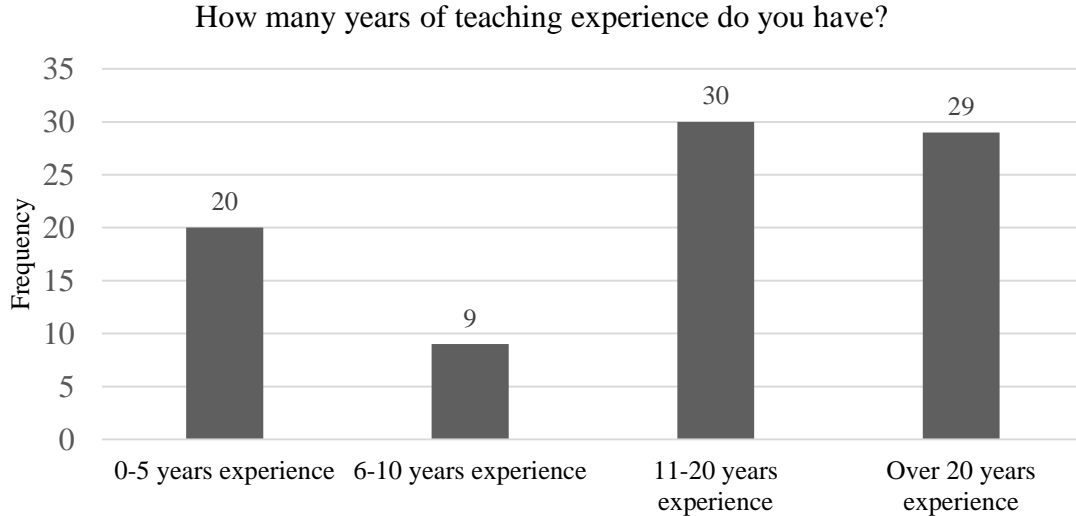


Figure 5: Participating teachers’ years of experience

Teaching experience at school district. Teacher demographic data collection also consisted in the frequency distribution of teaching experience at the school district.

Figure 6 represents the teachers’ years of experience at JHCISD. It also identifies similar number of teachers with 1-5 years and 11-20 years of experience at the school district.

The 1-5 years of district experience represented 24 teachers; whereas, the 11-20 years of district experience represented 29 years. The 6-10 years of district experience represented 13 teachers. The seasoned teachers with over 20 years of district experience represented 16 teachers. The category with the least years of district experience was the 0 years’ category. This category only represented 6 teachers. The combined categories of 0 to 10 years of district experience represented 43 out of 88 teachers; whereas the 11 to over 20 years of district experience represented 45 out of 88 teachers

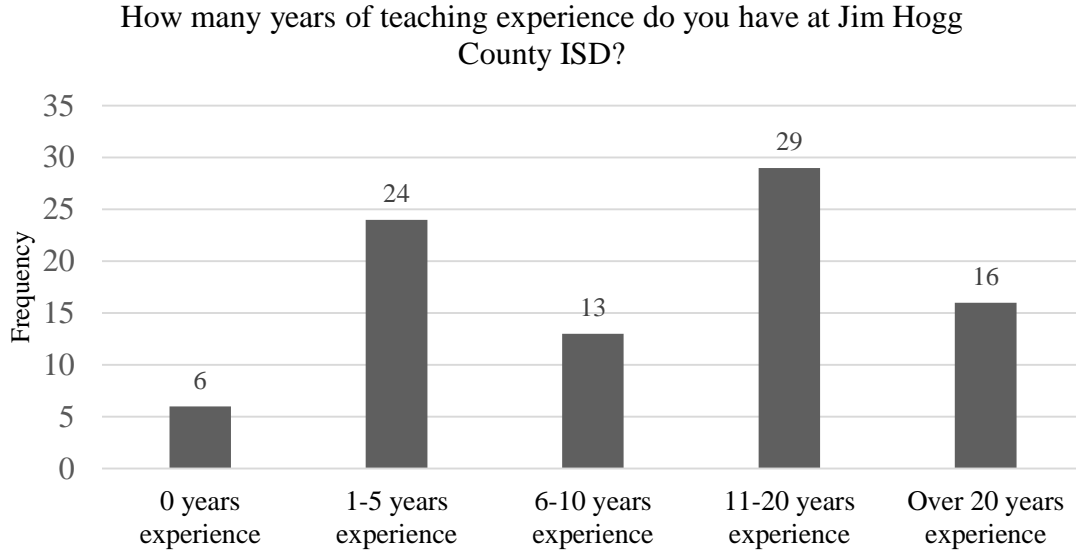


Figure 6: Participating teachers’ years of experience at JHCISD

Quantitative Results

The research study measured the teacher leadership culture of a school district both quantitatively and qualitatively. The process entailed an online Likert scale created by Kamile Demir (2014) entitled Teacher Leadership Culture Scale and three open-ended questions. The scale was used to answer research questions pertaining to three dimensions: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment. Teachers in the participating school district consented to provide their perceptions of different factors within each dimension, and the research identified the highest factor perceived by teachers.

Professional Collaboration Results for RQ 1

The research data collection for Professional Collaboration was conducted through the use of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). It measured the

level of how teachers work together towards a common purpose in the school district, as well as measured the observation of a collaborative environment where teachers learn from each other.

This scale was determined to be reliable and valid to answer the first research question:

- RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Professional Collaboration?

The data derived from the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale was used to generate descriptive statistics to determine teacher perceptions of Professional Collaboration. Table 9 provides a detailed report of the descriptive statistics generated from the participating teachers (N=88). This portion of the TLCS contained eight factors all related to the perceptions of how teachers work together.

Table 9: PC Descriptive Statistics

	Teachers talk about teaching strategies.	Teachers find creative solutions to the classroom problems.	Teachers are influenced by each other's work.	Teachers examine each other's work with students.	Teachers share new ideas and methods.	Teachers share core materials.	Teachers help each other solve problems.	Teachers talk about what is best for students.
N Valid	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
Mean	4.27	4.20	4.18	3.53	4.10	4.25	4.24	4.31
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Mode	4 ^a	5	4	4	4	5	5	5
Std. Dev.	.827	1.041	.891	1.028	1.051	1.157	1.039	1.021
Variance	.683	1.084	.794	1.056	1.104	1.339	1.080	1.043

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The highest mean ($\mu=4.31$) was reported from the PC8 question, “Teachers talk about ways to do what is best for students.” The mode for all factors in this data

collection range from “somewhat agree” to “strongly agree,” and the standard deviation for all factors in the PC was less than 1.2 ($\sigma=.827$ to 1.157).

Upon individual analysis of the results of the highest factor, 78 out of the 88 participating teachers either “somewhat agreed” or “strongly agreed” that teachers in the school district talk about ways to do what is best for students. Three teachers remained neutral, whereas seven teachers either “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree” with this factor. Figure 7 represents the highest factor in the PC dimension.

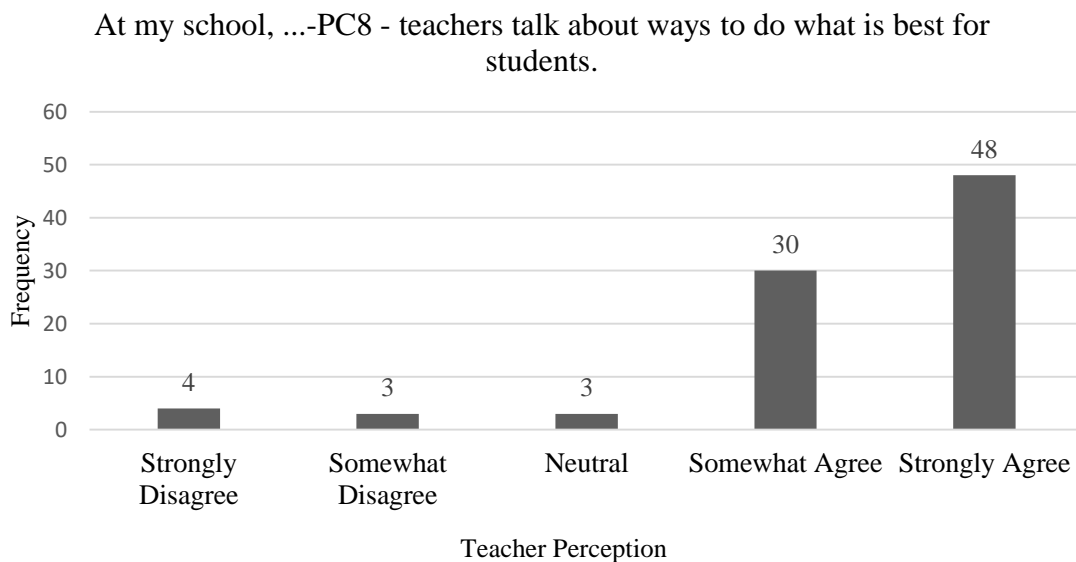


Figure 7: Highest factor in PC dimension (N=88)

Administrative Support Results for RQ 2

The Administrative Support research data collection was also conducted with the use of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014). This section of the TLCS entails the measurement of teacher perceptions or viewpoint of how teachers feel

administrators treat them on the campus. The tool includes opportunities for teachers to describe their perception of shared-decision making in matters that include instruction, student discipline, and teacher professional growth. In all, this portion of the scale measured teacher perceptions regarding the level to which principals provide opportunities to them for their development and practice of teacher-leader roles by encouraging them towards leadership responsibilities.

The research scale was reliable and valid, which corroborated with the process of answering the following question:

- RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Administrative Support?

The Administrative Support portion of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale entailed ten factors related to the teacher perceptions regarding the level of school leadership support towards a variety of factors leading to teacher involvement with campus and classroom decisions, as well as teacher-leadership responsibilities.

Table 10 represents the AS descriptive statistics and provides a thorough account of the statistics produced from the study involving teachers of the school district (N=88). Only two out of ten factors stemmed above the neutral zone of the scale. The majority of means (μ) for each factor of this dimension remained in the neutral range. The highest mean ($\mu=4.07$) was reported from the AS6 question, “Campus leaders respect teachers.” While the mean (μ) of all the factors were similar, the dimension consisted of factors that resulted individual standard deviations all above 1.1 ($\sigma=1.139$ to 1.295).

Table 10: AS Descriptive Statistics

	Campus leaders work with teachers.	Campus leaders value reaching a consensus with teachers.	Campus leaders and teachers make decisions on various activities.	Campus leaders want to learn teachers' thoughts and ideas.	Campus leaders work with teachers to solve academic and behavioral problems.	Campus leaders respect teachers.	Campus leaders make decisions about the use of time with teachers.	Campus leaders ensure teachers benefit from PD.	Campus leaders trust teachers.	Campus leaders support teachers with changes in their teaching strategies.
N Valid	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
Mean	3.97	3.65	3.64	3.47	3.73	4.07	3.74	4.00	3.72	3.64
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Dev.	1.139	1.260	1.205	1.268	1.248	1.182	1.150	1.194	1.295	1.243
Variance	1.298	1.587	1.452	1.608	1.557	1.398	1.322	1.425	1.677	1.544

In review of question AS6: “Campus leaders respect teachers,” the statistical data represents this factor as the most important as perceived by teachers. The study utilized the data to conclude the spread of teacher responses for this factor.

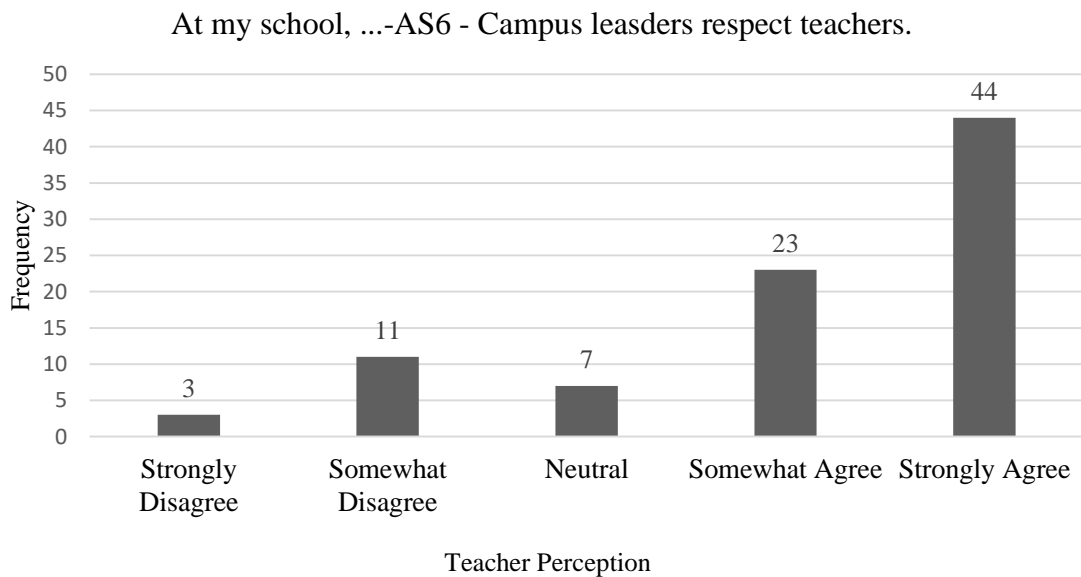


Figure 8: Highest factor in AS dimension (N=88)

Supportive Working Environment Results for RQ 3

The last section of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale is the Supportive Working Environment (Demir, 2014). The research data collection was also obtained from the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale to measure the level of trust, teamwork, and positive communication in the school environment. The empirically reliable and valid scale answered the following question:

- RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Supportive Working Environment?

The Supportive Working Environment portion of the TLCS contained nine factors, which addressed teacher perceptions of trust-based and positive communication among teachers in the school environment. Table 11 represents the SWE descriptive statistics and provides a comprehensive description of the statistics produced from the research study involving the teachers of the school district (N=88).

Table 11: SWE Descriptive Statistics

	Teachers work as a team.	Teachers discuss ways to better the situation.	Teachers behave in a professional manner.	Teachers are satisfied with the work environment.	Teachers trust each other.	Teachers use time to solve problems in meetings.	Teachers reach a consensus before making decisions.	Teachers celebrate success.	Teachers value each other's thoughts and ideas.
N Valid	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
Mean	4.27	4.02	4.24	3.35	3.72	3.78	4.14	4.28	4.28
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
Mode	5	4	5	3 ^a	4	4	5	5	5
Std. Dev.	.840	.934	.884	1.213	1.193	1.129	.899	.934	.883
Variance	.706	.873	.781	1.472	1.424	1.275	.809	.872	.780

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

While the standard deviation for the majority of the factors remained less than 1.00 ($\sigma=.883$ to 1.213), the outcome of this dimension was very close with three factors within hundredths of a point. Two factors were identified to share the highest mean (μ); the highest mean ($\mu=4.28$) was found to be evident in the following two factors:

- SWE8: “Teachers celebrate success.”
- SWE9: “Teachers value each other’s thoughts and ideas.”

The first factor resulted in a mean (μ) only 0.01 lower than the highest mean. Question SWE1: “At my school, teachers work as a team” was highly considered as a factor towards Supportive Working Environment.

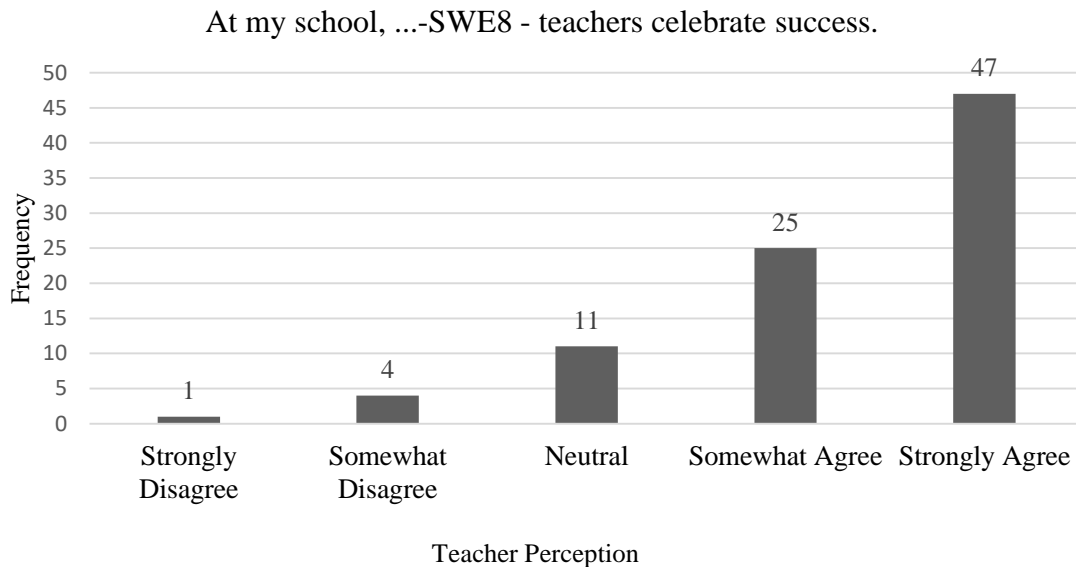


Figure 9: Highest factor in SWE dimension - SWE8 (N=88)

In review of both questions SWE8 and SWE9 as the highest strongly perceived factors under Supportive Working Environment, the data shows significant statistics

regarding the breakdown of each question. Figure 9 represents the SWE highest factor spread of teacher perceptions for question SWE8. In question SWE8, the data represented a total of 72 out of 88 teachers who indicated a perception of either “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” on whether teachers celebrate success. On the other hand, 11 teachers remained neutral with this factor, and only 5 out of 88 teachers indicated “somewhat disagree” or “disagree.”

Similarly, Figure 10 represents the highest factor in SWE under the question SWE9. In this question, the data denotes a total of 72 out of 88 participating teachers in the school district indicated either “somewhat agreed” or “strongly agreed” to teachers valuing each other’s thoughts and ideas. In this inquiry, 13 teachers remained neutral in their responses to the question. However, only 3 teachers in the in the entire school district indicated their disagreement by marking either “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree.”

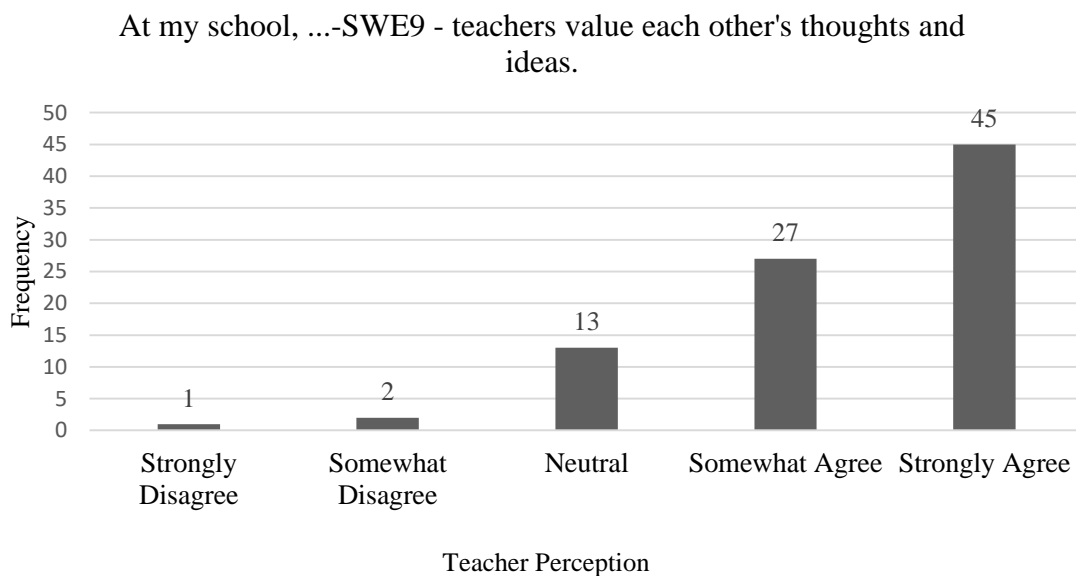


Figure 10: Highest factor in SWE dimension - SWE9 (N=88)

Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Research Variables

The statistical techniques utilized to measure how strongly pairs of variables are related was conducted. The correlation of each dimension of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale was analyzed by utilizing each dimension mean based on teacher responses. The correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether a strong relation exists between pairs of variables/ dimensions. In this study, the correlation was studied between the dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment.

Table 12: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Bivariate Correlation of Research Dimensions (N=88)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Professional Collaboration	Administrative Support	Supportive Working Environment
Professional Collaboration	4.1364	.78753			
Administrative Support	3.7602	1.03818	.409**		
Supportive Working Environment	3.9760	.87496	.439**	.571**	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 12 represents bivariate correlation of research dimensions. It provides definitive results from the data collection including mean (μ), standard deviation (σ), and the correlation coefficients for each dimension studied. The dimension of PC has the highest mean ($\mu=4.1364$) and the lowest standard deviation ($\sigma=.78753$). Whereas, the AS was the dimension with the lowest mean ($\mu=3.7602$) and the highest standard

deviation ($\sigma=1.03818$). The statistical data for SWE fell in the middle of all three dimensions, ($\mu=3.9760$; $\sigma=.87496$).

Significant positive correlations exist with each research variable or dimension in the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale. The highest significance was found to be between Administrative Support and Supportive Working Environment ($r=.571$). The least significance was determined to be between PC and AS ($r=.409$).

Qualitative Results

Professional Collaboration Results for RQ 1

A qualitative analysis was completed by reviewing each item to determine how teachers responded to the open-ended questions in the TLCS survey. Teachers either identified a PC factor perceived as most important, or its importance was inferred if the teacher described the factor or included an example of it in their response. Each response revealed a concept or idea related to the dimensional factors of Professional Collaboration.

Of the 78 teachers responding in the open-ended responses, purposive sample of nine teachers was identified. The sample represented all three campuses and consisted of three levels of teaching experience. Novice teachers were identified as having 0-5 years of experience. Midpoint teachers were identified with 6-20 years of experience. Seasoned teachers were identified with over 20 years of experience.

The 78 teacher responses were analyzed and patterns in the data were determine. Next, the PC data were organized into specific descriptive phrases. This process generated the following four categories of data:

- Collaboration to discuss instructional strategies or approaches to better engage students in lesson delivery;
- Collaboration to discuss classroom concerns, student misconduct, or parent meetings;
- Collaboration to share ideas and goals regarding school activities, programs, and initiatives; and,
- Collaboration to discuss what is best for student achievement and progress.

I further analyzed the responses by the participants' three levels of teaching experience by sorting the responses to see if the four categories were evidenced at each of the three levels. The purposive sample of the nine teachers' responses were then analyzed to determine which dimensional factor was perceived to be most important. Teacher responses were then coded to document the particular factors in the PC dimension that were observed. They were coded as follows:

- Classroom Concerns – CC
- Ideas and Goals – IG
- Instruction Strategies – IS
- Best for Students – ST.

The nine teachers selected individually defined what PC meant to them or provided examples of collaboration at their campuses. Despite the differences in teaching experience or assigned campus, each open-ended response contained documentation related to the need of collaborative professional relationships.

Table 13: Coding of Sample Responses for PC

Teacher	Campus	Exp	Code	Teacher Response
Ted	ELEM	0-5	IS	“Collaboration is the foundation to building student success. My fourth grade team works collaboratively, to ensure that students are engaged, teachers are scaffolding students weaknesses which in turn to strengths.”
David	JH	0-5	IS	“Working together for the common good. We have multiple opportunities throughout the year to come together with our department and discuss paths forward and techniques to reach all learners.”
Katherine	HS	0-5	ST	“I believe Professional Collaboration is the involvement of all professionals in the decision of what is best for our students and our campus.”
Elsa	ELEM	6-20	ST	“Professional Collaboration means that the professionals who are present in a work environment should constantly be communicating and coming together to make sure that all needs are met for success. In this case, it would be the success of each student. One of the most important factors would be the support of teachers sharing their ideas and teaching strategies with each other.”
Sandra	JH	6-20	CC	“Professional Collaboration is being able to meet with math teachers to discuss teaching strategies and also meeting with the grade level department to discuss student behaviors and academics. Something beneficial is that we are given lots of opportunities to collaborate with other colleagues.”
Leyla	HS	6-20	IS	“Having a weekly PLC with our department helps the department build relationships and allows us time to discuss content.”
Jessica	ELEM	20+	ST	“It means discussing our problems with administrators and colleagues to come up with the best solution for our grade level. Example: We always get together to discuss groupings, schedules, activities, etc...we all either agree and if we don't, then we continue to discuss until we do.”
Rachel	JH	20+	ST	“Professional Collaboration, in my opinion, means working together to enhance the educational needs of our students. I find it easier to work by grade level meetings since we can generate ideas that may impact the students we share among our classes.”
Abigail	HS	20+	IG	“Professional Collaboration means that all employees, regardless of their position, work together in all aspects of the educational environment with the school’s success as a whole as the main goal. The high school math department has worked closely with each other to provide support in curriculum, discipline, or lesson strategy. We have welcomed two new teachers in the past two years, and have made it our norm to meet and discuss what is working well in the classroom, and what is not. We have become very close in our positive working relationship.”

Table 13 presents coding and quote examples from the teacher responses of the purposive sample for this portion of the qualitative analysis. One out of the nine teachers considered collaboration as a need to address classroom concerns, student misconduct, and parent meetings. Another data point, one out of nine, revealed collaboration as a means to share ideas and goals of the campus. The higher data points centered on instructional strategies and student needs. Three out of nine reflected on the need for collaboration to improve instructional strategies; whereas four out of nine revealed a collaboration need to discuss what is best for students.

The qualitative data from the open-ended questions revealed the following themes for Professional Collaboration: 1) teachers support each other in developing collaborative and positive work relationships to meet learner needs; 2) teachers meet during planning periods to discuss campus goals and activities for student need.

The data included examples of teamwork which included collaborative meetings to address effective learning strategies based on data-driven lesson plans, as well as addressing classroom concerns that may pertain to student conduct.

The open-ended responses were further analyzed to determine whether the teachers' responses led to a common factor in the PC dimension. The results delineated in Table 14 represents the frequency and percentage of open-ended responses that aligned with the nine PC factors. The PC factor that was identified most frequently (34.6%) from teacher participating in the study was PC8: "Teachers talk about ways to do what is best for students." While the remaining factors resulted in more than a 15% difference from the highest factor, the second highest factor, PC1: Teachers talk about

teaching strategies, ranked second. These two factors resonate as areas of student need and teacher voice.

Table 14: Frequency and Percentage of PC Factors (N=78)

Rank	N	%	Dimension Factor
1	27	34.6	PC8: Teachers talk about what is best for students.
2	12	15.3	PC1: Teachers talk about teaching strategies.
3	11	14.1	PC7: Teachers help each other solve problems.
4	8	10.3	PC5: Teachers share core materials.
5	7	8.9	PC3: Teachers are influenced by each other's work.
6	6	7.7	PC2: Teachers find creative solutions to the classroom problems.
7	4	5.1	PC4: Teachers examine each other's work with students.
8	3	3.8	PC6: Teachers share new ideas and methods.

Administrative Support Results for RQ 2

A qualitative analysis was completed by reviewing each item to determine how teachers responded to the open-ended questions for the AS dimension. Teachers either identified a factor an AS factor perceived as most important, or its importance was inferred if the teacher described the factor or included an example of it in their response. Each response revealed a concept or idea related to the dimensional factors of Administrative Support.

The 78 teacher responses were examined and patterns in the data were determined and further analyzed into specific descriptive phrases. This process generated the following three categories of data:

- Support which entails administrators’ respect and trust in teachers’ instructional practices;
- Support which entails administrators’ willingness and availability to visit and listen to concerns; and,
- Support which entails administrators’ commitment to advocate and solve matters regarding students’ academic or behavioral problems.

The responses were analyzed by participants’ three levels of teaching experience by sorting the responses to see if the three categories were evidenced at each of the three levels. Based on the categories, the purposive sample of the nine teachers’ responses were then analyzed to determine which dimensional factor was perceived to be most important. Teacher responses were then coded to document the particular factors in the AS dimension that were observed. They were coded as follows:

- Advocate and Solve – AS
- Respect and Trust – RT
- Visit and Listen – VL.

The nine teachers selected individually defined what AS meant to them or provided examples of collaboration at their campuses. Despite the differences in teaching experience or assigned campus, each open-ended response contained documentation related to the need for Administrative Support.

Table 15 presents coding and quote examples from the teacher responses of the purposive sample for this portion of the qualitative analysis. One out of the nine teachers considered AS entailed the commitment to advocate and solve instructional and/or

Table 15: Coding of Sample Responses for AS

Teacher	Campus	Exp	Code	Teacher Response
Ted	ELEM	0-5	RT	“Administrative Support means trust and support. Without both, an educator will have to go through barriers to gain educational nourishment.”
David	JH	0-5	VL	“Administrative Support to me is understanding the daily routine of a teacher along with communicating to them their expectations throughout the year.”
Katherine	HS	0-5	RT	“Administrative Support is support from administration to all teachers and all students. The most important factor to administrative support is the assurance that administration trusts teachers but also works with them in a positive way to help each teacher grow which will in turn help students learn.”
Elsa	ELEM	6-20	VL	“Administrative Support should factor in all the needs of teachers and students. There should be praise when called for not just put downs. One of the most important factors would be the support of administration. Without this support nothing gets done, therefore making the teachers thoughts and ideas unproductive.”
Sandra	JH	6-20	RT	“Administrative Support for me means having them trust that everything I do in my classroom is always in the best interest of my students. Also having their support when a student is having behavioral problems especially when parent becomes involved.”
Leyla	HS	6-20	RT	“Administrative Support means having trust and respect for and from administration.”
Jessica	ELEM	20+	VL	“Administrative Support means that your administrator is going to value your work and opinions enough to discuss options with you instead of simply dictating orders. Example: There have been instances where we have been called in to discuss different options with different situations. I really feel valued and appreciated when that happens.”
Rachel	JH	20+	AS	“Administrative Support is having the confidence that my administrators will advocate on our behalf as well as assist and defend their educators when needed. The most important support factor listed for me would be is having my administrative support team work with teachers to solve student's academic and behavioral problems.”
Abigail	HS	20+	VL	“Administrative Support means Administrative Support! Teachers need to be able to have confidential and professional conversations with their administrators. They need to be able to go to their administrator for assistance and guidance in any aspect of education possible.”

behavioral problems. The higher data points shared the same outcome of four out of nine each. The results reflected AS that included campus leaders' respect and trust, as well as their availability to visit and listen to teachers.

The qualitative data from the open-ended questions revealed the following themes for Administrative Support: 1) teachers appreciate opportunities to visit with administrators who listen to their concerns regarding students' academic and behavioral matters; and, 2) teachers appreciate the professional courtesy, trust, and support from administrators. Teachers identified and expressed a need to be respected by campus leaders during their communication with both campus leaders and other teachers when addressing instructional or student need.

The open-ended responses were further analyzed to determine whether their responses led to a common factor in the Administrative Support dimension. The results delineated in Table 16 represent the frequency and percentage of open-ended responses that aligned with the nine AS factors.

The Administrative Support factor that was identified most frequently (21.8%) from teachers participating in the study was AS6: "Campus leaders respect teachers." The additional stronger modalities determined in this study included the importance of administrators' trust towards teachers and their availability to work collaboratively with teachers to discuss, plan, and solve both academic and behavioral problems at the campus level.

Table 16: Frequency and Percentage of AS Factors (N=78)

Rank	N	%	Dimension Factor
1	17	21.8	AS6: Campus leaders respect teachers.
2	14	17.9	AS1: Campus leaders work with teachers.
3	13	16.7	AS5: Campus leaders work with teachers to solve academic and behavioral problems.
4	10	12.8	AS9: Campus leaders trust teachers.
5	6	7.7	AS8: Campus leaders have teachers benefit from professional development.
6	5	6.4	AS7: Campus leaders make decisions about the use of time with teachers.
7	4	5.1	AS4: Campus leaders want to learn teachers' thoughts and ideas.
8	3	3.8	AS2: Campus leaders value reaching a consensus with teachers.
9	3	3.8	AS3: Campus leaders and teachers make decisions on various activities.
10	3	3.8	AS10: Campus leaders support teachers with changes in their teaching strategies.

Supportive Working Environment Results for RQ 3

A qualitative analysis was completed by reviewing each item to determine how teachers responded to the open-ended questions in the TLCS survey for the SWE dimension. Teachers either identified a SWE factor perceived as most important, or its importance was inferred if the teacher described the factor or included an example of it in their response. Each response revealed a concept or idea related to the dimensional factors of Supportive Working Environment.

The 78 teacher responses were analyzed and patterns in the data were determined and organized into specific descriptive phrases. This process generated the following three categories of data:

- A school environment where teachers work cohesively and cooperatively as a team and trust one another;
- A school environment where teachers' thoughts and ideas are worthwhile and valued by one another; and,
- A school environment where teachers gather and celebrate student and teacher achievement and success.

The responses were organized by the participants' three levels of teaching experience by sorting the responses to see if the three categories were evidenced at each of the three levels. The purposive sample of the nine teachers' responses were then further analyzed to determine which dimensional factor was perceived to be most important. Teacher responses were then coded to document the particular factors in the SWE dimension that were observed. They were coded as follows:

- Teamwork and Trust – TT
- Worth and Value – WV
- Gather and Celebrate – GC.

The nine teachers defined what SWE meant to them or provided examples of their work environment at their campuses. Despite the differences in teaching experience or assigned campus, each open-ended response contained documentation related to the need for supportive working environments. Table 17 presents coding and quote examples from the teachers' responses for this portion of the qualitative analysis. One out of the nine teachers considered a Supportive Working Environment is where colleagues encourage and celebrate each other's success. The higher data points shared

Table 17: Coding of Sample Responses for SWE

Teacher	Campus	Exp	Code	Teacher Response
Ted	ELEM	0-5	WV	“Teachers need to be able to trust and work well with each other. In order for us to do this, we have to have a Supportive Working Environment. An environment that embraces new ideas, respects each other, great listeners, collaborate with others not only within their grade level, and are open to suggestions. The environment needs to be open to change; they need to treat each other like family.”
David	JH	0-5	GC	“A Supportive Working Environment is an environment that is excited to see one another grow and become the best teachers we can be and not try to become the BEST teacher.”
Katherine	HS	0-5	WV	“Having a Supportive Working Environment is being able to confide in coworkers and share ideas amongst everyone. The most important factor is sharing ideas and thoughts about what has worked in the classroom to reach all students.”
Elsa	ELEM	6-20	TT	“Supportive Working Environment is when all teachers are there for each other. Lifting each other up and trusting one another would be two of the biggest factors for a Supportive Working Environment.”
Sandra	JH	6-20	WV	“Working in a positive environment allows teachers to plan and make decisions with ease. The majority of teachers work together and support each other’s opinions/suggestions.”
Leyla	HS	6-20	TT	“My experience at the high school has been very welcoming from administration, faculty and staff. I feel comfortable asking anyone any questions I may have.”
Jessica	ELEM	20+	TT	“Supportive Working Environment means to me that we are a team and we should stick together for the best of our students.”
Rachel	JH	20+	WV	“A Supportive Working Environment is one where a teacher can feel comfortable speaking their mind. An important Supportive Work Environment that is important to me is teachers behaving professionally. I have several colleagues who come to me to voice their concerns, and I believe it is because they know I will listen to them in a professional manner.”
Abigail	HS	20+	TT	“Supportive Working Environment means everyone is doing what they were hired to do, and that they do it the best way they know how. It means that everyone has the same goal and that they will work together to reach the goal. It means that we work together, we help each other, we provide positive interactions, and we value each other for their part in the education of our students.”

the same outcome of four out of nine each. The results reflected a SWE as having trust and teamwork in which thoughts and ideas are valued by one another.

Analysis of the qualitative data from the open-ended questions revealed the following themes for Supportive Working Environment: 1) teachers feel valued and respected when visiting with other teachers to discuss their thoughts and ideas; and, 2) teachers appreciate each other's professional courtesy, trust, and teamwork. The data included examples of professional and positive relationships, which influences teachers' self-confidence and their ability to continue professional communication with colleagues. Teachers further described the support and cooperation all teachers give in developing plans to celebrating success.

The open-ended responses were further analyzed to determine whether the teachers' responses led to a common factor in the Supportive Working Environment dimension. The results delineated in Table 18 represent the frequency and percentage of open-ended responses that aligned with the nine SWE factors. Teacher responses (N=78) resulted in contrasting data to the quantitative results. While the quantitative data established two factors with the highest mean (μ) and a third factor closely related, teachers' qualitative written responses indicated the reverse. The highest qualitative perception in this dimension across the school district was question SWE1: "Teachers work as a team." This highest factor entailed a 23.1% outcome. The additional factors that had considerable results were those pertaining to the value of thoughts and ideas, as well as the teachers' celebration of success. However, neither one of the additional factors were comparatively close in percentage outcome.

Table 18: Frequency and Percentage of SWE Factors (N=78)

Rank	N	%	Dimension Factor
1	18	23.1	SWE1: Teachers work as a team.
2	12	15.4	SWE9: Teachers value each other's thoughts and ideas.
3	10	12.8	SWE8: Teachers celebrate success.
4	9	11.5	SWE3: Teachers behave in a professional manner.
5	7	9.0	SWE6: Teachers use time to solve problems in meetings.
6	7	9.0	SWE7: Teachers reach a consensus before making decisions.
7	6	7.7	SWE5: Teachers trust each other.
8	5	6.4	SWE2: Teacher discuss ways to better the situation.
9	4	5.1	SWE4: Teachers are satisfied with the work environment.

Interaction Between Research and Context

How Context Impacts Results

The study of teacher leadership culture has had minimal interaction in school systems in the United States. Most of the empirical research has occurred in European countries, and the results have concluded strong relationships between teacher leadership, student learning, and school culture and climate (Harris, 2002a, 2002b; Grant, 2006; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). Upon the conception of the research in countries like Turkey, teacher leadership culture may or may have not existed in schools, and inquiries in the evolution of teacher leadership opened new avenues of leadership approaches that enhanced concepts of teamwork, communication, and support (Demir, 2008).

Because this study was designed to identify the perceptions of teachers in a rural South Texas School District, the research was tailored to deliver results that would promote professional growth within the school district. Upon the initial conversations with the superintendent of schools, the desire of wanting to learn more of what teachers perceived regarding teacher leadership culture was evident. Campus and district leaders accepted the opportunity to have teachers participate voluntarily in the survey and open-ended questions.

Follow-up conferences and phone conversations also created additional support for district-wide communication to encourage teachers to participate in the study. The promotion from the superintendent assisted in the data collection which generated strong data expected to benefit the organizational culture and climate. Hence, the district's sponsorship provided insight to the increased completion rate, which consequently provided the district with data to conclude a need for continued professional collaboration, administrative support, and supportive working environments.

Teachers were enticed to share their thoughts and ideas for this survey as it gave them a voice. Teacher participants came from all three campuses: elementary, junior high, and high school. The number of all participants in the study (N=88) was approximately 97% of the overall teaching staff. The approach in requesting teacher participation was considerate towards teachers' availability to complete the scale and open-ended questions within a 2-week window utilizing the Texas A&M University

Qualtrics. Despite pending a handful of teachers to complete the survey, there were no official denials or resistance for completing the survey.

The only challenge or obstacle encountered was obtaining the entire teaching community participating in the survey to complete the open-ended questions. To address this matter, the qualitative analysis measured teachers' perceptions based on the total submission of 78 teacher responses to the open-ended questions in comparison to the 88 teachers responding to the survey. Despite the lower number of participants in the qualitative study, the teacher participation rate during the qualitative study was approximately 86%. The analysis included all 78 teachers and purposive sample was selected to reflect on teachers' perceptions across the school district and across the different levels of experience.

In all, the most conclusive contextual impact to the results was the high teacher participation rate in the quantitative study. Approximately 97% of teachers of the school district participated, which made the confidence intervals for the datasets strong; thereby, producing similar results in teacher leadership initiatives in Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, Supportive Working Environment. The high participation of teachers included representation of each campus, levels of experience, and age groups, thereby, providing a strong outlook on the perceptions of teacher leadership culture throughout the district.

Similarly, the qualitative results indicated a strong reflection of teacher perceptions and points of view regarding examples occurring on campus and/or characteristics they desire to observe. Teacher responses resulted in similar outcomes

from the quantitative study, which provided stronger investigative reflections in the overall research of the culture in teacher leadership. Such reflections lead to additional communication with teachers for clarification and inquiry on the campus's ability to ensure of positive school culture.

Specifically, the research must be further investigated beyond quantitative studies. Inquiries conducted by Kamile Demir (2008, 2014, 2015) have studied in depth transformational leadership and teacher leadership initiatives using the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale and only statistical data regarding professional collaboration, administrative support, supportive working environments, and teacher self-efficacy. The descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations do not measure teachers' written expression of the dimensions. Therefore, including a qualitative component to the research allowed for an in-depth understanding of teachers' perception regarding the numerical data, as well as additional reflections for the researcher to collectively analyze the data and results for a stronger approach to improved school culture and improvement.

How Research Impacts Context

Throughout the data collection process, communication with the superintendent remained a constant. Both administrative conferences and phone conversations occurred to discuss progress and anticipated outcomes with preliminary scores. At the close of the data collection, results were preliminary discussed further to launch a summary of findings with leadership teams. The communication and presentation of results was positive and welcoming. Each dimension produced significant statistics and themes that

are consistent between both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The results assisted the leadership team in identifying potential areas of strength and areas for improvement considerations to promote the dimensions studied: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment.

Further data disaggregation followed my initial conversations with district leaders. Through the use of Qualtrics and SPSS, analysis that mirrored the empirical research of Demir (2014; 2015) and Parlar, et al. (2017). Visual representations were developed and formatted to assist the school district in having reader-friendly reports to help in continuous school improvement initiatives, such as teacher professional growth, teacher leadership, and organizational culture and climate.

The responses from campus and district staff was encouraging and motivating to increase the level of professional development for teachers. As such, conversations ensued with a need for on-going professional development that allows time for teachers to work collaboratively with each other. As described by Darling Hammond (1996; 2010), these strategies help teacher develop curriculum and instructional approaches, common assessments, and consistent analysis of student progress.

The results of the study also impacted the school district to uncover the desirable administrative support to ensure teachers are having requests met to maximize quality instruction. District and campus leaders further discussed initiatives dedicated to build capacity of teacher leadership where teamwork, communication, and problem-solving impact teaching and learning.

Furthermore, DuFour (2004a) and Penuel et al. (2007) affirm that collective efforts increase a consistent and focused system in building the capacity and shared knowledge of teachers through teacher cooperation, teamwork, communication, and dialogue, as well as organizational structures that change the behaviors of teachers. These approaches will positively impact teaching and learning as a result of meaningful processes when determining relationships between the three dimensions.

Suggestions for future studies centered on a potential need to increase the number of participants in the research group. The research currently available includes studies that entailed several campuses and school systems in a region. While this approach provides significant data, the limitations of finding results particularly for an individual school system may be difficult.

Most rural school districts have similar staffing ratios as the school district in this study. However, the goal of this study was to determine the perceptions of teachers on teacher leadership culture dimensions in this school district alone. Hence, when analyzing one rural school district, the results from the analyses are fitting for school leaders to develop professional development plans for teachers and overall campus improvement. As such, the study was satisfied to address the outcomes.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter IV

The purpose of this record of study was to determine teacher perceptions teacher leadership culture dimensions towards professional development in a rural South Texas school district. The research questions were designed to capture teacher perceptions of the most important factors in each Teacher Leadership Culture Scale dimension:

Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment.

The solution to examine perspectives from participating teachers included a mixed-methods research design, which included both quantitative and qualitative analyses. District-wide descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were calculated. The statistical data were analyzed and answered research questions. Similarly, the qualitative analysis was conducted with the open-ended responses provided by teachers. Each response was categorized by dimension codes and themes. This process completed the study by confirming the quantitative results to finalize answers to the research questions.

The results of the Bivariate Correlation (data available in Table 12) indicated the strongest relationship evident between the dimensions of Administrative Support and Supportive Working Environment ($r=.571$; $p<0.1$). In all, the analysis of this research concluded strong perceptions in each dimension. Table 19 presents a summary of the of the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

As the primary investigator, the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data permitted opportunities for reflective practices in school leadership. Two common themes emerged with both quantitative and qualitative analyses: 1) student need, and 2) teacher voice. This reflection exemplifies the impact the results have on the context of the study. District and campus leaders can utilize these concepts to support efforts to address them and school improvement altogether. By building teacher leadership capacity where teachers have input on campus decisions will influence better practices to

meet student need, improve school operations and instruction, and promote positive student and teacher outcomes.

Table 19: Summary of Results by Research Questions

Research Question	Quantitative Results (N=88)	Qualitative Results (N=9)
RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers experience the most strongly for Professional Collaboration?	PC8: Teachers talk about what is best for students.	
RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Administrative Support?	AS6: Campus leaders respect teachers.	
RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for Supportive Working Environment?	SW8: Teachers celebrate success. SW9: Teachers value each other's thoughts and ideas.	SWE1: Teachers work as a team.

In closing, Demir (2015) stated that significant and sustainable change for school improvement required a cultural change in how teachers view collaboration, support, and their workplace. A shift in the cultural outlook of a campus is considered to be the most challenging aspect of teacher leadership as it requires teacher and administrative effort and teamwork. As such, the opportunities for teachers to have a voice in meeting student needs plays a significant role in shifting a cultural position as teachers are influential in the advocacy of student academic success and teacher collaboration (van den Berg, 2002; Haynes, 2011). So, a leadership shift in teachers evolving into leadership

capacities is valuable to the school improvement process because they are capable of seeing the big picture for school improvement (Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001).

Therefore, continued research is needed in addressing teacher leadership culture and its dimensions. More specifically, both quantitative and qualitative research is needed to reflect on school leadership approaches to implement, evaluate, and measure teacher leadership culture within a school system. As a school district administrator and researcher of this study, the reflection in determining on how teacher leadership culture impacts school improvement is just as important as the teachers' perceptions. Hence, the pursuit towards quality professional development practices should not only empower teacher mindsets but it should also invest in the needed core educational research to further study the dimensional factors associated with teacher leadership culture.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This record of study captured two influences that have contributed to overall perception of teacher leadership culture within the participating school district: 1) student need, and 2) teacher voice. The influences of both student need and teacher voice at this school district entail the evidence of support from each campus as observed in both the quantitative and qualitative results. When campus leaders value teachers' thoughts and ideas pertaining to instructional approaches to address student need, the possibility of a high-quality consistent approaches for the school improvement may influence the overall culture.

In respect to teacher leadership culture, the initiatives in building teacher capacity then celebrating teacher success were proven to yield positive relationships between the dimensions of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment. The strongest correlation among the three variables was the relationship between AS and SWE. The bivariate correlation between AS and SWE ($r=.571$; $p<0.1$) supports the positive relationship teachers perceive to find within their campuses and school district.

Quantitative results indicated a strong influence of campus leaders respecting teachers and valuing their input. The respect and opportunities teachers are given to work as a team and discuss instructional approaches and interventions that best meet student need were factors that resonated throughout the three campuses. Teachers need to have a sense of belonging and worth in their contributions to positive student

outcomes and have a high regard to celebrate successes collectively. In fact, teacher responses in the qualitative sample described a supportive environment of where teachers work as a team. Both quantitative and qualitative results revealed the dimensional factors of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (Demir, 2014) to be strengthened, evident, and supportive. In all, the teacher leadership culture which supports teacher voice and student need are manifested in the three foci identified by Demir (2014, 2015) and Parlar et al. (2017).

Discussion of Results in Relation to the Extant Literature

As previously discussed throughout this record of study, professional development opportunities which impact the progress of teacher leadership capacity is expected to positively power collective leadership roles in instructional practice, operational responsibility, and school improvement (Fullan, 2014). Through the use of the Demir's (2014) TLCS, participating teachers were able to provide their perceptions and feedback under three different foci: PC, AS, and SWE.

The study revealed the highest correlation between Supportive Working Environment and Administrative Support ($r=.571$), as well as the second highest correlation between Supportive Working Environment and Professional Collaboration ($r=.439$). The bivariate correlation statistics identified this dimension as one many teachers perceived to be important and significant when addressing teacher leadership.

All bivariate correlations among the dimensions of the TLCS were positive. The correlation between PC and AS was the lowest among all dimensional analysis ($r=.409$; $p<0.1$) The dimensions with the correlation found to be between the lowest and highest

data sets in this study were Professional Collaboration and Supportive Working Environment ($r=.439$; $p<0.1$), and the highest relationship was found among the dimensions of AS and SWE ($r=.571$; $p<0.1$). Each bivariate correlation analysis resulted in the research of Demir (2015) and Parlar (2017). In all, the shared collaboration among teachers and administrators identified in the data collection confirm the teamwork and assistance in leadership within instructional strategies and teacher professional development. These key elements and collaborative efforts joined by a positive and supportive working environment coincide with the work of Marzano et al. (2005).

Professional Collaboration Dimension Summary

This dimension focused on teacher collaboration in meeting goals for the school and need for students. Both methods of the data analyses resulted in the same Professional Collaboration factor perceived most strongly by teachers, PC8: “At my school, teachers talk about ways to do what is best for students.” In the qualitative analysis, Jessica offered an example of how here elementary school colleagues collaborate to discuss best solutions for their grade level instructional grouping and activities, “...We always get together to discuss groupings, schedules, and activities. We all either agree and if we don't, then we continue to discuss until we do.” Both quantitative and qualitative results point to high regard in collaborating for student growth and achievement. This factor resonated strongly with the teachers on the survey and open-ended questions.

Several factors in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed parallel or similar outcomes. The significance of effective teacher collaboration can be highly

regarded as an opportunity for teacher leadership professional growth. The results offer a robust position on the action needed to ensure teachers have opportunities to collaborate with one another. The on-going, continuous, and job-embedded professional development to engage and collaborate with one another influences self-reflection on areas of strength or needed improvement. It identified the importance of effective communication and professional relationships to ensure the sharing of ideas, strategies, resources, and materials are evident in both quality and team-oriented approaches to meet learner needs.

Administrative Support Dimension Summary

This dimension was dedicated to the support administrators provide teachers to engage in campus decisions and leadership roles to address campus improvement and needs. Both the quantitative and qualitative studies identified AS6: “At my school, administrators respect teachers” as a factor that resonated with teachers across the school district. Because this dimension centers on teacher perceptions of Administrative Support, teachers were provided opportunity to convey their opinions on the level of leadership support in their campuses. While the data represented a high regard for administrative respect towards teachers, the overall dimensional mean ($\mu=3.7602$) revealed a neutral to somewhat agreeable perception of AS throughout the school district. This may be attributed to the standard deviation data for each factor, which reflected higher than 1.0).

A school culture that embraces teamwork, care, and discussions of shared experiences enhances the development of teacher leadership (Danielson, 2006; Roby,

2011). In Roby's (2011) study, teachers were given an opportunity to assess their workplace culture and provide important and critical analysis in a positive manner for school improvement. Furthermore, the empirical research of Killon et al. (2016) asserted teacher leadership factors contributed to a healthy culture and professional relationships. Hence, the results both of these studies are evident and portrayed in this record of study quantitatively, including the bivariate correlational analysis, as well as the qualitative results, including the patterns of codes and themes.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses concluded similar outcomes, the underlying themes revealed a high regard for the desired respect, trust, and professionalism from school leaders to teachers. In review of Katherine's written response to AS, she defined a need for positive approaches to help teachers grow and learn from each other, "Administrative support is support from administration to all teachers and all students. The most important factor to administrative support is the assurance that administration trusts teachers but also works with them in a positive way to help each teacher grow which will in turn help students learn." The significance of AS can be highly regarded as an opportunity for continued professional development. Both analyses established a high regard for positive and professional communication between teachers and administrators, which can build team-oriented support and teacher development to influence and improve student academic achievement.

Supportive Working Environment Dimension Summary

This dimension was committed to establish data that represented teacher perceptions of how effective the working environment supported one another. The

dimension focused on how teachers support one another, work as a team, and celebrate the success. In the quantitative study, 6 out of 9 factors had individual means above 4.0, which is indicative to the high agreement and approval teachers have towards this dimension. Both Demir (2015) and Parlar et al. (2017) found similar results which influenced professional growth in teachers and positive school culture.

The quantitative data consisted of two factors with the highest perception teachers were in agreement with: SWE8: “Teachers celebrate success,” and SWE: “Teachers value each other’s thoughts and ideas.” Both factors had an identical mean ($\mu=4.28$), and the standard deviation for the majority of the factors, 6 out of 9, remained under 1.0. These results are indicative of the consistency of perceptions in this dimension across the school district. The qualitative data identified a different factor with the highest perception. Teachers perceived the highest factor as team-oriented, SWE1: “Teachers work as a team.” Comparatively, both quantitative and qualitative studies portray a strong generalization of a SWE as a place where teamwork consists of sharing ideas and thoughts, as well as celebrating success cohesively.

Teacher responses in the qualitative analysis also mirror the factors of teacher growth and student success as identified in recent literature (Schein, 2010; Roby, 2011; Killion et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016). For example, in review of the qualitative written response by Abigail, she noted a Supportive Working Environment as “...a means where everyone has the same goal and that they will work together to reach the goal. It means that we work together, we help each other, we provide positive interactions, and we value each other for their part in the education of our students.” Results of Roby (2011)

were found in this research as the overall teacher leadership culture can build a positive approach towards school improvement. Similarly, Killon et al. (2016) found positive and professional relationships builds a positive school culture. This was also found in this study.

Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned

This study enlightened very own perception of teacher leadership culture and its purpose of finding what works in schools. The discovery and innovation of keeping Demir's (2014) three foci in mind in all actions for teacher professional development can unearth the possibilities of positive school culture, collaboration, high expectations, ownership, and adequate resources for school improvement. The literature review and analysis permitted the opportunity for me to focus on correlations that exist within dimensions that play a vital role in developing a positive culture towards school improvement.

Angelle (2011) asserted "Empowering others to lead along the principal builds collegiality and active participation in the improvement of schools" (p. 232). Rather than discovering new teaching practices to implement and evaluate student growth, school personnel are moving towards a more-refreshed outlook of professional development (Meirer, 1992; Little, 1993, 2003; Poekert, 2012).

The lessons learned stem from the core of teacher leadership culture. The added-value in completing a qualitative analysis enhanced the overall teachers' perceptions. The sample teacher responses assisted this study in focusing on every level of experienced teacher from each campus of the school district.

In review of the modalities and frequencies of which factor was perceived the highest or most important, both quantitative and qualitative results represent similar findings, such as the administrative support and respect for teachers working as a team to do what is best for students. Teacher leadership promotes success by creating a culture where teachers' urgency to influence student achievement is evident through their collaboration, support, and communication (Fullan, 2014).

The data collection and analysis was lesson of its own. It alerted me to the reality of what teachers' desire to see in their campus and need for continued professional growth. The data collection process was fairly simplified through the online survey. However, the experience in reassuring teachers of their confidentiality indirectly framed the intake of information with their trust to share their perceptions in the hope and expectation to experience change in positive school culture and student achievement. As such, while discovering how the results of this study mirror those of the extant literature, it reassures and affirms my intuition on the capability of empowering school leaders and teachers to structure effective communication, trust, care and support among one another (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Xu & Patmor, 2012; Kiliñç, 2014).

Implications for Practice

Connection to Context

The context of this study centered on two prevalent factors in both quantitative and qualitative data analyses of this study: 1) student need, and 2) teacher voice. Both factors support one another as student need was apparent and supported through the voice of teachers. Similarly, teacher voice was clearly evident and reinforced by the

overwhelming support towards meeting student needs. In any case, these factors were echoed in all dimensions of the teacher leadership culture analyses both quantitatively and qualitatively through the on-going need of professional development.

Teachers represent the vast majority of people in the field of education who are capable of affecting, endorsing, and modeling school reform. Understanding the process of how adults learn is imperative as the process of professional growth and action plans are guided by the principles of trust, respect, and support (Knowles, 1984; Little, 1993). School administrators need to support and structure teacher leaders to maximize their potential to impact teacher growth and student achievement altogether (Donaldson, 2001, 2007). Teacher leadership is a factor in the empowerment of collegial relationships due to the shared practices that impact school improvement initiatives (Harris & Muijs, 2004). In this study, Ted identified himself as a novice teacher at the elementary school. In his own written words, he described the need for collaboration as: “...the foundation to building student success.” As such, the essence of building professional relationships and collaboration as a foundation of student success proves that teacher leadership culture has an impact in teacher growth.

According to Cherkowski (2018, p. 63), “Teachers play a strong role in school improvement efforts.” Improving the quality of teaching requires the need to change and reform the way teachers learn and develop professionally in their instructional delivery (Muijs & Harris, 2006). In doing so, the effects of professional development should coincide with the challenges and needs teachers experience so as to build their capacity

in communicating a vision of teaching and learning and impacting the overall organizational culture (Little, 1993, 2003; Donaldson, 2001; DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Connection to Field of Study

When preparing for this study, a framework of school improvement remained at the forefront of my purpose in creating a plan and solution that drew the empirical research pertaining to how school leaders and teachers can support one another. The connection of this study to field of curriculum and instruction further enhances the models of school improvement where collaborative environments and shared purposes empower teachers to take leadership risks (Demir, 2014, 2015). The results of this study further prove the work of Demir (2015) and Parlar et al. (2017) in addressing what teacher leadership cultural change can provide to schools.

The connection and transformation in school improvement and reform have resulted in organizational change, specifically in supportive working environments. For example, the leadership models have evolved towards teacher leaders' acceptance of administrative roles throughout the school buildings (van den Berg, 2002). In fact, the increased expectations created a movement of shared leadership that is attributed to the vast responsibilities that affect a greater accountability measurement in curriculum and instruction (Donaldson, 2001). The school improvement approach and initiative to shape the professional development process in addressing every child's instructional need is suggested to come from teachers that are well-resourced to provide struggling teachers with instructional strategies, materials, observation feedback, and mentoring (Cherkowski, 2012; Cherkowski, 2018). The work required teacher collaboration,

administrative support, and an environment that supports teacher networking and instructional need.

As such, school administrators and teacher leaders view culture as a priority in the school and understand it is a product of leadership (Schein, 2010). When campuses utilize a shared leadership responsibility, teachers are able to contribute and influence other teachers and students in addressing school improvement strategies that have an impact in cultural change (Kılınç et al., 2015). In doing so, the culmination of past, recent, and this research is that teachers experience effective professional development in student learning, teacher collaboration, and analysis of school data (DuFour, 2004b; Demir, 2015; Parlar et al., 2017) resulting in positive gains in school culture.

Lessons Learned

The culmination of the record of study gave me both direct and indirect learning opportunities that have shaped my perspective in the practicum of curriculum and instruction, as well as school leadership. From the development of the problem statement to the results of the study, the importance of Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and a Supportive Working Environment have given me a new perspective that I will employ and share with as many people possible.

The three dimensions and their respective factors are aligned to determine current practices and ascertain expectations for school improvement. Initially, I was concerned whether teachers were going to share their perceptions, but became pleasantly surprised by the number of responses generated through the Likert scale and quantitative study. This record of study generated an over 97% participation rate, which provides a lesson in

itself – one that attributed to need for addressing teacher growth. In some cases, some factors were perceived to be clear, evident, and important. There were other areas that yielded minimal to neutral interest. As the number of results continued to generate more noteworthy results, I noticed more teachers discussing the research and becoming more comfortable with the dimension and purpose of the study. I learned that student need and teacher voice became significant takeaways.

This study not only provided significant data reflected in the empirical research and extant literature, but it identified the realities many teachers experience in schools that may lack the collaborative effort and support. The study reinforced the process of adult learning, including the process of professional development. Because adults are goal-oriented and practical, the opportunities to empower the professional relationships and communication can be influential with the support school and teacher leaders can provide.

The lessons reached levels of understanding how school leadership impacts curriculum and instruction. School leadership support and the implementation of teacher leadership collectively impacts professional growth and student achievement. Furthermore, the models of teamwork and cooperation impact campus cultures. This indirect lesson carries an even higher significance for the extraordinary regard for the three foci: Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment.

In sum, these studies lead the way to promising school improvement initiatives where teachers are influential in addressing student outcome. Furthermore, the

qualitative analysis more decisively contributed my understanding of what teachers' desire when addressing student interventions and data-driven instruction. The analysis of the written responses, which included pattern development, coding, and themes, allowed this research to go full circle in answering the research questions. Both studies created opportunities for me to share recommendations for professional growth in curriculum and organizational culture.

Recommendations

Because most research on teacher leadership culture has occurred in European countries, there are minimal studies regarding teacher leadership culture in the United States, much less in any state in particular. This study was conducted in rural South Texas school district, and the results indicate an influential need to continue the work of providing teachers with professional growth opportunities. Extending the research through the regional area or state may provide strong feedback for continuous, on-going teacher professional development.

The results of the empirically proven research, as well as the results of this study, indicate a significant effect of each dimension on the overall culture of teacher leadership. Each dimension (PC, AS, and SWE) had a positive correlation among each other which aligns with a recommendation in maintaining the continuity of teachers' professional development that is favorable to student and teacher need.

Conducting both a quantitative and qualitative study allowed participants to not only respond to what they believe is important, but also allowed teachers to express their thoughts in writing. As the researcher in this study, the qualitative research and data

collection afforded opportunity for in-depth, face-to-face or phone interviews when needed or requested by teachers. The involvement and contribution teachers offer transform the development, collaboration, and interaction teachers can utilize to build their own capacity in addressing student interventions. Hence, school leaders are encouraged to construct and create teacher-interactive environments of positive communications, connections, and relationships for teachers to professionally grow with one another, as well as their students and parents. Together, students' need and teachers' voice remained at the frontline of collaborative and supportive environments.

Therefore, recommendations for additional research should include a study that has implemented teacher leadership initiatives to ensure participants have knowledge of teacher leadership dimensions, examples, and characteristics. Doing so will close any gaps in the limitation of the research participants. Similarly, additional research should continue with a mixed-study and provide open-ended questions in online surveys. This approach will allow for the majority of participants to submit written and well-thought responses, which in turn will provide substantial feedback for the researcher to further investigate and inquire for clarity.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter V

The consideration of establishing a healthy school culture requires the administrative support and a supportive working environment that allows teachers with leadership skills to reinforce factors and elements that build professional relationships and collaboration. (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Demir, 2015; Killon et al., 2016). The voice and engagement of teachers in school systems strengthens a shared and collective

responsibility for student learning and teacher professional growth. Teachers gain confidence and shape a work environment that enables them to contribute to appropriate and collective instructional decisions.

This study emphasized the needed support for continuous improvement for teacher professional development that includes learning, reflection, feedback, and collaboration. Hence, communication of a team of teachers and leadership has the potential of building a culture that is guided by the beliefs and values the drive campus improvement. A shared growth mindset between both school leaders and teachers impacts the content knowledge, instructional approach, and professionalism that fosters trust and ownership.

In sum, teacher leadership is exhibited in numerous formal and informal behaviors, but each possesses duties and responsibilities to assume roles that lead colleagues in shaping a culture for continuous student learning and teacher professional development. Teacher leadership culture is a catalyst for school improvement that promotes an accountable action to facilitate the Professional Collaboration, Administrative Support, and Supportive Working Environment. Thus, as with this study, the dimensions of the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale can be utilized to capture the essential elements of a school system's teacher recognition, value, and growth.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER LEADERSHIP CULTURE SCALE

Teacher Leadership Culture Scale

<i>Indicate the degree to which each statement describes conditions in your school. Please use the following scale.</i> <i>1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree</i>	
Professional Collaboration	
PC1: At my school, teacher talk to each other on teaching strategies.	1 2 3 4 5
PC2: At my school, my colleagues help me find creative solutions to the problems I have in my classroom.	1 2 3 4 5
PC3: At my school, teachers are influenced by each other's work.	1 2 3 4 5
PC4: At my school, teachers examine each other's work with students.	1 2 3 4 5
PC5: At my school, teachers share new ideas and methods we learned with our colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5
PC6: At my school, teachers share core materials.	1 2 3 4 5
PC7: At my school, teacher help each other solve their problems.	1 2 3 4 5
PC8: At my school, teachers talk about ways to do what's best for students.	1 2 3 4 5
Administrative Support	
AS1: At my school, administrators work with teachers.	1 2 3 4 5
AS2: At my school, administrators give importance to reaching consensus with teachers.	1 2 3 4 5
AS3: At my school, administrators and teachers make decisions on how to organize various activities.	1 2 3 4 5
AS4: At my school, administrators want to learn teachers' thoughts and ideas.	1 2 3 4 5
AS5: At my school, administrators work with teachers to solve students' academic and behavioral problems.	1 2 3 4 5
AS6: At my school, administrators respect teachers.	1 2 3 4 5
AS7: At my school, administrators make decisions about the use of time with teachers.	1 2 3 4 5
AS8: At my school, administrators ensure teachers benefit from professional development opportunities.	1 2 3 4 5
AS9: At my school, administrators trust teachers.	1 2 3 4 5
AS10: At my school, administrators support teachers with changes in their teaching strategies.	1 2 3 4 5
Supporting Working Environment	
SWE1: At my school, teachers work as a team.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE2: At my school, when something goes wrong, we discuss ways to do better the situation instead of blaming each other.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE3: At my school, teachers behave professionally.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE4: At my school, teachers are generally satisfied with the work environment.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE5: At my school, teachers trust each other.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE6: At my school, teachers use time to solve problems in meetings.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE7: At my school, teachers try to reach consensus before making important decisions.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE8: At my school, teachers celebrate success.	1 2 3 4 5
SWE9: At my school, teachers value each other's thoughts and ideas.	1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Teacher Leadership Culture Short Answer Questions

Research Question	Data Collection
<i>RQ1: What teacher leadership factors do teachers experience the most strongly for professional collaboration?</i>	PC-I: Describe what professional collaboration means to you. Which professional collaboration factor is most important to you? Provide an example of an experience or characteristic you found to have been beneficial at your campus.
<i>RQ2: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for administrative support?</i>	AS-I: Describe what administrative support means to you. Which administrative support factor is most important to you? Provide an example of an experience or characteristic you found to have been beneficial at your campus.
<i>RQ3: What teacher leadership factors do teachers perceive the most strongly for supportive working environment?</i>	SWE-I: Describe what a supportive working environment means to you. Which supportive working environment factor is most important to you? Provide an example of an experience or characteristic you found to have been beneficial at your campus.

APPENDIX C
SCHOOL DISTRICT PERMISSION

4/16/2020

Texas A&M University Mail - Research Letter to JHCISD Superintendent



John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>

Research Letter to JHCISD Superintendent

1 message

John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>
To: spgarza@jhcidpk12.org
Cc: sramirez@jhcidpk12.org

Thu, Jan 30, 2020 at 7:00 PM


Dr. Garza,

Attached is a letter requesting your consideration and authorization to permit my Record of Study at Jim Hogg County ISD.

Thank you for your continued support and mentorship throughout my studies.

Best regards,

John Eric Salinas
Doctoral Student
Teaching, Learning and Culture
College of Education and Human Development
Texas A&M University

 **Letter to Supt 013020.pdf**
44K

4/16/2020

Texas A&M University Mail - Record of Study Survey



John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>

Record of Study Survey

Susana Garza <spgarza@jhcidpk12.org>
To: John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>
Cc: Leonor Hernandez <lhernandez@jhcidpk12.org>, Anna Canales <acanales@jhcidpk12.org>, JoAnn Valderas <javalderas@jhcidpk12.org>

Fri, Jan 31, 2020 at 8:15 AM

All,

Please encourage that all teachers participate in the survey. I am excited to see the results after Mr. Salinas has completed his research.

On Thu, Jan 30, 2020 at 7:44 PM John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu> wrote:
[Quoted text hidden]

--
Blessings,
Dr. Garza

January 30, 2020

Dr. Susana P. Garza,
Superintendent of Schools
Jim Hogg County ISD
210 W. Lucille Street
Hebbronville, Texas 78361

Dear Dr. Garza,

As a district administrator in your leadership team at Jim Hogg County ISD, it gives me great pleasure to announce my candidacy for a Doctorate of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Because of its high-regard and need in our core business of education, I chose teacher professional development as a program of study that emphasizes the leadership, application, and knowledge in school improvement initiatives. This personal and professional milestone will continue to enhance my abilities to employ consistent, on-going, and job-embedded school improvement methods for our District to continue a path forward for student achievement and an organizational culture that exemplifies the principles of teacher leadership and effectiveness. Hence, this correspondence serves to humbly request your support and approval to allow me to complete my Record of Study at Jim Hogg County ISD.

My research is entitled, "Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Leadership Culture Dimensions Towards Professional Growth in a Rural South Texas School District." I will examine the overall teacher leadership culture of the District based on teachers' perceptions across three foci: professional collaboration, administrative support, and a supportive working environment. The empirically validated Teacher Leadership Culture Scale protocol will incorporate a Likert type scale to measure the beliefs of teachers on each campus. This multifactor teacher questionnaire is designed with a total of 27 items constituted into three scales: eight items on professional collaboration, ten items on administrative support, and nine items on supportive working environment. The survey will also include short answer questions pertaining to the dimensions of the scale to qualitatively study the personal thoughts of teacher leadership culture. The survey will be provided to all teachers electronically and will remain confidential.

The proposed solution for this research aims to produce both a quantitative and qualitative record of perceptions across the District, as well as affirm the need to practice teacher leadership in meaningful and definitive ways to make a significant and sustainable change towards school improvement. The data will be represented in the study and presented to you with descriptive and correlation statistics per campus, as well as a summary analysis for the District. As such, your consideration and authorization to complete this study is appreciated.

Sincerely,



John Eric Salinas,
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Teaching, Learning & Culture
College of Education and Human Development
Texas A&M University

Cc: Dr. Trina Davis, Committee Chair

APPENDIX D
IRB DETERMINATION

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

November 14, 2019

Type of Review:	Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP CULTURE DIMENSIONS TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN A RURAL SOUTH TEXAS SCHOOL DISTRICT
Investigator:	Trina Davis
IRB ID:	IRB2019-1432
Reference Number:	100925
Funding:	
Documents Received:	IRB Application (Human Research) - (Version 1.0)

Dear Trina Davis

:

The Institution determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701

1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186

Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
<http://rcb.tamu.edu>

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety

Further IRB review and approval by this organization is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in this IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately contact the IRB about whether these activities are research involving humans in which the organization is engaged. You will also be required to submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Please be aware that receiving a 'Not Human Research Determination' is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. IRB consent forms or templates for the activities described in the determination are not to be used and references to TAMU IRB approval must be removed from study documents.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION FOR USE OF TLCS

4/16/2020

Texas A&M University Mail - Teacher Leadership Culture Scale



John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>

Teacher Leadership Culture Scale

4 messages

John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>
To: kamiledemir@hotmail.com

Mon, Jun 3, 2019 at 12:43 AM

Hello!

My name is John Eric Salinas, and I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX. I am pursuing a Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a major in professional development.

I certainly apologize for the continued communication. However, at this juncture, I am working on my research proposal that addresses the relationship of teacher leadership, professional development, and school culture. I am intrigued with your research that entails the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale.

Would you mind guiding me in locating to this scale/instrument for my educational research? If permitted, would you be so kind to allow me to review and possibly utilize the instrument in my study?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

John Eric Salinas
956-763-1328

John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>
To: kamiledemir@hotmail.com

Mon, Jun 10, 2019 at 7:30 PM

Hello!

Please contact me at your convenience regarding access and permission to use the TLCS.

Thank you very much!
John Eric Salinas

[Quoted text hidden]

Kamile Demir <kamiledemir@hotmail.com>
To: John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>

Tue, Jun 11, 2019 at 2:37 AM

Dear MR Sallinas, you have my permission to use TLCS. You can access this address <http://ilkogretim-online.org.tr/index.php/so/article/download/2102/1937>

iPhone'umdan gönderildi

John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu> şunları yazdı (11 Haz 2019 02:30):

[Quoted text hidden]

John Salinas <johneric_s@tamu.edu>
To: Kamile Demir <kamiledemir@hotmail.com>

Tue, Jun 11, 2019 at 10:35 AM

Hello!

Thank you very much for your response and access to the scale. This scale will allow for me to continue studying my research methodology.

John Eric Salinas
[Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/17ik=93cdc6f3b1&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a%3Ar8535351174133276258&simpl=msg-a%3Ar-621457724...> 1/1