EXPLORING THE CREATION OF A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING CULTURE FOR TEACHERS THROUGH THE LENS OF ACTION RESEARCH

by

SARAH ANITRIA BOSWELL

(Under the Direction of Laura L. Bierema)

ABSTRACT

Great schools begin with great teachers. The professional development of teachers has been addressed by a variety of theories and numerous approaches (Brown-Easton, 2008; Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). However, how often is the core root of developing teachers based on the premise of valuing, expanding, and sharing the teacher knowledge that exists in schools? Many times, ongoing learning for teachers is based on a deficit model, teaching teachers what they do not know or what someone thinks they need to know. This case study examined a school whose principal saw teacher talent and wanted to create a learning organization to maximize this key source of knowledge generation.

The purpose of the study was to explore how elementary school teachers' participation in an action research project that was focused on peer observation impacted the creation of a learning organization. Action research was used to gain a real-life school experience as teachers employed the five cycles of action research to implement systematic change—Define, Dare, Decide, Do, and Deduce—as adapted from Anderson's (2010) stages of the action research consulting process.

The findings of this study recognized the contradictory behavior of the participants that occurred while implementing an action research project. It also provided insight into how the

leaders of the action research process—principal, action research team, and consultant/ researcher—exercised their realm of power and influence as they dealt with the ambiguity of the action research process. Lastly, the study's findings showed that the components of peer observation training built the capacity for collaborative learning by reinforcing collegial acceptance and conversational skills, while the peer observation experience provided teachers with the opportunity to converse about instructional strategies. The peer observation experience also offered the opportunity for choice in determining their learning focus and selection of peers to visit. Time, unclear logistics, and apprehension in the process were findings that suppressed the ability of peer observations to support the creation of the learning organization. Intended outcomes were not met, yet the resulting missteps yielded a meaningful guide that offers greater insight into how schools can apply and investigate maximizing teacher talent via an action research approach.

INDEX WORDS: Action Research, Teacher Talent, Learning Organization in Schools, Peer Observation

EXPLORING THE CREATION OF A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING CULTURE FOR TEACHERS THROUGH THE LENS OF ACTION RESEARCH

by

SARAH ANITRIA BOSWELL

B.S., Spelman University, 1989

M.Ed., Georgia State University, 2002

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

EXPLORING THE CREATION OF A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING CULTURE FOR TEACHERS THROUGH THE LENS OF ACTION RESEARCH

by

SARAH ANITRIA BOSWELL

Major Professor:	Laura L. Bierema
Committee:	Karen E. Watkins April Peters-Hawkins Khalil Dirani

Electronic Version Approved:

Julie Coffield
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2015

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my brother, Reginald D. Boswell, my sister Pamela L. Boswell, my father the late Walter Boswell and to my mom, Dora Marie Peeks Boswell, who told me one frustrating day "just keep writing, it will come together"; your faith in me and spirit of unconditional love, compassion, wisdom, and acceptance will forever resonate in the deepest aspect of my soul.

I also dedicate my dissertation to the Creator, my Spiritual Guardian, Sarah G. Lewis Alford, and to all my immediate and distant Mighty Ancestresses and Ancestors. I am forever grateful for your presence and protection in my life and your never-ending love, support, and guidance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I give thanks to my committee whose collective knowledge encompasses content ranging from K-12 education, international education, organization development, action science, adult education, and women's studies. This collective knowledge has cultivated my growth as a consultant/researcher and has enabled me to expand my capacity to provide K-12 educational organization development as a means of making impactful change in schools with teachers and, ultimately, for students. I am very grateful for my chair, Dr. Laura L. Bierema, who guided my path and my committee members, Dr. Khalil Dirani, Dr. April Peters-Hawkins, and Dr. Karen E. Watkins, for their insight, feedback, support, and flexibility ☺.

I give thanks to my mother, Dora Marie Peeks Boswell, and my grandmother, Sarah Geneva Lewis Alford, for inspiring my love of children and whose gifts of teaching I inherited.

I give thanks to John Tippins for giving me the freedom as an educator to explore my passion for teacher support. I am grateful for Dr. Cheryl Love and Dr. Sonja H. Alexander for embracing my passion and cultivating my role as a teacher developer through their encouragement, guidance, and belief in me. I am grateful for Alvin Perry for seeing something in me that I did not quite see in myself by calling me Dr. Boswell light years prior to this pursuit.

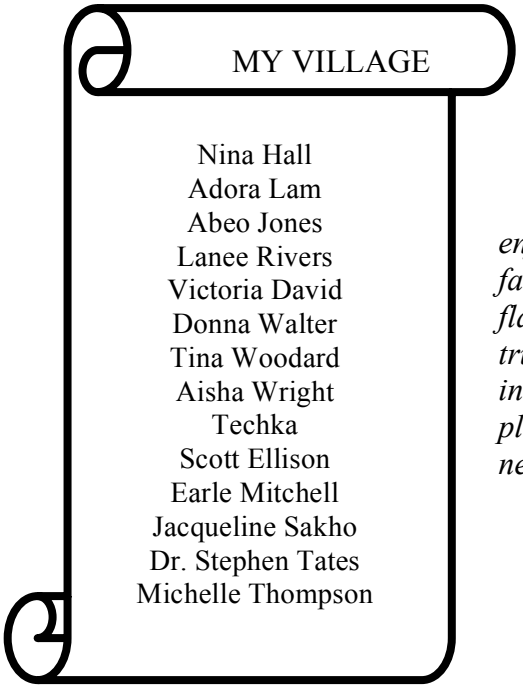
I give thanks to Dr. Wendy A. Ruona, whose vision, coordination, and execution of the Adult Learning Ed.D. program has offered me the opportunity to blossom into a scholar practitioner for teacher development.

I give thanks to my Reading Circle Friends for their love, support, and laughs along this journey. I give thanks for my Ed.D. cohort for being a wonderful group of people to learn and grow with along this doctoral journey.

I give thanks to the teachers and principal who gave their time, creativity, insight, and ingenuity during this study. For my action research team, who has taught me so much through their courage, sincerity, diligence, and power, I give thanks.

I give thanks to my family, childhood friends, my college friends, work friends, yoga friends, sorority sisters, and Dao relatives for believing in and loving on me!

I give special thanks to the people who rallied around me forming my synchronistic village of divine souls; always there at the right time sharing their love, talents, wisdom, energy, and spiritual insight. Thank you for being *my anchor* when I needed to be still and grounded, *my drill sergeant* when I needed to get in line, and *my lighthouse* when the way became dark and dreary. May all the love you gave me along my journey be returned to you in miraculous ways.



An acquaintance merely enjoys your company, a fair-weather companion flatters when all is well, a true friend has your best interests at heart and the pluck to tell you what you need to hear.

— E.A. Bucchianeri

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

APPENDIX

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Resources that could help us teach better are available from each other—if we could get access to them.
>
> – Parker J. Palmer

Teacher talent is generally a well-kept secret within schools. Many teachers apply unique lessons and dynamic instructional strategies in their classrooms every day. Unfortunately, the school environment lacks the capacity for this knowledge to be shared, cultivated, observed, and enhanced. Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007) highlighted this phenomenon by noting that in postmodern times, the knowledge of educational practitioners is viewed as subjugated or " . . . knowledge that is not viewed as valid by those who create knowledge in universities and those who make educational policy" (p. 48). The dissemination of knowledge for teachers tends to fall under the traditional learning model designed by educational policymakers and conducted by external trainers. In most cases, teachers' learning needs are based on generalized research data (i.e., standardized test scores). Sometimes the learning needs are based on the professional interests of the state, district, school policy leaders, or the latest trend in education. As this type of learning can be valuable in the growth and development of teachers, the opportunity for using the expertise of teachers as a source of professional development is seldom considered. Miller, Lord, and Dorney (1994) reinforced that teacher training that does not take into account that actual teacher knowledge continues to be the most popular form of learning for teachers in the

United States. Teacher knowledge is not considered by the federal, state, and local educational policymakers; it is driven by state and/or national norms as a result of student achievement scores.

As well, teacher talent often goes unnoticed with the influx of educational reform programs such as *Success for All* and *Open Court* that are encouraged by educational policymakers as a means of increasing student achievement. These reform models are geared toward instructing teachers on how to implement a scripted curriculum: a guided instruction where the teachers are discouraged and, at times, required to not deviate from the guide. Unfortunately, this type of strategy can be counterproductive in encouraging teacher talent. Requiring teachers to participate in a practice where their creativity, innovation, and talent are not considered devalues teacher knowledge (Anderson et al., 2007). These reforms often also yield a great expense at the state and district levels while not producing the desired improvement in student achievement as intended.

Conversely, if the end goal is to create exceptional learning for all students in a cost-effective manner, it can be achieved by considering the development of a reform model that capitalizes on the talents within the buildings. Zeichner (2003) highlighted the value of teacher talent by emphasizing the need for "professional learning opportunities to respect and build on the knowledge and expertise [of] teachers . . . and to nurture and support their intellectual capacity" (p. 302). Helping educational policymakers and, more specifically, school building leaders to discover, create, *and* facilitate a systemic framework, a learning culture, that values teachers' talents and their collective ability to produce exceptional instructional practices, is necessary.

Defining "Learning Culture"

Teacher professional development is too often left to those who are no longer in the classroom (Anderson et al., 2007; Killion & Roy, 2009). However, a learning culture framework, where teachers play a role in the design of their professional development needs, can create an authentic environment for teacher learning. Aubusson, Steele, Dinham, and Brady (2007) shared how a collaborative school environment can provide a "sense of security within the classroom and an opportunity for teachers to experiment with their practice" (p. 135). A learning culture for teachers in schools should create a collaborative environment where formal, informal, and incidental learning becomes the fabric of the organization, hence creating a quality of teaching and learning for our students. Palmer (2007) commented that "the growth of any craft depends on shared practice and honest dialogue among the people who do it" (p. 148). Generating more opportunity for teachers to reflect, inquire, and converse collectively about their practice can illuminate the talent that resides in every schoolhouse. The concept of collaboration in schools has taken on many different meanings, from teachers sharing materials to teams reviewing and analyzing student data.

For the context of this study, I am defining a collaborative learning system as an environment that actively engages in the collective ingenuity of teachers for the overall improvement of the system. However, creating whole-system change such as a collaborative learning system, where teacher talent is a source of learning and innovation, can be challenging for a school leader (Fullan, 1993; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). A leader may be confronted with the task of creating a school-wide process for adult learning while also trying to meet the requirements of district and/or state mandates for professional learning and other initiatives. Despite a possible conflict of priorities and time constraints, school leaders may simply not know

what an effective open collaborative culture of learning looks like for teachers, much less how to create and lead one (Collinson & Cook, 2007).

A leader may also struggle with how to formulate the ingenuity of teachers to implement a collaborative learning system. Teacher talent cannot only be the source of learning and innovation, but it can be the source of change and reform. Helping teachers to embrace learning as a means to their success is vital for the quality of student learning and can serve as the solution of meaningful school improvement. As well, learning organizations in schools can provide the culture needed to foster the power and professional advantage of learning. Marsick and Watkins (1999) stated that the learning organization is characterized by a culture that has the capacity for ongoing learning and change. For instance, one suggested cultural approach for teacher learning is peer collaboration, which can provide the structure and format to engage in ongoing learning among teachers. In many cases, these models do not become a reality in the learning culture of the school (Schechter, 2008). However, to implement a change such as this, school leaders must first create the vision for a learning culture, and then partner with teachers in the implementation of that vision as needed.

Action research may be the connective pathway that allows teachers and associated organizations to embrace a culture of learning. Bierema (2010) defined action research (AR) as "a collaborative research method that actively engages participants in a systematic process that is critically oriented (not neutral), to develop, improve actions, and improve understanding and conditions" (p. 19). These three concepts together may provide an opportunity to apply inquiry and reflection in a way that impacts the individual (peer observations), the team (action research), and the organization (learning organization in schools) to create a genuine, practical,

and sustainable culture of learning for teachers. This research explored an elementary school environment combining these concepts to achieve a learning culture.

School Environment

Owlton Elementary (pseudonym) is a PreK-5 elementary school in one of South Eastern County's affluent communities. It is one of 83 elementary schools in the South Eastern County School System. Since its establishment in the early 1970s, it has received several awards and recognition for its academic excellence. Owlton's student population demographic breakdown is 68% European American and 32% Other (i.e., African American, Hispanic American, Alaskan American, Asian American, and Multiracial American). Less than 1% of students receive a free and/or reduced-price lunch. Over the past five years, Owlton has seen an increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs).

Student growth has been the number one factor for the increase in the number of teachers at Owlton. The faculty consists of 52 certified teachers who have between 1 and 30 years of experience. Eighty percent of the teachers are certified in gifted instruction and, thus, can provide the academic rigor for 85% of the student body who have been identified as high achievers. The 2011-2012 school year was the first year Owlton operated as a PreK-5 school, after four years of operating as a K-3 school.

The level of parental involvement at Owlton is high, along with the participation of community members who take pride in ensuring and supporting the academic goals of the school. To that end, Owlton's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) has established an annual fund-raising campaign that allows parents to donate to the PTA fund instead of participating in a variety of fundraisers throughout the school year. Seventy-two percent of Owlton's parents have

contributed to this fund, which provides students, teachers, and administration with supplemental programs, incentives, and opportunities for teaching and learning.

Administration, teachers, students, and parents are the key stakeholders at Owlton School. Matthew Barred (pseudonym) served as principal at Owlton for four years starting in the 2008-2009 school year before being reassigned to another school for the 2012-2013 school year. His administration included two assistant principals, one of which was named the new principal upon his school reassignment.

School Challenge: Problem Identification

Owlton has consistently met and exceeded its annual yearly progress (AYP) goal, a national measurement for academic progress in schools, by scoring 75% on the state's Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Owlton's CRCT scores are among the highest in the state, which makes it one of the top-ranking schools by test scores. In addition, students score between 95% and 98% on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), a national standardized test. Even though the school was meeting and exceeding state and national measures for academic success, the principal saw that the learning culture among his faculty lacked the disposition to collaborate, develop, and grow as professionals. Emphasis on nation-wide averages to determine the academic success of a school can result in a false pretense of academic success for schools whose student population overall enters with a high inclination to achieve. Teachers in this setting can become complacent with their practice when students exceed the academic indicators. The principal's goal was to foster a learning organization that would shift the focus from state and national matrices that determine student success, which can be considered a product of cultivating teacher excellence. He sought to create an environment where teachers' talent and expertise were the key components for meeting the ever-changing learning needs of their

students. The goal of this action research was to determine the underlying issues facing the teachers' learning culture and create interventions to help the institution become a learning organization.

Conceptual Framework

Exploration beyond the education sector can serve as a way to discover models that may best serve as a guide for principals to create a learning environment for teachers. Business organizations have used human resource development (HRD) to manage talent and to create change. A number of theories have proposed strategies to maximize the functions of HRD in the context of ensuring that top talent is not only hired but also cultivated to meet the organization's goals while maintaining a competitive edge (Christensen, 2006; Ulrick & Brockbank, 2005). Until recently, HRD approaches have typically not been applied to education (Olson, 2008). As HRD processes are being explored in schools, this study took an in-depth look at how an HRD framework may help schools become an open, collaborative system to maximize inherent talent. This study explored the HRD concept of a learning organization that fosters teacher talent as a means of encouraging ongoing learning among faculty in schools. It linked the concept of peer observations with action research as a conduit towards the goal of becoming a learning organization. By providing principals with a model of collaborative learning systems, it may increase their ability to maximize teacher talent successfully for school improvement. I propose that the combination of learning organization, peer observations, and action research will allow the principal to reach his goal.

Learning organizations can provide schools with a competitive edge that will enhance student learning and teacher quality. Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (1998) agreed that the "image of schools as learning organizations seems like a promising response to the continuing

demand for [teacher effectiveness]" (p. 3). Watkins and Marsick's (1996) seven dimensions of the learning organization equip schools with the framework and measurement assessment to determine their professional learning needs. A skillful peer observation model, "a nonthreatening structure designed for peers to help each other improve instruction or learning situation," can result in a self-perpetuating process for organizational change that increases learning for students by creating new knowledge and skills development for teachers (Gottesman, 2002**,** p. 5). However, schools should take into account what is needed in the workplace to make these models thrive (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Bierema (2010) offered the concept of organizational development, where planned change in an organization focuses on building the organization's ability to assess its current functioning to achieve their future goals.

To assist in the creation and sustainability of this planned change, action research methodology can be used as a systematic process to plan and design interventions that build capacity and authentically address the professional learning needs of teachers. Action research is a planned approach to change, whereby organizational members can jointly explore problems, initiate action, and evaluate outcomes with the overall goal being organizational change (Anderson, 2010). This form of collective learning can begin to create ongoing learning and change—hence a learning organization. In Zeichner's (2003) examination of several action research studies in P-12 schools, he identified many claims regarding this process: one being "[AR] will stimulate positive change in the culture and productivity of school and raise the status of the occupation of teaching in society" (p. 84). Action research generates a process for teachers to examine and explore the learning that is occurring in their schools and create action to achieve desired results.

The conceptual framework of this study proposed that learning organizations in schools can have the capacity and sustainability for ongoing learning when peer observations are integrated into the organization via an action research approach. The concept's common themes of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection generate outcomes for teacher learning and development where student learning can soar. The rich elements of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection impart a greater understanding of real-life scenarios as they occur (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010), hence generating genuine results that directly impact the intended outcomes. Incorporating this concept into schools may assist leadership in academic institutions attain the vision of a learning organization that encourages the use of collaborative learning models such as peer observations.

Purpose of Study

Even though the concepts of action research and peer observation are not new to the field of education, there has been limited use of their combination in an effort to foster systemic learning for teachers. The purpose of this case study was to explore how elementary school teachers' participation in an action research process using peer observations impacted the creation of a learning organization. The questions that guided this study were:

1. What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of the change?
2. How does leadership impact the action research process focused on peer observations?
3. How does an action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?

Significance of Study

Creating a system where the school organization is engaged in ongoing adult learning and where the teachers are collaboratively exploring innovative ways to meet students' academic

needs (Hord & Sommers, 2008) is the intentional goal of maximizing teacher talent. Unfortunately, in many schools today, this seldom occurs. More often than not, teachers generally view collaborative professional learning models as one more thing they "have" to do. Schechter (2008) reiterated:

> Despite the numerous conceptions of organizational learning in schools (e.g., coordinated group efforts [PLC], professional development programs, shared goals, active commitment to continuous improvement, horizontal network of information flow, open culture, teacher leadership), they are rarely translated into operational structures and processes in school reality. (p. 156)

As collaboration is the current buzzword in many school reforms, it is important to learn how peer observations and other collaborative professional learning models take root in our schools and the complexities that may arise as a result of this rooting process (Schechter, 2008). This understanding can allow authentic school reform to occur that helps to create and sustain the capacity for learning for both teachers and students. More importantly, it can equip school leaders and district officials with the knowledge and possible management strategies needed to develop and sustain a learning culture for teachers.

Learning Forward (formally, National Staff Development Council) defined professional development as "a comprehensive sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers and principal's effectiveness in raising student achievement" (Killion & Roy, 2009, p. 18). Teacher talent can be a conduit for creating comprehensive, sustainable, and intensive professional development among teachers. When teachers drive their professional learning through action research over a period of time, this "transformative" process generates effective professional learning that meets the needs of those involved (Bana, 2010; Walker, 1994).

As the concept of collaborative learning transpires in schools, a variety of literature for schools supports the benefits of this mode of learning for teachers and provides steps for implementation (Brown-Easton, 2008; Dufour, 2004; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Hord & Tobia, 2012; Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Typically, I found schools to follow the "how-to books" as guides to implement collaborative models versus seeking journal articles about conducted research on the topic. Many of these books from my experience offer great insights and steps needed to achieve an environment of collaborative learning; however, they seldom are based on empirical data and/or have not been peer-reviewed. This type of literature does not fully disclose the complexity of establishing a healthy, open culture of collaborative learning in environments that have been historically governed by a top-down, bureaucratic, directive approach—the unsung conversations in P-12 education. Furthermore, the result from such approaches runs the risk of creating an unsuccessful shift from isolation to collaboration where the true benefits of learning and student achievement can be achieved.

Hence, for many schools, the issue has been identifying the methodology needed to implement this mode of knowledge creation rather than creating long-lasting systems that establish an operational structure for collaborative (Schechter, 2008). Even when collaborative learning is a mandated professional learning initiative from either district or school level, it tends to be a prescribed program instead of a process for learning. This action research case study explored the collaborative learning models of peer observation and action research on a school-wide level as tools in a grassroots approach to utilize teacher talent as a means to shift the learning culture toward an authentic teacher-focused and teacher-driven collaborative learning environment.

This case study illustrated how an action research approach guided a school's efforts in becoming a learning organization and the real-world complications that produced meaningful learning outcomes, adding to the knowledge base of successfully established sustainable operational learning structures for teachers by teachers. Real-life complexities that arise when implementing participatory processes such as action research in top-down environments such as schools were documented. The study brought to light participants' behaviors of contradiction in the midst of the implementation of a collaborative culture. The study also raised conversations around power and influence among the leaders of the action research process: principal, team, and consultant/researcher. We learned from the study how peer observation along with training could help support the creation of the learning organization. The benefits of these events that impacted the creation of learning organization exposed authentic scenarios that often go undiscussed in the school setting.

The knowledge that can be gained from this real-world case study gives rise to empirical research that speaks to what can really happen when these collaborative learning models are integrated into the school culture. It offered an opportunity to explore further the impact on sustainable learning that enhances teacher talent. What tends to be missing from trending books on collaborative learning models is the disclosure of the impact on issues of politics, power and control, trust, leadership agenda, teacher disempowerment and empowerment, and teacher's rote behavior that may exist in these situations, as evident from this study. This study opened the door for further exploration of and insight into the phenomenon of human dynamics that goes unnoticed or perhaps is ignored when creating ongoing learning in schools—a learning organization.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes the review of literature relating to this study. The review explores common themes among the various definitions, models of the learning organization, and leadership characteristics needed to facilitate the learning organization in schools. This review also investigates the application of peer observation programs and action research processes at the systemic level in elementary schools as part of creating a school-wide learning culture for teachers. This investigation of the literature will inform the potential gaps, areas of improvement, or need for further exploration of establishing a learning organization in schools.

The business world has embraced learning organizations as a tool to enhance productivity and create a competitive edge in industry. The learning organization is viewed as a framework to provide personal development, innovation, and a productive workplace environment. Shani and Docherty (2003) dated the theory of learning organizations back to the late 1940s and have identified four streams of research that have evolved over the past 70 years. The first stream defines learning on a team and organizational level. Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the second stream evolved into an understanding of the decision-making process of organizations. The third stream emerged in the late 1960s, linking learning to individual experiences and actions, creating a distinction between single-loop and double-loop learning, and developing a progression from doing given tasks to reflecting and questioning processes. Lastly, the fourth stream of research focused on the social and conversational processes between people in a common learning setting.

Learning organizations serve as a means for businesses to maximize their potential. Due to economic uncertainties, building knowledge and facilitating learning became crucial for businesses. The concept of learning organizations was viewed as a source of professional survival. Argyris (1991) echoed this thought by stating that "success in the marketplace increasingly depends on learning" (p. 99). Yet Marsick and Watkins (1999) reminded us that "learning is not an end itself. It is a means to excellent products and services . . . or to improve [overall outcomes]" (p. 26). The learning organization became a process that managers embraced to provide a sense of stability through a mechanism that fosters change within the organization. Senge (2006) posited, "Learning is a process that extends [one's] capacity to create [and] be part of the generative process of life" (p. 13). As learning generates new knowledge, it fosters the evolutionary change that companies need to maintain a competitive edge in a rapidly changing society.

Learning Organizations in Schools

In the past 15 years, the concept of learning organizations has found its way into K-12 education as a means of ensuring a competitive edge in student achievement. Researchers such as Dufour (2004) and Hord and Sommers (2008) have coined the term *professional learning communities* (PLC) that resemble many of the components of a learning organization. In many schools and school districts, PLCs became the new collaborative approach for improving student achievement. However, it was introduced to schools as a program more than an approach. By doing so, the focus on key components, i.e., common vision, collaborative skills, and so on, needed to sustain its intention was neglected. Schechter (2008) stated:

> Despite the numerous conceptions of organizational learning in schools (e.g., coordinated group efforts [PLC], professional development programs, shared goals,

> active commitment to continuous improvement, horizontal network of information flow, open culture, teacher leadership), they are rarely translated into operational structures and processes in school reality. (p. 156)

More often than not, PLCs do not create the intended change and are generally viewed by teachers as one more thing they "have" to do. Therefore, the concept of change by learning has not fully taken root, nor is it well-conceptualized by K-12 school leaders and teachers. Gray (2000) contended, "By understanding more about the process [of learning organizations] . . . a greater impetus for change can be created" (p. 238). Bowen, Ware, Rose, and Powers (2007) concurred, noting that "unfortunately, the concept of the learning organization is generally vague, and school personnel have few tools available to support its assessment and to inform intervention strategies" (p. 199). Greater clarity about the purpose, understanding of the process, evidence of its effectiveness, and an assessment to guide interventions may enable schools to see more clearly the benefits of a learning organization as a means of fostering deliberate and intentional learning experiences for teachers.

Learning Organizations Defined

The theory of learning organizations is a vast topic in the field of organizational development. Argyris (1989) stated that the quality of learning within a company yields an "intellectual capital, crucial in building an organization that is vigilant about detecting and correcting errors, dedicated to producing innovations, and ready to change to meet the demands of the environment, which itself is often changing" (p. 5). In the K-12 literature, this concept of learning within the organization is casually explored in the two terms of *learning organization* and *organizational learning*, making very little differentiation between the two. Karen E. Watkins (personal communication, 2011) defined the difference as follows:

> A learning organization is an organization that has built a culture that has an improved capacity for continuous learning and change—through systems, infrastructure, and culture changes. OL [organizational learning] is what you measure to show that the organization has learned—e.g. changes in performance, market niches, etc. It's an outcome at the organizational level of a learning process.

Yet, most of the K-12 literature on the concept of learning in the organization is found under the keyword of *organizational learning*. Therefore, when referencing the work from the K-12 literature, the terms may be used interchangeably. However, for this study, the theoretical framework will be termed *learning organization*.

Since Senge's (2006) popularization of the concept of the learning organization in the 1990s, theorists have generated various interpretations and applications to define the concept of learning within the organization. Collinson and Cook (2007) stated, "Organizational learning is the deliberate *use* of individual, group, and system learning *to embed* new thinking and practices that continuously *renew and transform* [emphasis added] the organization in ways that support shared aims" (p. 117). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1995) defined the learning organization in schools as:

> A group of people pursuing common purposes (individual purposes as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes. (p. 63)

These two definitions from Collinson and Cook (2007) and Leithwood et al. (1995) emphasized what action elements are found within the learning organization. Bowen, Ware, and Rose (2006) described the learning organization as a place "with a core set of conditions and processes that

support the ability of an organization to value, acquire, and use information and tacit knowledge acquired from employees and stakeholders" (p. 98). This definition emphasizes the structure that is needed in order for these processes of the learning organization to thrive.

Senge (2006) defined learning organizations as "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the result they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3). Garvin (1993) believed that definitions similar to this leave people unclear about what learning organizations really are and distorts their ability to create an accurate process. He defined a learning organization as "an organization skilled in creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring and retaining knowledge and at purposefully modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (p. 80). The key words in his definition seemed to speak directly to action that needs to occur in order to establish a learning organization, similar to the definitions of organizational learning. Marsick and Watkins (1999) stated the learning organization is "characterized by continuous learning for continuous improvement, and by the capacity to transform itself" (p. 10). Coppieters (2005) summarized one of the essential characteristics of a learning organization as "increasing the learning capacity to reach a state of continuous change or transformation" (p. 134).

With the various definitions that exist, common themes that emerge are innovation, continuous change, and a capacity for learning. Bowen et al. (2007) mentioned these three themes as the keys to unlocking the creative and dynamic processes schools need to undergo in order to address the challenges faced in teaching their youth. Although schools' number one focus is creating solutions to maximize teaching and learning for their students, they seldom look at designing a learning culture among the adults to generate innovative solutions. Hiatt-Michael

(2001) saw the learning organization as a place where all members acquire new ideas as well as accept responsibility for the learning process.

Creating this space for all members to learn new ideas, accept responsibility for their learning, and be supported in their learning has been a challenge in schools (Collinson & Cook. 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2008). The responsibility of learning for teachers tends to fall within the boundaries of just meeting the necessary requirements to maintain their state certification. Generally, fulfillment of this learning is sought in their district or nearby faculty development centers. Teachers may seek courses that are convenient for their schedules and fulfill the number of hours required for certification. However, seldom is learning focused on the generation of new ideas, enhancement of practice, or the professional development needed for career opportunities. Typically, professional learning is a very isolated task for teachers. Rarely do teachers discuss their professional learning plans and learning needs with each other (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Nor are school leaders found who are facilitating learning opportunities within the schools where teacher knowledge is the source for innovation and continuous learning. Hiatt-Michael (2001) further stated the learning organization is one that focuses on "harnessing experiences of the members" (p. 166). Collinson and Cook (2007) also referred to a learning organization as a means of capitalizing on the knowledge of its members to ground innovation within the school by stating it is the "deliberate *use* of individual, group, and, system learning *to embed* new thinking" (p. 34). The learning organization then becomes a place that could help the shift from professional learning as an isolated venture to a collective responsibility among teachers. Bowen et al. (2007) proposed "that the degree to which a school functions as a learning organization may influence the willingness of school employees to embrace new innovations for promoting student achievement" (p. 200).

The definition of a learning organization describes the environment that supports the capacity to learn and innovate to create the change. The learning organization builds on the utilization of teachers' knowledge and expertise as the source of generating innovation. This approach has the potential to create a grassroots strategy to create change in addition to creating the sustainability of that change. In many schools, the concept of change is directed at student learning, curriculum, and instruction—not an organizational change. Woolley (2006) stated a similar perspective when he said, "focusing school . . . change efforts on changing the students, without also working to make changes in the work environment and relationships among faculty, is much like treating the symptoms while ignoring the problem" (p. 98).

The summation of ideas from the business and education sectors defines a learning organization as an organization collectively generating knowledge and information on a continuous basis that evokes creativity, innovation, and change (Bowen et al., 2006; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Garvin, 1993; Marsick & Watkins, 1999). The learning organization where creativity, innovation, and change are embraced can serve as a prime environment for teachers to create and maintain a competitive edge in student success. To support schools in building this capacity for learning, creativity, innovation, and change, several different learning organization models or frameworks have been proposed.

Models of a Learning Organization

Senge (2006) proposed five disciplines as the framework to implement a learning environment. Many learning professionals tend to use these disciplines as their guideline for implementing a learning organization. He stated that personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team building, and, especially, systems thinking are essential disciplines to establish an effective learning organization. Watkins and Marsick (1996) identified the following seven

action imperatives of a learning organization: leaders' model learning; connect the organization to its environment; empower people toward a collective vision; establish systems to capture and share learning; encourage collaboration and team learning; promote inquiry and dialogue; and create continuous learning opportunities. Garvin, Edmondson, and Gino (2008) identified the building blocks of learning organizations as being a "supportive learning environment, a concrete learning process and practices, and leadership behavior that provides reinforcement" (p. 110). As these models are more representative of the business sector, several models for schools have also surfaced.

Bowen et al. (2007) believed that the model for learning organizations in schools should be categorized into two distinctive components of action and sentiment. They classified action in the following way: team orientation, innovation, involvement, information flow, tolerance for error, and results orientation. Sentiment is classified as common purpose, respect, cohesion, trust, mutual support, and optimism.

To create a school's capacity for organizational learning, Marks and Louis (1999) described their five constituent dimensions as: structure, shared commitment and collaborative activity, knowledge and skills, leadership, and feedback and accountability. Collinson and Cook's (2007) framework consisted of six conditions associated with organizational learning: prioritization of member learning, collective inquiry, dissemination of learning, the practice of democratic principles, human relationships, and member self-fulfillment. Schechter (2008) stated the need to bring the abstract concept of organizational learning into reality. Hence, he recommended the management science perspective of information acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, organizational memory, and retrieving information as an approach.

Hiatt-Michael's (2001) model stressed four categories to promote learning organizations: the moral purpose of the organization, open work environment, new ideas and knowledge among diverse stakeholders, and a focus on an evaluation of one's efforts, both means and ends. She also emphasized the importance of a servant leader who performs as a guide and nurturer in the learning organization.

The common themes through each of these business and school models are teamwork, collaboration, and trust. Lick (2006) provided an in-depth view of what is needed to create learning teams within an organization. He reiterated that one reason learning organizations fail is because "team preparation and support are inadequate. Effective teams require significant new competencies, including formal training and coaching" (p. 91). He continued by addressing the need for synergistic relationships and provided the prerequisites and the process for establishing such teams. The four steps in the process for building synergy in teams are interaction, appreciative understanding, integration, and implementation. Regarding interaction, Lick stated that the required constructive elements are: "(a) effective communication, (b) active listening, and (c) creating trust and credibility" (p. 92). These elements are often missing in school environments where, for so long, the culture has been centered on teachers working in isolation. Garmston (2005) confirmed that "teachers most often work in isolation, and professional learning programs seldom invest the time in teaching teachers to work with adults. Professional development in this area is a must" (p. 65). Hence, providing a training process in schools may help to cultivate and foster these skills of teamwork, collaboration, and trust: three characteristics the literature states are key components of establishing the learning organization. However, the Schechter (2008) model emphasized the process of learning in schools leading to a task-oriented approach. This approach is similar to Garvin's (1993) description of a learning organization,

which he defined as an organization whose key focus is creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge.

In comparison to previous authors, Schechter (2008) and Garvin (1993) framed their models of a learning organization based on the tasks required to manage knowledge acquisition. Their model did not account for the affective aspect of learning, i.e., trust, team building, collaboration, and so on. However, Fullan (1993) disagreed with the elimination of the affective element of learning by stating that "without collaborative skills and relationships, it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn as much as you need to know to improve" (p. 87). From the consistent themes seen throughout the literature, affective components (i.e., trust, collaboration, and teamwork) combined with managed knowledge learning is helpful if it yields the creative and innovative outcomes of a learning organization. As such, several of the learning organization models do consist of effective and knowledge-managing components, as indicated in Table 1. The seven action imperatives of the learning organization as proposed by Watkins and Marsick (1996) contain at least one of the components the authors have identified as conditions for organizational learning in schools. Hence, it was selected as the framework for the correlation of the various learning organization models.

Measurement Tools for Learning Organizations

Several of the researchers mentioned in Table 1 have created a diagnostic tool and/or process to assess the readiness for establishing a learning organization. Watkins and Marsick's (1996) *Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ)* and Garvin et al.'s (2008) *Learning Organization Survey* are geared towards the business arena. Bowen et al.'s (2007) *School Success Profile Learning Organization Inventory (SSP-LO)* and Schechter's (2008) *Organizational Learning Mechanism (OLM)* questionnaire cater to the K-12 education

Table 1

Correlation of Seven Dimensions With Models of Learning Organizations in Schools

Seven Dimensions of a Learning Organization (Watkins & Marsick)	Senge	Marks & Louis	Hiatt-Michael	Collinson & Cook	Bowen et al.	Schechter
Individuals						
Create continuous learning opportunities	Personal mastery	Skills and knowledge		Prioritization of member learning		Information acquisition
Promote inquiry and dialogue	Mental models	Feedback and accountability	Focus on evaluation of one's effort	Collective inquiry		Retrieving information
Teams						
Encourage collaboration and team learning	Team learning	Shared commitment and collaborative activity		Member self-fulfillment	Team orientation	Information interpretation
Organization						
Create systems to capture and share learning	Systems thinking	Structure	Open work environment	Dissemination of learning	Information flow	Information distribution Organizational memory
Empower people toward a collective vision	Building shared vision		Shared moral purpose	Human relationships	Common purpose	
Global						
Connect the organization to its environment	Systems thinking					
Provide strategic leadership for learning		Leadership	Servant leadership			

arena. The indicators in each of the assessments are very much aligned with each author's perspective model for implementation of the learning organization. Hence, the DLOQ and the SSP-LO indicators explored the level of collaboration, trust, and teamwork—three components that were identified by the literature as key components for a learning organization. However, the *Learning Organization Survey's* emphasis was placed on providing an opportunity to compare the results with other organizations to determine its competitive edge. In addition, limited information was given about the indicators of the OLM questionnaire. The DLOQ and the SSP-LO provide an opportunity for an organization to determine its strengths and areas of needed development as it seeks to create learning organizations. The DLOQ also shows the relationship between the impact of learning and outcome performances, i.e., financial, knowledge, and mission. Businesses often find this correlation to be helpful in knowing the impact learning has on their profitability as a company. As the DLOQ has been adapted for use in non-corporate settings (Marsick & Watkins, 1999), schools can use and benefit from similar correlations as well.

Other means of diagnosing the readiness for a learning organization were proposed in the literature. Collinson and Cook (2007) did not utilize a formal assessment tool to measure the readiness for organizational learning in a school. Instead, they guided teachers to create an inventory based on their vision of a workplace that establishes and executes the six conditions proposed by the authors for organizational learning to occur. The teachers are guided through a process to create statements based on the type of behaviors, interaction, thoughts, and feelings they think people should demonstrate in the workplace. As a next step, the teachers reflect on what this means to them, and what could happen if their school environment became a learning organization. The key focus is to help the teachers think through collaborative discussion and

interaction to reflect on "the nature of learning in [their] school and to consider how learning can be encouraged for all members of [their] school" (Lick, 2006, p. 87). Allowing time for teachers to think through this experience is aligned with Collinson and Cook's (2007) view that practitioners have the tendency to look for quick fixes as "the immediacy of pressures of school life usually demand quick responses" (p. 83). This process provides a means for engaging teachers in the process of determining the readiness for organizational learning.

Marks and Louis (1999) stated that "schools' abilities to perform at high level, that is teachers practicing quality pedagogy and students performing well on authentic and standardized measures, are likely to depend on their capacity for organizational learning" (p. 732). Whether through a formal quantitative survey recommended by several authors, or a less formal approach as suggested by Collinson and Cook (2007), the need to determine the capacity for organizational learning is important for effective implementation. Along with an instrument for assessing of the learning culture, having a leader who possesses the characteristics for leading a learning organization would help its implementation and sustainability be successful (Coppieters, 2005).

Leadership

Thus far, this review has attempted to show the commonalities and contrasts among various definitions of a learning organization and key elements for effective implementation. Next, the state of the literature will be reviewed as it relates to the type of leader needed for a learning organization. Several theories have emerged in the literature about leaders of a learning organization (Collinson & Cook, 2001; Coppieters, 2005; Senge, 2006; Watkins & Marsick, 1996). Senge (2006) viewed leaders of a learning organization as "designers, teachers, and stewards" (p. 321). He believed a new type of leader would emerge to move these learning

organizations effectively and in the best direction. He asserted that "these leaders [emerge] from the periphery—people who do not come from traditional centers of power but from the culture, economic and demographic periphery: women, poor and the young" (p. 367). The leader of a learning organization will take on a different look from previous types of leadership. Watkins and Marsick (1996) added that a leader needs to model learning and think strategically about the use of learning when creating change. Garvin et al. (2008) provided the following descriptors to characterize a learning organization leader: "actively question and listen empathically to employees; promote dialogue and debate; willingness to entertain alternative points of view, encourage others to think creatively and in unexpected ways, generate open-minded discussions" (p. 112). Being a critical friend or strategic planner are also themes that translate into expectations of school leaders of learning organizations. Coppieters (2005) reiterated that an important task for a leader "is to guide the school in the creative space or at the edge of chaos to ensure that what Argyris and Schön (1978) call 'double-loop' learning takes place" (p. 137). Double-loop learning is a proposed learning theory related to challenging current values and assumptions through reflection and inquiry in order to seek alternative ways of dealing with a situation that may lead to better outcomes (Argyris, 1978).

Collinson and Cook (2007) stated that "double-loop learning can occur when members examine incompatibility between an espoused theory-in-action (e.g. valuing organizational members' knowledge) and their theory-in-use (e.g. top-down decisions) and then take action to resolve the incompatibility (e.g. seeking members' input in decision making)" (p. 68). A leader will need to be able to move the organization from making a current situation better (single-loop learning) to reflecting critically on unique situations that may best address the concern (double-loop learning). In order to guide in this manner, Coppieters (2005) stated several key factors that

a school leader should focus on, including: "the rate of flow and the quality of information; the variety and diversity of practice and behaviour; a clear system for delegating responsibilities; ensuring effective decision-making processes; and increasing connectivity and collaboration" (p. 137).

Silins and Mulford (2002) studied teachers' perspectives of leadership practices that promote organizational learning and found the following components valuable: vision and goal setting that involves the total faculty; the development of a caring culture; structure for shared decision making; intellectual stimulation through learning and reflection with colleagues; individual support and appreciation of each other's work; and performance expectations that include effectiveness and innovation. The literature reflects that a leader of a learning organization must be a trusting person who is willing to serve the people, create opportunities, challenge thinking, and foster collaboration. Silin and Mulford's (2002) findings of teachers' desire for educational leaders to facilitate learning organizations are aligned with the literature.

The success of the learning organization relies on leaders "who model, champion and make space for learning initiatives" (Marsick & Watkins, 1999, p. 8). Marks and Louis (1999) stated, "leadership in high-performing learning organizations is decentralized, facilitative, and exercised fully at all levels in the organization" (p. 714). School leaders typically lead by dictatorship. The top-down approach tends to be the norm in the culture of K-12 education. Senge (2006) foreshadowed this new type of leader: one who is willing to challenge the status quo in order to foster a learning organization.

Hiatt-Michael (2001) shared that an educational leader must know and "understand [her]self" (p. 118). She will rely on her sense of intuition and trust in efforts to leverage this type of counterculture structure for school improvement. One may have to go against the typical

bureaucratic approach toward school reform to achieve authentic change. Yet Marks and Louis (1999) asserted that effective organizational leadership embodies a supportive and authoritative perspective in an effort to assert that the organizational goals are productive for all members. School leaders will need to have a healthy combination of shared and authoritative leadership that will set a clear focused path and structure for ongoing learning, but also incorporate the input and voices of others as part of the process. The concept of teacher leadership may provide the healthy combination of shared leadership, as asserted by Marks and Louis (1999).

Leadership plays an intricate role when creating change in a school culture (Sergiovanni, 2005). Several common characteristics were evident throughout the literature such as: trustworthiness, fosters collaboration, challenging thinking, and shared leadership. As school leaders begin to develop these skills, a consideration of the types of skills teacher leaders will need to assist in leading such initiatives may be necessary.

The next section explores what was found in the literature related to peer observation. An overview of peer observations is provided first. Next, how the term is defined in the literature and used in schools is outlined. The section concludes by discussing the benefits found in the literature of the creation of a learning organization.

Peer Observations

Peer observation has been a mode of collaborative learning for the past 30 years. In the mid-1980s, the term *peer observations*, which is also referred to in the literature as *peer coaching* (Joyce & Showers, 1996), is used interchangeably in this section. The concept is a means to improve teacher practice, transfer training knowledge into the classroom, build self-esteem and confidence, and foster collegiality within the school (Aubusson et al., 2007; Bush, 1984; Robbins, 1991; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Truesdale, 2009). Joyce and Showers (1996)

viewed the role of peer observations as a "component of staff development that drives organizational change" (p. 1). Learning for teachers was primarily based on workshops attended during the year or participation in summer institutes, with the expectation that the knowledge and skills gained would be implemented into the classroom. Implementation did not occur. Joyce and Showers (1996) attributed this to the "organization of schools" not supporting these "intensive training efforts" (p. 2). They continued to share that the failure of implementing skills in the classroom was due to the teachers' lack of motivation, effort, and positive attitude rather than the state of the organization or the training design (Joyce & Showers, 1996). It was confirmed through research that peer coaching following initial training increases the level of transfer into the classroom (Greene, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 1982). Retention and more appropriate use of the new teaching strategies over time were also found to be results of the peer coaching after training (Baker & Showers, 1984, as cited in Joyce & Showers, 1996).

Definition

Peer observation is one type of the collaborative professional learning model for adult learning offered in schools (Brown-Easton, 2008). In the 1980s, Joyce and Showers were key contributors to the area of peer coaching. Their studies ignited conversations about peer coaching as a necessary training component to ensure transfer of instructional skills into the classroom. Joyce and Showers (1985) characterized peer coaching as a supportive system for a community of learners involved in ongoing learning that generates the transfer of training into the classroom. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) stated, "peer coaching can be described as a technical process that focuses on and builds upon particular skills developed in-service training" (p. 232). These authors noted that the key purpose for such an approach was to help teachers integrate the new learning into their classroom while creating professional dialogue and collegial

relationships within their school. Hargreaves and Dawe's perspective was similar to Joyce and Showers' with its emphasis on dialogue and relationships. Gottesman (2002) described the process of peer coaching as a "nonthreatening structure designed for peers to help each other improve instruction or learning situation" (p. 5). Robbins (1991), who designed and implemented a peer coaching program, defined peer coaching as "a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand refine and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace" (p. 1). She also stressed the process as being one that is not evaluative and offers the opportunity for collaborative learning to occur through reflective conversations. Robbins' peer coaching program emphasized teachers' autonomy as they determine their learning needs and select what they would like to learn from their colleagues, thus making peer coaching "as individualized as the teachers who engaged it" (p. 2). Peer coaching is a form of collective learning among teachers, devoid of evaluation or judgment but allowing the enhancement of their instructional practice in the classroom through reflective dialogue. Having teachers observe instructional strategies and convene to discuss their learning has led to a 95% increase in implementation of new skills and techniques into their practice (Bush, 1984; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Truesdale, 2009). Peer observations thus is the term that will be used in the remaining chapters of this study, as opposed to peer coaching.

Use in Schools

Several studies have been conducted that inform how peer observations have been used in schools. The settings have ranged from higher education environments to elementary schools. However, the studies have indicated interest in learning more about the benefits of peer observation and ways to make it work that impact teacher learning and the learning culture

(Aubusson et al., 2007; Sinkinson, 2011; Slater & Simmons, 2001; Zwart, Wubbels, Bolhuis, & Bergen, 2007).

Sinkinson (2011) shared her experience of piloting a peer coaching program at her university. Although the program was designed for higher education and for use among librarians, the transformational qualities of peer coaching still hold true for the K-12 setting. The intention of her study was to pilot a peer coaching program among teaching librarians to: a) encourage change via reflective teaching practices; b) reveal the professional learning needs of individuals or shared needs among department members; c) build the community of teachers; and d) engage teaching librarians in the design/direction of future professional learning programs. Eight teaching librarians volunteered to participate in the pilot program that yielded the following results: a) a desire for future participation in a peer coaching program, b) a stronger sense of community among teaching librarians; c) finding the time commitment as manageable, d) anxiety and unease from being observed by peers; e) promotion of reflection from the perspective of the inviting teacher; f) coaches who were self-critical about their ability to encourage reflection; and g) post-conversations establishing a collaborative and encouraging, non-evaluative tone. Because teachers were able to determine their learning objective for the peer observation, the pilot created an opportunity to reveal department-wide concerns about improving student engagement.

Sinkinson's (2011) pilot program emphasized a peer coaching process that included teachers having "control over [their] observation focus" in order to yield an intrinsic and meaningful reflection and analysis experience (p. 13). When used in this manner, it allows teaching to be the central focus of study, where the goal shifts from teacher evaluation to teacher improvement and an enhanced community of learners (Sinkinson, 2011). Hence, making peer

coaching a more transformational experience for the organization is beneficial. This approach of giving teachers the autonomy to select their learning goals also provides a more authentic method for determining the teacher learning needs of the organization at large. This approach helps the organization design learning that is genuine to the learning needs of the teacher. It would shift the more common means of determining the learning needs of teachers from using only student data results to incorporating data analysis of teacher learning results to drive the organization's professional learning needs. It is also aligned with Robbins' (1991) suggestion of encouraging participants of peer observations to choose an observation focus that aligns with their own philosophies and interests and produces reflection in practice that is more meaningful and intrinsic. This study supports the positive benefits that peer coaching can have on developing reflective learning with a community of learners. It also informs how self-selected peer observation objectives can provide data needed to help leaders tailor learning to meet individual and organizational needs.

Zwart et al. (2007) conducted a study that examined the actual learning activities and outcomes resulting from a year-long reciprocal peer coaching experience among eight high school teachers. Their study concluded that peer coaching resulted in specific activities primarily in the areas of acting, thinking, and interacting. These activities included: "doing something for the first time, experimenting/modeling something new, noticing student behavior, asking questions, listening and/or responding to questions of the dyad partner" (p. 988). These learning activities spoke to the actual learning that can occur among teachers when peer observation is implemented.

Aubusson et al. (2007) conducted a study on action learning, an "inquiry-led action" mode of learning at work using peer observations to incorporate a pedagogical framework

(p. 135). The study consisted of 82 schools where collaborative teams of teachers each designed their action learning projects linked to improvement in the identified pedagogical areas. From surveys, teacher journals, and nine case studies that were conducted, it was determined that peer observation was an approach that 24% of the school teams instigated. After teachers overcame their initial reluctance, they found this model had been "pivotal in their learning" (p. 145). It was an approach that helped create a culture of openness through the teachers' willingness to be observed and/or share teaching experiences. The study revealed that this approach may not be the only way or the best way to render openness for collaborative learning experiences. Of the schools that applied peer observations, 20% reported them as "transformative and the sharing of the experience led to gains in confidence and self-esteem. It was also noted that this transformative outcome was the result of a 'mature learning community,' where the participants were 'willing to open their classes to others'" (p. 146). Some other schools who intended to use peer observations decided to delay the usage until teachers' level of confidence increased with the peer observation process. Peer observations in this study were associated with using a rating scale indicating the degree to which the pedagogical framework was evident in the classroom.

In several schools, teachers viewed the scale as meaningful data to help inform them of their effectiveness in implementing the framework. In other schools, teachers viewed the scale as a score of their ability and were intimidated by the process. Aubusson et al. (2007) mentioned this as "the paradoxical outcome of a systematic peer observation guided by a scored rubric [that] could both promote and inhibit teacher engagement in professional learning" (p. 144). Aubusson et al. cited Gosling's (2002) and Peel's (2005) claims that "peer observation can be either evaluative or transformative depending on the context in which it is used" (p. 147). In their study, peer observation was a common approach that teachers sought to create a sustainable

means for ongoing learning to improve teacher practice. The authors concluded that further research was warranted to explore the potential of peer observation in building community, but speculated that sharing positive experiences can increase participation and trust within the community is a perquisite.

A study conducted by Slater and Simmons (2001) indicated an improvement in teaching techniques as well as overcoming the feeling of isolation when implementing peer observation. In their study, they attempted to harness the instructional talents of teaching staff in high school settings. The key barriers were teachers' perceptions of isolation and low confidence in their ability to collaborate. The authors thought peer observation had the potential to foster learning and broaden the desire for collaboration in schools. They outlined reciprocity, trust, flexibility, and volunteerism to be key components of a peer coaching program (Slater & Simmons, 2001). Their study included 17 high school teachers who participated in a peer coaching experience over a year. This experience included orientation, training, implementation, and evaluation. Through the analysis of interviews, participation survey, and program evaluation, the study produced the following results: a) new teaching strategies were learned and knowledge and ideas were gained, and b) a sense of companionship was felt, thereby decreasing the levels of teacher isolation. Slater and Simmons' (2001) research provided new knowledge gained from the peer coaching program, but did not indicate the use of reflective dialogue that other studies mentioned. One of the purposes of the study was to enhance the "use of new teaching methods and strategies" through peer observations, which is similar to the use of peer observation in Aubusson et al.'s (2007) study. The data showed an increased awareness of new strategies and increased motivation to try something new. However, it did not indicate the implementation of these new strategies in the classroom. The study indicated it appeared to help overcome teacher

isolation by the teachers feeling a sense of companionship as a result of the program. Slater and Simmons (2001) understood the impact of relationships on the peer observation process and realized it extends beyond just teachers. They shared, "[peer coaching] is a complex innovation only because it requires a radical change in relationships among teachers, and between teachers and administrators" (p. 75). It did not mention any challenges faced about trust and resistance to the peer observation process nor the learning focus for each observation. However, other studies had found trust and resistance to be factors in the peer observation process in addition to observations that had a learning goal as part of its process (Aubusson et al., 2007; Robbins, 1991; Sinkinson, 2011). Their study contributed to the body of literature, confirming that peer observation can build relationships, increase learning knowledge of teachers, and assist in developing more expertise in teaching. Peer observation has an impact on professional learning within a school setting. It provides transformational results that create shifts in teacher activities within their classroom, provides a forum for problem-solving instructional challenges, and builds relationships.

Development—Staff or Organization?

Hall and Mckeen (1991) made the distinction between staff development and organizational development (OD) by stating that staff development focuses on the personal and professional development of the individual, whereas organizational development focuses on the growth and development of the organization by incorporating ongoing learning opportunities. This perspective of OD can be seen in its definition. Hall and McKeen (1991) defined OD as "an emergent discipline that provides concepts and skills for improving the climate and problem-solving ability of organizations" (p. 553). Expanding from the idea of peer observation as a tool for impacting teachers' practice to the idea of peer observation as a tool that impacts the total

organization can fortify a systemic approach towards learning and growth within schools. It can be where the transformational changes supported in the literature manifest themselves, creating a culture of learning.

As the shift from working in isolation to collaboration occurred in the mid-1980s, several reforms were seeking interventions to assist in this transformation (Bacharach, Baurer, & Shedd, 1986; Roark & Davis, 1981). Peer coaching emerged as an intervention to create collaborative learning conditions within educational organizations where collective knowledge and skill development can occur. Most of the prominent literature on peer observation and peer coaching emerged from the 1980s to the mid-1990s. (Hall & McKeen, 1991; Joyce & Showers, 1986; Robbins, 1991). Application of this concept in schools took on the goal of helping members of the educational organization construct a community of practice focused on solving problems, changing what was needed, and supporting the members (Roark & Davis, 1981). After Sandt's (2012) review of the literature, he asserted that "peer observation has some strong potential to increase collaboration between staff, in particular if it is part of a strategy to build a community of practice" (p. 358).

The typical forms of learning intervention in schools have been focused on staff development workshops and trainings, with the intended goal of improving the quality of instruction. Bacharach et al. (1986) reported the results of a survey of a national sampling of 1,789 teachers revealing that teachers viewed in-servicing (workshops/training) as the least effective source of work-related knowledge and skill development. The preferred means of learning was reported to be personal experience and peer interactions in order to grow and develop effectively as a teacher. In their case studies, Hall and McKeen (1991) identified how two schools implemented peer coaching as an organizational development intervention. The two

key findings were: a) peer coaching can increase the opportunity to maximize teacher talent through the utilization of each other as sources of job-related knowledge and skills; and b) peer coaching can contribute to the development of a collaborative culture and/or common professional language. Hall and McKeen stated that "both cases provide examples of what can result when schools parallel staff development activities [focused on] individual growth with OD interventions that address the overall effectiveness of the organization" (p. 557). Overall effectiveness can be viewed from a learning perspective as the organization's ability to transfer the learning from staff development activities into the classroom (Joyce & Showers, 2002). In Hall and McKeen (1991) and Aubusson et al.'s (2007) studies, peer observation was shown to be a conduit for systemic learning.

Needed Conditions

Given that peer coaching has the capability to impact learning and practice in schools, Hall and McKeen (1991) asserted that peer coaching can act as an OD intervention that creates the conditions to maximize teacher talent. These conditions include a collegial, cooperative learning environment, which has the potential to "create conditions that makes the organization (school) more effective in accomplishing its tasks and improving the quality of life for those who work in the school" (p. 554). A common emphasis on creating an environment for teachers where the focus is on establishing the quality of life at work was asserted by Robbins (1991), who said, "While [peer] coaching activities may involve only segments of a school staff, collectively they can increase the climate of collegiality if they become an integral part of life at the school and if the school culture provides a hospitable environment" (p. 12). The common theme of establishing an environment for teachers to have a safe and friendly place to work is commendable, and these authors saw peer observations as a conduit for creating such a place.

Once the environment is created, then peer observation has the ability to transform the learning culture.

Transformative or Evaluative

Aubusson et al.'s (2007) findings indicated that "about 20% of schools in this study, [peer observations] was reported as transformative and the sharing of the experiences led to gains in confidence and self-esteem" (p. 147). Peel (2005, as cited in Aubusson et al., 2007, p. 127) claimed that peer observation can be either evaluative or transformative, depending on the context in which it is used. In order to have peer observations help develop a learning culture in schools, it is important for peer observation to be seen as a transformative approach to teachers' learning and development.

The reason that peer observation can be so transformational is because it involves teachers in the reconstruction of "their existing knowledge and beliefs" (Spillane, 2000, p. 17, as cited in Elder & Padover, 2011). Despite the awareness of its impact, the challenge of making it an operational structure within the school still exists. Robbins (1991), who designed a peer coaching program, reemphasized that "institutionalization is, perhaps, the most difficult of the three phases [mobilization and implementation] to accomplish" (p. 61). Nevertheless, the effort towards doing so has the following benefits on the learning culture:

> When peer coaching becomes a real part of school operations, school maximizes their capacity to meet the challenges of today's world. Teachers are empowered to make decisions about their work, the restructured workplace, and their students. They feel responsible for the program's success. Coaching no longer a superficial innovation tacked onto the school for a year; rather it is part of the school's inner workings, its soul-

> deep and enduring. When it's institutionalized, teachers' lives change: Even for the most severe problems, there is colleagueship and beyond that, companionship. (p. 61)

When peer observation becomes a school-wide program, the school has the potential to develop a culture where reflective practice on learning becomes the norm. Sandt's (2012) studies showed that "peer observation initiates reflective practice and supports continuous learning as well as improvement for teachers, which then simultaneously stand as a role model for student learning" (p. 364). The core essence of this new normality is based on teachers' sense of empowerment to make decisions that impact the functionality of their school. Peer observation becomes the conduit for continual improvement, which promotes change within the school.

Peer Observation in Schools Today

More recently, the concept of peer coaching (as stated early, the terms *peer coaching* and *peer observations* are being used interchangeably) still has a focus on helping to improve teachers' practice, but unlike the efforts made several decades ago, the emphasis on empowering teachers is not there. Rather than utilizing the art of peer coaching among all staff, selected teachers (designated at the district level or school level) serve as the coaches who provide support to colleagues within the building. The primary role of the coaches is to support the implementation of a school's goals for instructional improvement (Knight, 2011). The names for this type of coach vary—some examples are instructional coach, academic coach, graduation coach, data coach, among others, and the name typically gives insight into their area of focus or support. Knight (2011) did extensive research of and application with instructional coaching and described the coaches' involvement to fundamentally include "partnering with teachers to model practices in the classroom, observe teachers, and engage in supportive, dialogical conversations

with them about what they observed" (p. 91). A key benefit to having one to two educators serving in the capacity of full-time coaching was that there was no conflict between classroom responsibilities and teacher leadership responsibilities. Elder and Padover's (2011) findings confirmed that "the biggest challenge for the [peer] coaches was to find the time to coach as they were teaching full time and had other responsibilities" (p. 142).

While this model of instructional coaching may have its benefits, it does tend to mirror supervisory collaboration, where the coach is the expert and the teacher is the novice. Having a few teachers designated to support other colleagues and learn from such experiences does support and promote ownership and confidence in one's practice, but it only applies to those select few who receive these intrinsic benefits of giving, sharing, and learning from others versus all the teachers in the building reaping benefits. It contradicts the collective aspect of learning that Robbins (1991) emphasized with organizational benefits to peer observation, and "[it] makes learning about the business of teaching accessible to all teachers in the workplace" (p. 34). This original approach of peer observations fosters the concept of learning organization more so than having one or a select few observing, modeling, and providing feedback to teachers. The concept of peer observations as a school-wide means of teacher learning and empowerment needs to be revisited. Also, having one or a few people on the staff as coaches diminishes the faculty's potential learning and negates the organizational development intention of creating an environment where teachers work and learn together (Hall & McKeen, 1991). In addition to peer observations, other forms of collaborative learning models have emerged in schools (Brown-Easton, 2008).

In addition to instructional coaching, other collaborative learning models appear to have become the latest trend in schools toward collaborative learning among teachers (Brown-Easton,

2008). These collaborative learning models (i.e., professional learning communities, whole faculty study groups, book study groups, etc.) involve team-based collaboration with the primary point of improvement on student data results. Seldom do these models seek teacher learning and development as the primary focus for collaboration. The topics that tend to govern these team discussions generally relate to curriculum and instruction or student testing data (Dufour, 2004). Robbins (1991) mentioned how "peer coaching provides an avenue for teachers to tailor a staff development plan for themselves" (p. 13). In the following excerpt, Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) spoke of the importance of teachers driving their own collaborative learning experiences:

> We do, of course, very much support teachers improving their skills by working closely and practical with each other, especially where the process is genuinely voluntary, where teacher have high control over determining and reflecting about which skill are to be coached, and where critical reflection about the content and context of those skills is not only permitted but actively encouraged. (p. 239)

Peer observation is a teacher-centered process focused on the learning objectives of the individual teacher (Tschannen-Moren & Tschannen-Moren, 2011). Robbins (1990), Hargreaves and Dawe (1990), and Tschannen-Moren and Tschannen-Moren, (2011) emphasized the idea of peer coaching as a means of enhancing instructional practice, but also stressed the need for it to be an autonomous learning process for teachers. The collaborative learning models tend to not provide that learning option for teachers.

Schools should take into account what is needed in the workplace to make collaborative learning models thrive (Joyce & Showers, 1996). A helpful perspective for schools to consider when wanting to use these processes is the concept of organizational development. This is in alignment with the findings from Hall and McKeen's (1991) case studies on peer coaching as an

OD intervention. This present research study expanded on those concepts to explore further how the intervention of peer coaching can help create a learning organization using action research as a planned change effort.

How Peer Observation Enhances Learning Organization

The definitions of peer observation provide a common theme of reflective conversation that enhances teacher learning. When peer observations are embedded in the school culture, reflective learning and conversation become modes for innovation among teacher talent. Robbins (1991) championed and supported the capacity of peer observations to foster a learning culture where dialogue, inquiry, collaboration, and systems for sharing are embedded when she stated:

> Ultimately, peer coaching should become part of the school culture; it becomes the way we do things around here. In this state it is no longer an innovation but an integral part of the institution itself. To achieve this status, the organization's members must perceive peer coaching activities as meaningful, useful and worth continuing. The process must become embedded in the way school business is conducted: how the school solves problems, shares in decision-making, and applauds individual initiatives. (p. 61)

The way to promote peer observation as meaningful, useful, and worth continuing is to have it be a process that is generated by teachers for teachers. This notion aligns with the assertion of utilizing teacher talents as a source of maximizing learning within the educational organization. When peer observations are correctly implemented into a school environment, a non-evaluative process that is teacher-centered and built around trusting relationships can be a source of meaningful learning for teachers. Tschannen-Moren and Tschannen-Moren (2010) posited that peer observation can lead to transformative changes in the educational organization.

Therefore, peer observation has the potential to support the creation of a learning organization as both set out to use learning as an impetus to change.

Summary

The learning organization can be the framework on which to build teacher talent. By definition, it is a concept that builds on the talent from an individual, team, and organization to generate, share, and manage knowledge so that learning will be ongoing for continuous improvement of the organization (Marsick & Watkins, 1999). This systematic approach yields a collaborative learning system. Watkins and Marsick's (1996) Seven Dimensions of the Learning Organization brought learning organization to life in schools by providing a clear and precise definition, identifying seven action imperatives, and creating an instrument to measure if these conditions exist to formulate strategies for interventions. Even though the seven dimensions originated as a business model, the literature review indicates an alignment of the seven action imperatives with the models that theorists of learning organizations in schools have proposed (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis 1998; Marks & Louis, 1999). The learning organization does not provide a direct correlation to managing talent, but offers an overarching vision for learning where specific structures for managing talent can be aligned. Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (1998) agreed that the "image of schools as learning organizations seems . . . promising" (p. c3). The Seven Dimensions of the Learning Organization model provide a promising approach for school leaders to create an environment that supports teacher talents, while also generating a collaborative learning system and innovation.

Peer observation (peer coaching in the literature) has the characteristics of inquiry, dialogue, and collaboration that can support the establishment of the Seven Dimensions of the

Learning Organization in schools. Although common characteristics emerged between these two concepts, and studies have been conducted suggesting peer coaching as a plausible partnership with organizational development concepts (Hall & McKeen, 1991), there are no students in the literature that show the application of peer coaching as an approach to support the establishment of learning organization in schools. Likewise, the literature is void of studies that address the phenomena that may occur by uniting these two concepts within a school via action research to create a teacher learning environment that positively impacts change.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to explore how an elementary school's participation in an action research process that was focused on peer observation furthered understanding of how to create a learning culture in the school. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of the change?
2. How does leadership impact the action research process focused on peer observations?
3. How does an action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?

This chapter describes action research as the primary methodology used in this study. It also provides the rationale for using the research design along with describing the sample selection, data collection strategies, data analysis procedures, and trustworthiness of the data.

Research Design

Typically, the research methodology used in educational research seeks to provide formal generalizations for school programs and policy (Anderson et al., 2007). This objective and generic approach tends not to speak to the real-live human dynamics that interplay in individual school settings. Joyce and Calhoun (2010) stated that "teachers are not identical, and their states of growth and conceptual development have much to do with what and how much they learn from a given experience and environment" (p. 129). Applying a research approach such as

action research, which addresses the unique growth and development concerns of teachers that each school faces, has the potential to lead to the change that educational research attempts to create. Action research is a planned changed process whereby organizational members can jointly explore problems, initiate action, and evaluate outcomes where the overall goal is organizational change (Anderson, 2010). Action research methodology generates a process for teachers to examine and explore the learning that is occurring in their schools and create action to achieve desired results. This form of collective learning could begin to create the capacity for ongoing learning and change—hence a learning organization.

Definition of Action Research

When seeking to apply a research methodology that speaks to the direct dynamics and situations at a local entity, action research is a methodology that can render those results. Action research is different from academic research in that it represents real-world local knowledge about a setting. Herr et al. (2007) observed that "even an ethnographer who spends years as an observer cannot acquire the tacit knowledge of a setting that those who must act within in it daily possess" (p. 4). Action research studies the social reality that is occurring in the moment. Reason and Bradbury (2008) defined action research as "a participatory democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purpose, ground in a participatory worldview" (p. 1). Providing a research approach that incorporates the knowledge and experiences of the organization to solve real-life concerns can yield more genuine solutions for schools. As schools begin to tackle issues such as teacher effectiveness and professional learning, action research can equip them with a process to assess and address their current issues successfully and efficiently. Action research enables schools to deal with their current issues by engaging in a cyclical process, "where the initial problem prompts

diagnosis, planning action, taking action and evaluating results" (Anderson, 2010, p. 96). Lewin (1973) described action research as a continual "spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (p. 206). Various authors and researchers have articulated these core steps differently; however, each embodies the iterative cycle of learning through inquiry. The emerging inquiry that exists with action research not only renders solutions to immediate concerns, but provides an opportunity of learning from the intended and unintended outcomes which, when combined, add significant contributions to scientific knowledge and theory (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). These contributions from a teacher's perspective may have the potential to inform the theory and knowledge that have often driven the generalizations of academic research.

Action Research in Schools

In K-12 education, action research is generally offered as a professional learning tool for teachers to reflect on and improve their individual instructional practice (Brown-Easton, 2008; Jaipal & Figg, 2011). Teams of teachers may use action research as a means to enhance and/or improve the school's curriculum (Anderson et al., 2007). On a school-wide level, a common use of action research has been to problem-solve curriculum and instruction-related issues as school improvement strategies that improve student teaching and learning, not as means for systemic organization changes that improve school culture for teachers. Few studies exist that show how a team of teachers have used action research school-wide to improve, enhance, or change the organizational culture (Zeichner, 2003). I found this very interesting and it supports my continual focus to establish the means for talent and teacher ingenuity to be part of the renewal process. Table 2 provides a comparison of action research studies and their various foci.

Table 2

Action Research Studies: Comparing Systemic Change Focused on School Culture

			Involvement/Impact		Action Research Focus	
Authors	Location	Study	On One's Own Practice	Systemic School-wide Change	School Culture	Curriculum Instruction
Lopez-Pastor, Monjas, & Manrique (2011)	Spain	Fifteen years of action research as professional development seeking more collaborative, useful, and democratic systems for teachers				X
Zeichner (2003)	U.S.A. Wisconsin	1) Wisconsin Classroom Action Research Program—different schools working in small group	X			X
		2) Massachusetts—Teachers Research in Inquiry Groups several teachers from within the same schools working in research group sharing research on individual topics	X			X
		2a Massachusetts—The Lawrence School Study Groups—teachers convening to discuss their own classroom studies	X			X
		3) Georgia—school-wide approach that involved the faculty in the action research process with a team facilitating; topics selected by faculty related to school's improvement, i.e., student writing skills (student learning issues)		X		X
		4) Iowa—school-wide approach that involved the faculty in the action research process with a team facilitating; topics selected by faculty related to school's improvement, i.e., student writing skills		X		X
Bana (2010)	Pakistan	To empower stakeholders in a rural school to improve their current practice through the examination of the effects of their own practice		X		X
Fien, Kumar, & Ravindranath, (2001)	Asia-Pacific Region	To expand the range of innovative practices used in teacher education programs in the Asia-Pacific region by introducing educators to the curriculum planning skills and teaching methodologies of environment education		X		X
Sales, Traver, & Garcia,(2011)	Spain	To explain how action research methodology was applied to encourage professional and school culture towards an intercultural and inclusive approach		X	X	
Walker (1994)	South Africa	To evaluate action research as a means of improving educational processes and outcomes in the classroom	X			X

This action research study explored the phenomenon of implementing peer observations in an elementary school; because this study was centralized to one particular unit, it can be classified as a case study. Merriam (2009) defined a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). A case study is further described as being one particular entity chosen on the basis of its uniqueness, success, and so forth.

The particular elementary school was chosen because of the principal's desire to have a learning culture. In a public school system environment that focuses on top-down mandates, it is unique for a principal to initiate a grassroots approach where teachers are leading initiatives for their own professional learning and growth. A case study was aligned with this action research project because it provided a sense of awareness to the principal and teachers of the successes and challenges that emerge from implementing the teacher-guided intervention of peer observations in the school. A case study that was anchored in real-life situations provided a "rich and holistic account" of the issue at this school (Merriam, 2009, p. 51).

Study Design

This qualitative study combined a case study design with action research. By focusing on a single phenomenon, i.e., the case, I was able to illuminate the interaction of key factors that were specific to the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). For this study, I captured the situations that occurred at an elementary school to gain insight into how an action research process impacted the school in becoming a learning organization. The qualitative action research approach provides a participation component that helps teachers be "knowledge creators in their own right" (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 127). Combining the case study design with a qualitative action research approach allowed for this sense of empowerment to take place in a local context with the goal of change (Anderson et al., 2007). The participating school's unique story then becomes

a source of knowledge where others can learn as they seek to create learning cultures within their schools (Merriam, 2009).

Study Targets

The participants of this study included the 50 certified teachers who made up the Pre-Kindergarten-5 (PreK-5) classroom teachers, special education teachers, and specialist teachers (Art, Music, etc.) at Owlton Elementary School, which is located in an affluent Southeastern neighborhood. At the time of the study, the school serviced approximately 536 students. Teachers tend to live in Owlton, with changes in staff generally the result of redistricting, increases in student enrollment, or district reconfiguration of student-to-teacher ratios.

Purposive sampling was the sampling procedure used for this study. As the method of choice in qualitative research, purposive sampling is based on the notion of obtaining information-rich data by selecting participants who have knowledge of and exposure to the topic of inquiry (Patton, 2002). It allows for multiple perspectives from those who can relate to the particular issue of study (Anderson et al., 2007). In a case study, the sample selection begins at the case level and then by selecting samples within the case (Merriam, 2009). Owlton was selected as a case study because of the unique situation of the school principal wanting teachers to lead an action research process as a way of establishing a learning culture within his building. Purposeful sampling, "which is based on the unique attributes and/or occurrences of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 78), was used for the sample selection within the case. To obtain purposeful data on the incidents relating to the peer observation implementation process, I needed samples that spoke to that particular phenomenon.

The interview sampling consisted of three groups: a) teachers, b) action research team, and c) the principal. The criteria for the sampling included:

- teachers who participated in the peer observation training who did and did not participate in the monthly peer visitations;
- teachers who served on the action research team who did and did not participate in the monthly peer visitation; and
- the principal.

The total sample size included 10 participants (9 teachers and action research team members (teachers) and 1 principal). The entire staff was invited to participate in the DLOQ, which was used to triangulate the data. Data triangulation is further discussed in the Data Collection section below.

Recruitment of participants was conducted during a faculty meeting in the form of a presentation. All faculty members were required to attend the weekly meeting, hence providing me with an opportunity to address the entire staff. The presentation followed the guidelines of the IRB by informing the faculty of the overall study, confidentiality, their rights as participants, the benefits of the study to them, and the type of information needed from them (i.e., interviews, documents, and surveys). Emphasis was placed on the opportunity for participants to share their insights to potentially help other teachers learn how to design and create a learning culture. Informed consent forms were distributed to those who were interested in participating. On May 14, 2012, I reviewed the consent forms and purposefully selected my sample for interviews using the criteria mentioned above. However, if an individual had not signed a consent form and I believed he or she would have added great value to the interview process, I personally asked the

person if he or she was willing to participate. The participants who submitted consent forms took the DLOQ, a retroactive pre- and post-questionnaire, on May 21, 2012.

Data Collection

In order to gain rich data of the phenomenon, interviews, surveys, researcher memos, meeting notes, and emails were used for the data collection. The two main instruments used, Critical Incident Techniques and the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire, are described in the next section.

Interviews

Interviews are a process in which an interviewer engages an interviewee in a question-answer sequence in order to elicit spoken data relating to a research study (Roulston, 2010). These questions can be either open-ended or closed-ended. Closed-ended questions tend to yield a restricted response; for example, "Did you participate in peer observations?" The participant is inclined to reply with a basic "yes" or "no" answer. Even though probing by the researcher can generate more information, Roulston (2010) recommended that novice interviewers use open-ended questions to generate "in-depth descriptions of people's perceptions and experiences" (p. 12). Open-ended questions provide an open range for interviewees to generate their responses relating to the topic asked by the interviewer (Roulston, 2010). An open-ended question that asks "Tell me about your experiences during the peer observation process" will invite the interviewees to begin sharing their story. As probing questions from the interviewer will most likely still be warranted, the flow of data generated by the interviewee from open-ended questions is more inclined to produce richer information than closed-ended questions. For this study, I used open-ended questions in my interviews.

Interviews can also be categorized by their structure. The three basic descriptions are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Merriam, 2009; Roulston, 2010). Structured interviews have predetermined questions and the interviewer does not deviate from the order or wording of the questions (Merriam 2009; Roulston, 2010). Semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility by incorporating a blend of structured and less-structured interview questions where specific data are generally required, but without being restricted to a particular order or wording format (Merriam, 2009). In contrast, unstructured interviews consist of no formal interview format (Roulston, 2010). Regardless of the type of interview questions, the focus of the interview is still under the guidance of the interviewer's research topic. The interviews for this study were semi-structured.

In addition to the structure, interviews can be categorized by the "kind of content they tend to elicit" (Roulston, 2010, p. 16) based on the purpose, theoretical framework, and intended data analysis approach. Roulston (2010) mentioned the following five different types of interviews: phenomenological, ethnographic, feminist, oral and life history, and dialogic or confrontational interviews. Phenomenological interviews are designed to extract information related to "concrete lived experiences" (p. 28). Ethnographic interviews focus on people's self-expression of events and actions within their own culture. Feminist interviews can incorporate any of the other types of interviews with the emphasis on "ethical, non-exploitive, sincere, and genuinely interested in free and open dialogue" (p. 22). Roulston stated that the purpose of feminist interviews is to address feminist issues. Oral and life history interviews both capture and chronicle the events of people's lives. However, oral history interviews tend to capture historical events by historians, whereas life history interviews tend to be used by a variety of other disciplines to capture different life situations and experiences. Lastly, dialogic or

confrontational interviews are designed to not just listen to the story shared by the interviewees, but to integrate and examine their "justifications and reasoning practices" (p. 29). In this study, the type of interviews used was phenomenological.

Critical Incident Technique

The type of conversation in which I wanted to engage with my participants needed to involve a phenomenological interview approach that included open-ended questions in a semi-structured format to best capture their story. Therefore, Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was used for this study. Flanagan (1954) shared that "critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles" (p. 1). He added that these procedures for collecting observed incidents have "special significance and meet systematically defined criteria" (p. 1). CIT provides a semi-structured format for exploring human actions related to incidents of a particular situation. Semi-structured interviews provide a format of asking open-ended questions followed by probing questions in order to gain a more detailed description of the incident (Roulston, 2010). This was the best approach to allow the teachers' and the principal's story to unfold naturally with limited guidance. Themes and patterns could then emerge to provide a greater understanding of their experiences of the peer observation action research process, implementing the process, and leading an initiative.

The CIT included questions that were assigned to one of three sampling groups mentioned in Research Study Target section of this paper: teachers, action research team, and principal. A digital recorder was used during the interviews and the recorded interviews were transcribed for analysis and interpretation. An example of the CIT interviewing questions is

provided in Table 3. These interview questions provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to share incidents relating to their participation in the action research process focused on peer observation.

Table 3

Example of Critical Incident Technique Questions for Teachers

Critical Incident Technique Questions for Teachers	
I'd like you to think about a peak experience or **"high point**" in your experience with the overall peer collaboration process this year. Please describe the experience in detail, like you're telling me a story. Next, I'd like to ask to think about a **"low point"** in your experience with the peer collaboration process this year. Please describe the experience in detail, like you're telling me a story.	Probing questions for each "story starter" • Tell me about your experience • What led up to it? • What was your role? • Who were the other people involved? • What happened? What actions did you take? • What were your thoughts and feelings? • How did it turn out? • Why was it significant? How did it contribute to your experience? • How does this experience hinder the idea of ongoing learning in your school for teachers?

Surveys and Questionnaires

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) reminded us that "for over 75 years, sample surveys have remained a remarkably useful and efficient tool for learning about people's opinions and behaviors" (p. 1). However, to effectively capture perspectives that can be accurately applied to a data collection survey, processes need to be considered and followed. Dillman et al. (2009) introduced tailored design, which incorporates motivational factors into the survey procedures to ensure exceptional respondent quantity and quality. Social exchange, "where the respondent behavior is motivated by the return that behavior is expected to bring and,

in fact, usually does bring from others," is viewed as a powerful method for obtaining the level of quantity and quality a surveyor desires (p. 16). Dillman et al. identified nine ways to increase the benefits of participation: a) provide information about the survey, b) ask for help or advice, c) show positive regard, d) say thank you, e) support group values, f) give tangible awards, g) make the questionnaire interesting, h) provide social validation, and i) inform people that opportunities to respond are limited. For this study, suggestions for increasing benefits for participation were primarily used for the implementation of the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ).

Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire. The DLOQ was used in this study to gain an understanding of the teachers' opinion of the overall learning culture at Owlton Elementary School. This understanding allowed me to determine the status of the learning culture in which the study was situated. The next sections confirms the DLOQ's validity and reliability as an assessment tool in business organizations as well as in schools, and discusses the process in which the data were collected.

The DLOQ is based on Watkins and Marsick's (1996) Seven Dimensions of the Learning Organization framework: leaders model learning, connect the organization to its environment, empower people toward a collective vision, establish systems to capture and share learning, encourage collaboration and team learning, promote inquiry and dialogue, and create continuous learning opportunities. The DLOQ has two different questionnaire versions. A short version with 21 questions is generally used by scholars to show theoretical relationships of the learning culture. The full version has 43 questions and is generally used by practitioners. Yang (2003) recommended the full version for the practitioner because it "provides a comprehensive assessment of the learning culture in seven dimensions and gives more information for making

decisions about where to intervene in the organization" (p. 160). The full version of 43 questions was used for this study to align with the peer observation process intervention. Four demographic questions were added to the survey. As the DLOQ typically includes performance measure questions to show correlations between the learning culture and the company's performance, I did not include this on the pre-assessment because no comparisons were made as this was the first time the participants were taking it. For the post-assessment, modifications for a school setting were applied to the performance measurement.

Reliability and validity of the DLOQ. Yang (2003) provided empirical evidence that the DLOQ is able to measure some observable behaviors in what is considered an abstract concept of creating and sustaining a learning culture. Yang reported that "the reliability estimates for the seven dimensions ranged from .80 to .87 for coefficient alpha and .88 to .94 under the congeneric model, and the overall reliability estimate for the whole scale is .96" (p. 160). These findings qualify the DLOQ as a valid and valuable instrument among organizational researchers and practitioners. Marsick and Watkins (2003), as part of their initial work with their instrument the DLOQ, placed emphasis on validating it as well. They stated, "We submitted it to rigorous critique for meaning and used reliability coefficients to identify poorly worded items and low performing items. We deleted or revised items until coefficient alphas for each scale were acceptable. The scales have proved consistently reliable, with all scales above the recommended .70" (p. 136). As my role of consultant and researcher blended during the course of this study, the DLOQ allowed me to meet the school's need by implementing approaches that would best address its issue of becoming a learning culture.

Studies that have used the DLOQ. The DLOQ is a resourceful instrument for helping organizations determine how well the various interventions they implement are supporting their

efforts to create, enhance, and improve the learning organization. Chermack, Lynham, and van der Merwe (2006) used the DLOQ in their study to measure how scenario planning helps individuals learn and adapt in their organization. Scenario planning "is a multi-faceted organizational intervention aimed at recognizing the fact that the business environment is uncertain and to incorporating the concept of uncertainty into the planning process for change" (p. 769).

However, many other studies exist from national and international regions that included organizations ranging from small family business to nonprofit to major businesses (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Several of these studies are: Selden (1998), who conducted 142 studies on a small family business; McHargue (2003), who conducted national studies where the impact of learning organization was explored among nonprofit organizations and directors; and Lien, Yang, and Li (2002), who used the DLOQ to study financial and high-tech firms and management, technical, and professionals in Taiwan that are creating an international presence. Watkins and Marsick (1996) have continued expanding their international presence by conducting studies with multiple managers and employees participating in the Columbia Business School Executive Program. Even though the DLOQ has been widely used as valid and reliable assessment in business organizations, a non-experimental study was also sought to field-test the DLOQ in schools and to cross-validate the instrument with prior studies.

As the non-experimental study focused on research that related to other organizational variables, the short version of DLOQ, consisting of 21 questions, was used. Yang (2003) suggested that when correlating with other organizational assessments such as the School Effectiveness Measurement, it is best to use assessments with fewer measurement items. Since the tools mentioned in Benjamin's (2011) and Yang's (2003) studies were not the same version,

validity and reliability from Yang's study were applicable. Yang (2003) confirmed that "one representative item for each of the seven dimensions . . . has been identified to form a concise version of the DLOQ. These seven items form a succinct measurement of a learning culture with an acceptable reliability estimate (alpha = .84)" (p. 160).

The results of Yang's study suggested that the DLOQ is a good scale when used in schools. Benjamin (2011) reported, "The scale shows good reliability when used with total, rural, and urban populations and good reliability shows on all the dimensional scales. Results from exploratory factor analysis explained 54% of the variance" (p. 60). Benjamin asserted that "learning in schools is systems level, continuous and engineered for the purpose of performance outcome measures. The essential construct of observable behaviors form a culture and are measurable on the DLOQ . . . which can be used very well in schools" (p. 65). The information from Yang's study helped to frame the setting in which my research project occurred.

Data Analysis Procedures

Merriam (2009) reminded us that "data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data" (p. 175). Through the process of data analysis, important themes and patterns are derived from what the researcher has seen and heard. In qualitative studies, the process of analysis can become overwhelming (Ruona, 2005). Therefore, the need for a systematic process for analysis prior to collection is crucial. This system would include both inductive and deductive approaches such as coding, making notations while reviewing data, sorting, and naming the themes that emerge. These represent an inductive approach to analysis. Following a deductive approach of analysis, coding, sorting, and naming are based on the categories associated with the theoretical framework. Often, qualitative data analysis will start off as inductive, but become deductive as consistent themes emerge from the analysis (Ruona, 2005). In addition, it is

recommended to begin analyzing the data upon collection (Merriam, 2009; Ruona, 2005). This serves two purposes: a) it reduces the amount of data to analyze at one time, and b) it brings attention to any emerging themes where additional data collection may be necessary for further or more thorough analysis (Ruona, 2005). In the next section, I provide my process for analyzing the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) interviews.

Qualitative Analysis

The CIT interviews were transcribed and analyzed for common themes and patterns that related to the research questions. This attempt to make sense of the data included "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176) the stories the teachers shared as they related to their experiences and understanding of the peer observation action research process. For each research question, as I read a transcript, I identified bits of data I perceived as potentially answering that question. This process of coding was open coding, where I was open to anything possible that emerged from the data (Merriam, 2009). I reviewed the themes that emerged and grouped them based on commonality. Reviewing the interview data in the same format, I began to name categories that were "congruent with the orientation" (p. 184) of the codes emerging from my study. Along with ensuring that the categories are responsive to the research questions, Merriam asserted that "categories constructed during data analysis should include the following criteria: the need to be sensitive, exhaustive, mutually exclusive and conceptually congruent" (p. 186). Charmaz (2006) shared the means for remaining sensitive to the data: "[stay] close to the data and, when possible, starting from the words and actions of your respondents, preserve the fluidity of their experience and gives you new ways of looking at it" (p. 49). I used this approach as a way to be sure that the categories I was identifying were sensitive and open to the participants' perspectives. To ensure that my categories were exacting in their descriptions,

relevant data were placed in the different categories. After I felt I had exhausted all the possible categories for the data that were relevant, I was ready to create my initial coding system.

At this stage, I decided to use a process for further coding and management. I employed the assistance of the computer software, HyperSearch. However, as much as these tools help to organize the information, researcher analysis is still required. Therefore, I used Microsoft Word, a word processing software, which manages and analyzes data. Ruona (2005) suggested a four-step process of data preparation, familiarization, coding, and generating meaning.

Data preparation. In this stage, data are collected, filed, and/or organized in a way to ensure easy accessibility (Ruona, 2005). I organized my data into file folders labeled with the corresponding headings and stored them in my file cabinet when not in use. My interviews were transcribed into a Word document. Using the format recommended for the process, I changed the Word document into a chart that would be used in the coding stages of the analysis. In addition to the interviews, I also formatted my transcribed principal's meeting notes and digital researcher memos and my emails into this format.

Familiarization. This stage involved my reviewing and becoming familiar with my data. As a result of the initial coding I did, I was a little more comfortable and focused when reading more deeply into the data. I began to engage the data by making comments and questioning what was there for an exploratory perspective. I relied on Charmaz's (2006) approach of "paying attention to the language" (p. 55) of the participants to get a general sense of the information and meaning of the data.

Coding. Ruona (2005) shared a possible way to view coding as data simplification, in which we break up and categorize the data into simpler, more general categories. By contrast, she also shared that coding could be viewed as data complication—when data are questioned to

the point of creating new meaning. She concluded that coding is mainly about "discovering and conceptualizing the data" (p. 241). I decided to use words and phrases as my descriptors for my coding process. Since I did not use a numerical system, I was unable to organize the data using the categorizing feature in Word, as recommended by Ruona (2005). To determine my descriptors, I used *in vivo* codes. Charmaz (2006) described *in vivo* codes as "codes of participants' special terms" (p. 55). This allowed me to develop codes that closely depicted the participants' meaning. To organize and manage my data, I used a coding system suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consisted of highlighting points (based on a color-coded system) from the interviews and asking questions that promoted focusing on themes related to research questions and new ideas. The notes and comments were made in the note section of my formatted data document that was created during data preparation. As the themes inductively emerged from the interviews, they were also deductively analyzed, which aimed at testing these categories against the remaining data (Ruona, 2005). This process of deductive analysis was also applied to the team meeting notes, researchers' memos, emails, and other transcribed data. By using coding schemes where initial topics where derived, I was able to organize my data.

Generating meaning. In this last stage, I took my organized data and began to generate meaning. I explored the information I had by asking myself the questions Ruona (2005) suggested, namely: "how themes fit together, what patterns emerged across themes, what contrasts, irregularities, surfaced, and what lessons have been learned?" I also used the following tactics: "noting patterns themes, seeing plausibility, and clustering" to generate meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 101). A few times when I found myself going off on a tangent, I asked myself: *How does this relate to the research questions?* This helped me draw reasonable conclusions as I engaged in the "creative and intellectual work" of exploring how the

themes were connected to each other, my ideas, the literature, and other important considerations (Ruona, 2005, p. 246).

The interviews, transcribed data (researcher's memos, principal meetings), emails, and meeting notes were cross-applied to gain a sound understanding of how the experiences of the teachers and the principal fostered new or confirmed ideas that supported the creation of a learning organization in the school.

Quantitative Data Analysis

In January 2012, I distributed an electronic DLOQ to the 32 staff members who had agreed to participate in the study. This questionnaire was retroactive to August 2011 to serve as a pre-assessment of the culture prior to any training and implementation of peer observations. It was not originally given in August due to pending IRB approval. Dillman et al. (2009) suggested nine ways of increasing participation. These guidelines were considered and applied when constructing the electronic DLOQ questionnaire for the faculty. A brief email was sent to each participant thanking him or her for his or her time and participation in the study. Participants were given three days to complete the survey on their own, or they could use the allotted time during faculty meeting. During the faculty meeting, participants submitted the printed thank-you screen of the survey and received donuts and a "Jean Day" pass (a pass to wear jeans to work on an approved day) as incentives for their participation. The post-DLOQ was administered in May 2012. It was part of the teachers' "End of the Year" school packet, which consisted of administrative tasks to complete before the end of the year. The packet had to be turned in with signatures from the administration signing off that items had been completed. For the post-DLOQ, the teachers were required to submit a printed-out copy of the thank-you page of the survey. Twenty-five teachers completed the post-DLOQ survey.

Analysis of the DLOQ. The DLOQ results were determined by taking the average scores of the questions for each dimension. For each teacher, seven scores were collected and compiled in an Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet then averaged each of the teacher's scores to determine the school's score for each of the seven dimensions. These data were analyzed to determine in which dimension the school scored high (4 and above) or scored low (3 and below). For the post-DLOQ, the school's averaged scores were compared to the pretest to determine what gains or deficits had occurred.

During the study, my reflexive journal was categorized into the following four topics: seven dimensions, peer observations, action research, and miscellaneous. I selected these topics because they related to my conceptual framework. I frequently reviewed my reflections and comments, and analyzed the information as it related to my overall research topics and questions. This ongoing analysis also helped inform my understanding of the study as it unfolded. The miscellaneous category was reviewed and analyzed to stay connected to the concepts that may have been emerging outside of the designated categories.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness defines how we determine if a study has merit and is believable and truthful (Anderson et al., 2007). Stringer (2007) stated, "Rigor in action research is based on checks to ensure that the outcomes of research are trustworthy" (p. 27). The checks or strategies that I used for the interviews were member checks, triangulation, and a reflexive journal. Member checks are the solicitation of feedback on the emerging findings from some of the interviewees (Merriam, 2009). Two of the teachers were selected to review my interpretations of their interviews. This allowed some participants to identify their experience in my interpretation and/or identify any discrepancies that needed clarifying.

The next strategy was triangulation of the research memos, DLOQ, and interviews. Triangulation, a method of "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods" (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 113), was used to show the trustworthiness of the data interpretation (Maxwell, 2005). I triangulated the Critical Incident Technique interviews of the teachers, members of the action research team, and principal, as well as meeting notes, end-of-year peer observation surveys, and emails. Based on the common themes that emerged, I cross-referenced those data with results of the DLOQ and peer visitation process reviews (survey results). Examining the data from these various angles helped confirm my understanding of how the teachers' and principal's responses addressed the research questions.

Lastly, I maintained a reflexive journal which recorded my reflections in a spiral notebook. A reflexive journal (I interchange "reflexive journal" with "researcher's memo") is a record of the investigator's thoughts of the study, methodology, and data. It also included my reflections, insights, and challenges (Anderson et al., 2007). Reflexive journals are a tool to systematically capture my subjective observations, experiences, impressions, thoughts and emotions, and responses to incidents as they occurred. In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the primary data collection instrument because "data are registered in our beings and systematically recorded" (p. 160). As my interpretation to the research was evident, trying to eliminate my perspectives was impossible. Therefore, the goal of this process became not to eliminate the influence, but to understand it and use it productively (Maxwell, 2005, p. 109). My reflexive journals became my resource for capturing the results of my data inquiry process and served as my means to reorient and refocus myself in light of the evolution of my research in order to maintain the trustworthiness of my data (Anderson et al., 2007). As there were no

specific step-by-step procedures for testing the trustworthiness of the data, these strategies helped create integrity for my analysis and interpretation process (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

Timing

The research began in March, 2011. During this month, the data-gathering process which formulated the problem occurred. In July, 2011, based on the problem resulting from the data collected from their peers, the intervention of peer observations was determined by the action research team. This intervention consisted of training and implementation of peer observations. Training took place from October to December 2011. Due to logistics with IRB, the DLOQ was administered in January 2012 instead of October 2011, when the action research intervention of peer collaboration training started. Teachers were asked to respond to the DLOQ based on their setting and situation because it occurred in September 2011. The Critical Incident interviews and the post-DLOQ were conducted in May 2012. An overview of this process can be seen in Appendix C. Ongoing data collection via researcher's memos and reflections continued until May, 2012. The final analysis and interpretation of the data began in July 2012.

Transferability

Traditional quantitative study outcomes are generalized to other contexts and groups outside of the study participants. However, action research outcomes tend to be only applicable to the people and place of the study (Stringer, 2007). Because of the case-specific information that is generated qualitatively, some wonder to what extent action research studies can and should be replicated by other researchers. However, these studies include actions, personal understanding, and ownership of the phenomenon that occurred for the participants (Stake, 1986, as cited in Anderson et al., 2007). It is through stories that people are able to learn. Merriam

(2009) reiterated that the "general lies in the particular; that is what we learn in a particular situation can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered [in other schools]" (p. 225). The more descriptive detail that appears in the story, the greater the likelihood that one will be able to identify a commonality applicable to one's situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that transferability is based on the notion that the responsibility is on the person seeking application, not on the original investigator, to prove if the study applies to his or her setting. The investigator's role is to create a descriptive account of a natural story about a particular context where anyone reading may relate and attempt to apply it.

As an action research dissertation case study, this research presents the opportunity to inform the field of education how teachers explore the inquiry and reflection of an action research process to provide peer observations as a systemic learning process towards becoming a learning organization. From the actions, ownership, and personal understanding that were descriptively captured, others can easily discern what is applicable to their own setting.

Subjectivity Statement

Joyce and Calhoun (2010) made a statement that succinctly captures the gist of the issue of subjectivity as it applies to any research study: "At this point no one should be surprised that institutional change comes down to changing ourselves" (p. 99). A subjectivity statement provides an opportunity for researchers to "critically examine their perspectives and assumptions about the research project" (Roulston, 2010, p. 120). This critical reflection, also known as reflexivity, "involves a critical assessment of assumptions that frame thought and action" (Bierema, 2010, p. 33). Through my reflexivity, I was able to bring to the surface any influence my experiences, personal thoughts, and background had on impacting my interpretation of the data. Openly disclosing these views in my study shows the influence I had on my analysis,

hence maintaining the integrity of the findings. I also reviewed my subjectivity periodically to maintain my awareness of how I influenced what I heard, saw, and understood (Ruona, 2005).

My Personal Positionality

I am a teacher development consultant, a junior researcher, an educator, and one of the participants in the school's action research project to establish a learning organization. As a participant in this project, I was the lead facilitator. My positionality was that of an educated woman of African descent, a New Age Spiritualist, a teacher, and a visionary. My spiritual perspectives include the belief that the divine is in each person. With this view, I tend to see teachers as divine people who have been called to serve in a role to cultivate and nurture others at a critical time in their development stages. Seeing the role of teacher in this manner, I am very passionate about supporting teachers. As a result, my goal is to design the best approach to maximize teachers' ability to manifest authentic learning outcomes for themselves and through their practice. In addition, I want them to see their worth and value as a professional in our society. This study was an opportunity to serve in that role, while extracting impactful learning experiences to continue to foster my efforts.

In a task-oriented environment where the idea of creating possibilities has been suppressed by the larger culture of dominance, mandates, requirements, and accountability, people tend to relate to me as being idealistic. I am constantly challenged by and faced with resistance and am told I am out of touch with the dynamics of the everyday life of an elementary school. This resistance, criticism, and non-acceptance generate a sense of self-doubt in me. My positionality as a woman of African descent covertly comes into play. My sense of self-doubt magnifies my perception of how I am perceived in the context of a predominately White school that is situated in an upper-middle-class community. In addition, as a hired consultant that is

paid by the donations of the community via PTA, I am also concerned about perceptions of my ability as a woman of African descent. Despite my sponsor's (a White male) support and advocacy for the action research project, I wonder how much of my positionality impacts his interaction with me in this context. His power and positionality were revealed in the study when he felt and stated, "At the end of the day, I am still principal." This statement did not categorize itself into a genre of gender or race, but it did lend itself to further exploration before any finite conclusion could be drawn. Analyzing the data from this study that involved my actions, inactions, and reactions created an emotional roller-coaster. As a result of this "ride," I had to replay the experiences that I felt confirmed and revealed my deepest fear: that the adversity occurring in the study was due to my inadequacy and insecurity as a novice consultant/researcher.

As I look at how my positionality impacted my research, I see how my perception of victimization due to my positionality in this context initially blurred the interpretation of my observations, interviews, meetings, researcher notes, and survey. This perception occurred during the study, and as conflict arose as part of the development process in the action research project, I quickly assumed that stakeholders' demonstrated behaviors (i.e., not including me in on meetings, difficulties scheduling meetings with principals and team leader, team not knowing what to do) were direct vendetta against me. It took several rounds of writing and analyzing my findings before these feelings of self-doubt, insecurity, betrayal, and defeat purged their way out of my system of thinking so that I could begin to see at a more objective distance what happened and clearly talk about it. It took two years for that evolution to occur before I could write with the level of consistency and credibility that ultimately resulted in this document.

Insider/Outsider Positionality

Herr and Anderson (2005) defined insider researchers as "researchers who often collaborate with other insiders as a way to do research" (p. 36). Outsider researchers tend to be those from change agencies, consultants, universities, and other places who conduct action research within an organization. In particular, Herr and Anderson warned of the complexity and nuances of being an outsider researcher.

My outsider status incorporated some aspects of being an insider. For example, by having taught 10 years in a very similar demographic area, I was able to relate to many of the issues that the teachers currently faced, i.e., above average students, heavy parental involvement, high expectations for academic rigor, among many others. Prior to this research project, I worked with the school in conducting training as a district faculty developer. Yet, despite these areas of commonality and familiarity, I was not there every day, nor was I subject to the same constraints, logistics, or expectations as the teachers. As an outsider with some insider association, I had to continue building relationships with the members of the faculty so that they would see that the research I was doing was not *on* them, but *with* them.

However, my feelings of insecurity and inadequacy as an advocate for change impeded my insider/outsider postionality. To go against a system whose foundation was built on years of maintaining status quo requires insurmountable courage, or at least the understanding and acceptance that the structure I seek to maintain would be challenged by the winds of fluidity and uncertainty—and it is okay. Being a novice researcher and consultant who accepted the uncertainty as normal was my learning edge. In an elementary school culture, the concept of knowing is a form of credibility. This created a sense of vulnerability as a result of being viewed as an expert, "all knowing," when my reality was not knowing how things were going to play out

with the action research process. This created an internal conflict. The consequence of this internal conflict was a lack of relationship building between the teachers and myself. This was due to the pervasive story of not being credible, good enough, and adequate, which generated my fear of engaging fully and wholeheartedly from a sense of openness and sincerity. My guard was up. Fortifying stronger relationships with the faculty would have assisted with the understanding and acceptance of the action research project.

My Overall Learning

My grandmother, observing my behaviors as a young girl, often told me that I always take up for the underdog. I interpret the underdog to mean advocating for those who appear disempowered. The methodology of action research served as an ideal conduit to help me fortify my advocacy for teachers. Christenson, Slutsky, Bendau, Covert, Dyer, Risko, and Johnston (2002) noted that "action research empowers teachers to take control of their own learning, to advocate for change within their classrooms or schools, and to ask hard questions about the nature of schooling and the goals of education" (p. 271). Currently, I have decided to dedicate my life's work to providing these attributes to teachers who often assume a voiceless position. Intriguingly, I have learned as a result of this study that at times I, too, am voiceless in the midst of my advocacy for the voiceless. It has been my interconnection with my action research team and teachers overall that have helped me experience myself as I sought to participate with them.

This process of negotiating to derive a knowing of oneself through participation and self-investment is something I desire to do for my working and personal life. I see my study as a subconscious approach of working through of my own struggles with knowing myself and being empowered as a result. I see my interest in a learning organization "characterized by continuous learning for continuous improvement, and by the capacity to transform itself" (Marsick &

Watkins, 1999, p. 10), and it is synonymous with my desire to create a structure, a process, and a collective approach for my own evolution of learning to transform myself. As stated at the outset of this Subjectivity Statement and well worth repeating at its conclusion, Joyce and Calhoun (2010) reflected eloquently on this realization: "At this point no one should be surprised that institutional change comes down to changing ourselves" (p. 99).

My attraction to and use of concepts like Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) as an approach for teachers to connect with their inner self to maximize their potential for creativity and innovation in the classroom and schoolhouse is perhaps more of a self-serving desire. The support that I am seeking to provide for teachers is also the support that I am subconsciously, or perhaps now consciously, desiring for myself.

Summary

Viewing my overall subjectivity from this standpoint, I see the benefits of my research as being a genuine sense of alignment with my journey through life and the work that, I believe, I have been called to do. Action research has given me the experience to extend my level of compassion for teachers though accepting where they are and guiding them to a place they would prefer to go. I have learned to be mindful of my own agenda, needs, and fears and to have the courage to discuss them in an effort to maintain the integrity of the action research process. Due to my heightened awareness and interest in this process, I believe that my future research endeavors will provide a deep, thorough understanding and unique approach linking the practical and theoretical frameworks of the action research. Peshkin (1988, as cited in Merriam, 2009) made the case that "[one's subjectivity] can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis for researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" (p. 15). The opportunity to be reflexive in an

action research project provides unique qualities that added to the richness of my development as a researcher. My awareness of my experiences served as an innate means of inquiry to remain in a constant flow of reflexivity which equips me to fortify myself as an action researcher. In a qualitative study, Maxwell (2005) reminded us that it "is not to eliminate [the] influence [of the researcher] but to understand it and to use it productively" (p. 109). My understanding of my subjectivity will allow me to use my experiences as a productive component of my research studies.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY REPORT

Owlton Elementary (pseudonym) is a K-3 school in one of the district's affluent communities and one of 83 elementary schools in the district. Since its establishment in 1973, it has received several awards and recognition for its academic excellence, including the Platinum Award from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, which makes Owlton Elementary one of eight Southeastern County schools nominated for President Bush's Blue Ribbon Schools Program and Southeastern School of Excellence. Once teachers become faculty members at Owlton, they tend not to leave. Teachers have been added to the faculty roster primarily because of the increase in the student population over the past three years.

The range of experience for the 52 certified teachers at Owlton extended from 1 to 30 years. In addition, 80% of the teachers were certified in gifted instruction which provided higher academic rigor to the students, 80% of whom were identified as high achievers. Each grade level had 8 to 10 teachers, with each class having approximately 25 students—an unusually large class for an elementary school. To accommodate the population of students, the administration elected to place four trailers and five trailer module units on campus. A unit was comprised of four classrooms and a restroom. Many teachers of the same grade level rarely planned together or saw each other because of the challenges of finding common planning times and convenient meeting locations.

Parental involvement was one of the jewels of Owlton, and community members took pride in ensuring and supporting the academic goals of the schools. To that end, the Owlton

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) established an annual fundraising campaign known as One Check, One Time. This event was the offspring of the parents' interest in donating directly to the PTA fund rather than participating in a variety of fundraisers throughout the year. Seventy-two percent of Owlton's parents contributed to this fund, which provided the students, teachers, and administration at Owlton with supplemental programs, incentives, and opportunities for teaching and learning. During this research project, the fund had received donations in excess of $80,000 and provided programs ranging from international potlucks to environmental education.

At the time of the study, Owlton had a population of 811 students. The demographic breakdown was 68% European American and 32% Other (i.e., African American, Hispanic American, Alaskan American, Asian American, and Multiracial American). Less than 1% of the students received a free and/or reduced-price lunch. Over the past five years, Owlton has seen an increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs). Owlton has consistently met and exceeded its annual yearly progress (AYP) goal, a national measurement for academic progress in schools, by scoring 75% on the state's Standard Knowledge and Skills Test (SKST) (pseudonym), an assessment of students' competency of teaching standards. Owlton's SKST scores were among the highest in the state, making Owlton one of the top schools. In addition, students scored well into the 95% to 98% range on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), a national standardized test.

Owlton was led by Matthew Barred (pseudonym), who started his leadership track as assistant principal of instruction at Morris High School and has served as principal at Owlton since the 2008-2009 school year. He was supported by two assistant principals, Tammie Goodson and Alicia Crawford (pseudonyms). Through creative instructional design and innovation, they worked together to foster the mission of Owlton, which is as follows:

> The Owlton school community is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in academics and behavior; united we contribute to a positive and challenging educational environment which inspires life-long learning, international thinking, and productive citizenship.

Because Barred believed in shared leadership, decisions about instruction and school-wide issues were shared with the instructional leadership team (ILT), which was comprised of 14 teacher leaders who also served as grade-level chairs and special area teachers. During their monthly meetings, they acted as liaisons to share information, ideas, and concerns between administration and faculty.

The 2011-2012 school year presented some new experiences and challenges for Owlton. Due to district-wide redistricting and reconfiguration initiatives, Owlton was once again classified as a PreK-5 school, a change from its previous K-3 status which it held for four years. Students in the community were rezoned to either Owlton or a neighboring school, Morris Elementary School, which previously served students in Grades 4 and 5 but was now also a K-5 school. To make the transition less dramatic for the students, the district requested a certain number of teachers to transfer with the students based on volunteerism and a last-hire (seniority) policy.

Because very few teachers volunteered to leave Owlton, the majority of the 17 teachers whom Barred had hired in the three years prior to the move were among the seven who were transferred. The number of the teachers who needed to move to Morris was not confirmed by the district until early May, 2011. This shift to PreK-5 also presented some uncertainty for the teachers who were not leaving Owlton, because Barred could not guarantee his faculty the same classrooms or grade levels they were already teaching. The uncertainty of not knowing left many Owlton teachers feeling anxious at the end of the school year. Fortunately, before the last

day of school, the number of transfers, as well as the new grade reassignments, were confirmed. Teachers ended the school year feeling more certain about the upcoming year, but they were also advised that everything was subject to change.

Beginning the fall semester in August, 2011, the school faced the benefits of a reduced number of classes per grade level from 10 to 6, more time to collaborate with peers, and fewer students to serve per grade level. In addition, the school was faced with the challenge of redefining and reunifying itself with the new faculty members and one new administrative leader. This action research project began at a time when the stakeholders could benefit from joining under one common vision to achieve the goal of becoming a learning organization that fostered teacher excellence.

Story and Outcomes

This section begins the story and outcomes of Owlton School's involvement in an action research process as an organizational development approach to identify and solve the teacher learning concerns they had in their building (Anderson, 2010). My engagement with the school was from an organizational development consulting perspective. As a consultant, I used the action research process to guide the school (my client) through the cycles of action research as a means to address their organizational concerns related to teacher learning.

Action Research Process

The action research process is a series of events comprised of interactive cycles of gathering data, feeding them back to those concerned, jointly analyzing the data, planning action, taking action and evaluating, and leading to further joint data gathering (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Anderson (2010) shared that this joint series of events is the basic philosophy of the majority of Organizational Development (OD) work. Shaw (2002) reiterated that OD's

methodology includes the evolution of Lewin's action research method, which emphasizes understanding and describing the world and the changes needed to explore jointly the phenomena of the people directly impacted. OD can best be defined as a planned change process that takes into account both the technical and human sides of the organization and uses inside or outside consultants to plan and implement the desired change (Bierema, 2010; Schein, 1992).

OD consulting and action research brings a process to schools that will allow them to be more proactive in creating planned change that can shape their environments into a space where both teacher and student learning will flourish. Anderson (2010) defined this process as: a) Entry and Contracting, b) Data Gathering, c) Diagnosis and Feedback, d) Do: Interventions, and e) Evaluation and Exit. To make the stages easy for schools to remember, I created the following heading for each stage of the process: a) DECIDE: identify and confirm a clear intention; b) DARE: test current assumptions, challenge current state; c) DECIDE: analyze/ interpret to determine; d) DO!: develop and implement interventions; and e) DEDUCE: evaluate the process. Table 4 provides a comparison of my action research titles and descriptions with those of Coghlan and Anderson. This project describes Owlton's journey through these processes of planned change.

Entry and contracting. The action research process was conducted with the client and included several stages that clearly defined the purpose. The stages were gaining entry, contracting, setting expectations for ongoing interactions with the client system, and selecting the action research team to participate in the identification of the problem. The action research team worked in collaboration with me, the researcher. This section describes my entry and contracting process with my client system, Owlton Elementary School. It begins with a discussion of initial contact with the principal and concludes with the formulation of the action research team.

Table 4

Comparison of Action Research Cycle Titles and Descriptions

Cycles	Coghlan (Internal AR)		Anderson (External AR)		Boswell (External/Internal AR)	
1	A pre-step of context and purpose	Understand the forces that impact change within the system	Entry and Contracting	Initial contract with client and an agreement of work to accomplish	DEFINE	Identify and confirm a clear intention with principal and staff
2	Constructing	Derive at working theme for action via dialogic activity	Data Gathering	Sources of information is gathered about the situation, client, organization	DARE	Test current assumptions, challenge current state
3	Planning Action	Create a plan to act upon	Diagnosis and Feedback	Analysis of data via with client to propose intervention strategy	DECIDE	Analyze/ interpret to formulate problem
4	Taking Action	Implementing interventions	Interventions	Intervention strategy is agreed upon and carried out	DO!	Develop and implement interventions and prepare teacher team leader to continue action research process in their school
5	Evaluating	Examine intended and unintended outcomes	Evaluation and Exit	Outcomes are evaluated for intervention and exit or reentry is determined	DEDUCE	Evaluate the process and Exit

School principal. Principal Barred and I attended The University, where we both earned a degree in educational leadership in 2002. Our paths crossed once again in 2009 at a summer leadership retreat held by the district. As a coach and faculty developer for the department, I volunteered for summer training for the district's principals. Here, I informed Barred of a seminar that I had designed for teachers, "Let's Collaborate," a peer observation seminar that teaches effective ways to foster collaborative and reflective learning among teachers through classroom observations. Barred was interested to learn more and we scheduled to meet several weeks later.

Entry: Three Attempts. Anderson (2010) referred to recontracting as an opportunity to revise the plan of action based upon a variety of reasons. This section describes the three attempts to establish a collaborative learning culture made over a three-year period. I provide an overview of the first two attempts and mention elements of Anderson's stages of entry and contracting as they emerged, and then discuss the final attempt, which marked the beginning of this action research study.

First entry. In August, 2009, Barred and I engaged in our first conversation about peer observations. I shared with him an overview of my seminar that included the seminar purpose, learning objectives, and what current research stated about the impact of peer observations on a school. I asked him if the seminar was something he could envision working at his school. He stated it was. He wanted a class to teach his teachers how to work together. I continued by reviewing the process for training. Barred mentioned that he wanted to be inspired by the intended outcomes, and he wanted to start training immediately. Our next steps involved identifying dates and times to conduct the 5-month training series on peer observations.

The peer observation training was conducted during the teachers' after-school staff development time when all teachers were expected to participate. Teachers were not aware of the topic, peer observations, for their staff development sessions. After the first two training sessions, the peer observation training came to a quick halt. The teachers' level of resistance, demonstrated by side-bar conversations and lack of participation, yielded unproductive learning sessions. Barred made the call to cease training activities and the sessions ended with a general overview of the benefits of collaboration, and an explanation of the manner in which peer observation serves as one source of collaboration to enhance the teaching practice.

The reason for the teachers' response was never explicitly identified and addressed, and the principal saw my seminar as a means to that end. This top-down approach to professional learning is a pattern often conducted in schools. The lack of stakeholder support had a very interesting outcome at Owlton. The level of resistance among the faculty added value to the importance of engaging the stakeholders in the process.

Second entry. My second entry conversation occurred in the summer of 2010. I had resigned from the district, become an independent consultant, and begun a doctoral program in adult education, human resources, and organizational development. Barred's goal of a collaborative learning culture remained the same, but a different approach was attempted. We realized that prior to training on a collaborative professional learning model (i.e., peer observations), we needed to set the proper foundation. I conducted a survey with the teachers to gain an understanding of their concept of collaboration and how they have collaborated with each other. Although the survey provide insight into the teachers' perceptions, it was not directly used to design the plan of action within this second entry attempted. The principal and I agreed to plan for school-wide collaboration based on his vision for collaboration and my

knowledge of theories seemingly aligned with generating that outcome. The plan for building a collaborative culture for learning among the faculty was to implement Scharmer's (2009) Theory U model. Theory U is an approach that moves individuals and organizations through a process that allows them to connect with their essential *Self* in order to open their minds, hearts, and will to the possibilities of the future. As part of this process, the teachers created a common vision about teacher excellence—their future goal. Monthly activities from this model guided teachers to explore their own and others' perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of teacher excellence. As a result, two things happened: a) the teachers became uneasy and vulnerable as a result of engaging in an atypical process for their climate, and b) the teachers' lack of understanding about the purpose for such an activity emerged. Several attempts were made to ease their anxiety by providing opportunities for dialogue and inquiry about the process. However, Barred and I quickly realized that the level of uncertainty and confusion among the teachers was a result of their not understanding the overall purpose of the intervention. Nevertheless, this collaborative structure created a greater venue in which to voice concerns in contrast to the peer observation seminars. This learning made us both look forward to the possibilities of the action research process, which included members of the organization playing key roles in identifying issues and interventions.

Third entry. Toward the end of spring 2011, I recontracted with the client system. We learned from the previous experiences the value of incorporating stakeholder involvement. Anderson's (2010) stages of entry and contracting were used and my official entry interview came shortly after these previous attempts. The next section shares the details of this entry and contracting experience.

Anderson Model

The Anderson (2010) model highlighted four key topics for questioning: the presenting problem, the consulting relationship, the consulting engagement, and the organization. Using three of these four categories as a framework, the next section analyzes and evaluates my entry interview with my client.

The presenting problem. During this interview, I asked Barred to explain the presenting problem that his school was facing. His response was more in-depth than the second entry and contracting interview. He explained:

> Basically, what I noticed and what I worked on here at Owlton is that we're a very static faculty and we're using a lot of old instructional techniques that are not very effective and there is a huge resistance to change. So what we want to do is start to work on building a culture of learning in the building and a culture of sharing. There is a lot of isolation to me and closed doors, and overall, I think that is getting in our way of growth and development in the building.

Barred had been principal of Owlton Elementary School for three years. Noticing the static culture from the beginning of his holding the office showed his eagerness to implement an intervention. Barred provided several examples of the consequences of a static culture and its overall impact. He stated:

> Two things that are happening: a) We are not keeping up with the best research base practices with our students, specifically when we are teaching reading; additionally, b) the AYP goals are starting to catch up to a school like Owlton, where we have not had to address it ever. The decline is in the data, but eventually, it will slip below AYP

> because each year the AYP is going up and so it will catch up to us very soon, over the next two to three years.

AYP is set by the state to determine how well schools are achieving academic success. Elementary schools in the state use the state standard criterion test to measure AYP. Owlton had a reputation for meeting and exceeding AYP; however, Barred predicted that as a result of the static adult learning culture, student achievement would decline over time. This potential decline supported the need to create a collaborative learning culture for the teachers.

In addressing the expectations of the client (Barred), I did not directly ask him what he wanted me to do. What I did ask him, however, was how he thought the concept of a learning organization would best support his presenting problem. Through our past conversations, he had shared that he wanted me to facilitate the implementation of a learning organization to create the following shift:

> I think it will take us from a very static faculty, meaning that we're not moving anywhere, we are very stuck in our ways, to a very dynamic faculty. That would enable us to be flexible, move and grow with the changing student, changing political winds, changing face of education. Building a learning organization is going to help us really have the ability to expand and grow and better meet the needs of the students, and that's really the bottom line.

Consulting relationships. Barred requested weekly communication and suggested we set up benchmarks along the way to determine progress. He stated that the end of the engagement would be determined by the organization's "capacity to perpetuate this without your involvement and without my involvement." If this did not happen within a certain timeframe, other steps would need to be explored. We both agreed that disagreements would be addressed

through open and honest discussions. Because our visions were very much aligned, he believed that disagreements would be few.

I suggested that we set up norms and guidelines to governor our conversation and interaction with each other in a productive and respectful manner; he agreed. As I took on more of a leadership role in the action research project, norms helped to safeguard our friendship. Later in the interview, he jokingly made the comment, "When it's all said and done, I'm still the principal." As I shared a chuckle with him, I reflected on the importance of gaining an understanding of him as a teacher and me as a consultant. I needed to maintain a consultant-client relationship and "recall that consulting relationship is an equal partnership" (Anderson, 2010, p. 111). However, Barred's openness to share leadership was evident. He confirmed in our interview that "I seek advisement from my instructional leadership team and assistant principals." Although he embraced the concept of collaboration, he was still the principal, but I was a consultant, not a teacher, so I had the right to take an opposing stance when I felt it necessary.

Confidentiality was discussed in relation to who would have access to the documents, reports, and so on. We agreed that he and I, along with the action research team (consisting of teachers), would have access to that information. He also stated that this initiative was local. As we discussed how we could communicate my role as a consultant to the organization, he concluded that we would continue to share that I was "working to help us with collaboration and with building a learning organization and we are going to do some research, ask questions and put some interventions into place." The last part of his response showed his understanding of the action research process, a major benefit in the process.

With regard to research, I had some concerns about how my role would be perceived once it officially switched from consultant to consultant-researcher. I asked how he would communicate that change to maintain trust and rapport with the faculty. He continued to share that when the time came in the fall, we could inform the faculty "that some of what we have been doing is powerful enough to put into a dissertation piece and we will work on that as well as this because it some good stuff." I was content with this approach and felt it would not breach the level of trust and rapport with the faculty.

Our conversation about the consulting relationship provided an opportunity for me to formally address and gain an understanding of how we would coexist during this process. Reviewing our conversation, I realized the importance of having evidence of our progress in meeting Barred's goal. Therefore, identifying criteria for ending this engagement was something I definitely planned to have in place for this intervention.

Ongoing interactions. I informed Barred of the next steps, which included gathering data to identify the underlying problem and forming a team of participants for this process. Shortly after this discussion, the team was formulated. This team also functioned as my action research team. Because this initiative started as a consulting relationship, Barred and I agreed to maintain this position until the decision and approval for the research were confirmed and/or in the process. A confirmed research problem and approval for research were planned for August 1, 2011.

The team consisted of seven teachers who were asked to serve on the committee based on their willingness to support the creation of a learning culture (Table 5). Their support was evident when they were asked to share their vision for Owlton during our initial meeting. Many stated that they wanted be in a place where their colleagues embraced learning as part of the

Table 5

Action Research Team Member Profile

Team Member	Teacher Category	Race/Gender	Years of Teaching
Nancy	Specialist	African-American female	13
Wendy	General Education	Caucasian female	12
Cindy	General Education	Caucasian female	11
Samantha	General Education	Caucasian female	5
Sheila	General Education	Caucasian female	6
Sally	Specialist	African-American female	12
Darlene	General Education	Caucasian female	4
Stacey	General Education	Caucasian female	10

process for themselves as well as their students. The teachers were charged with being change agents of the school and were informed of the work ahead. At the close of the meeting, they were told they were not obligated to serve on the team if they were not willing to commit to the task, but nobody declined the opportunity. This team's goal was to become a permanent fixture of the organization, as it would also serve as my action research team. Because my relationship with the teachers began with me in the role of consultant, Barred and I agreed that I would maintain this position until the decision was made and approval granted for the research to commence. When the research problem and approval for research were confirmed, we informed the school that I was also a doctoral student. However, I informed the team of my intentions during our last summer meeting before the 2011-2012 school year. The focus of the next meeting was to develop the plan of action to test the assumption of the stated problem by the

principal. Table 6 identifies the overall plan of action of the team between March and May 2011.

Table 6

Action Research Team Next Steps

Step	Action Research Team Next Steps
1	Share with the PL team (school) the problem: Owlton is a static environment where ongoing learning is not occurring because many teachers feel that they do not need to learn. Students scoring well on standardized testing (e.g., CRCT) reinforces the concept my teachers "I am good enough."
2	State the desired state: Owlton becoming a learning organization where teachers work collectively towards a common vision for teacher excellence supported by CLASS KEYS, collaborative educative learning models, empowerment evaluations, and teacher-designed professional learning models. As a result, creativity and innovation are generated to produce a competitive edge in teacher quality and student success.
3	Gather data that will help to formulate the problem and test assumptions (lack of interest in learning; thinking good enough; do not collaborate, Theory U as a process for building collaboration, etc.). The type of data used to test the assumptions are needs assessment, climate survey, collaboration survey, sensing journeys, test scores, DLOQ, and identify any other type of data that may inform the problem.
4	Formulate overarching evaluation questions.
5	Create an evaluation plan: overarching question(s); methods; intended use; using seven dimensions as a standard/criterion.
6	Analyze and interpret data to clarify problem.
7	Make any adjustment to the original problem.
8	Determine an intervention that will support the organization in working toward desired state.

DARE: Data gathering. This section describes the steps that the action research team and I took to gather data about the presenting problem. Anderson (2010) recommended collecting enough data to expand the practitioner and client knowledge of the problem. This expansion can lead to a more finite and accurate picture of the problem the organization is facing.

During our first full-day planning meeting on March 29, the team members agreed with the presenting problem shared by the principal: Owlton is a static environment where ongoing learning among the teachers is not occurring because many teachers feel they do not need to learn. They provided some examples of this occurring among colleagues. I shared with them that the collaborative summits we did that year were an example of an intervention to address the presenting problem. The summits were intended to begin forging a sense of collaboration through conversation about a common vision of teacher excellence. As the teachers reflected on that experience and others, one question emerged: Do the faculty members view the adult learning environment to be static? We generated a list of data that could be gathered in the building that would best address this question.

In addition to gathering existing data, the teachers also decided to conduct a survey and four focus groups. Sub-teams designed the questions for each method of evaluation, survey, and focus groups. A schedule of events during April 11 through May 11 was constructed to complete the data collection process, gather existing data, design and conduct survey, and conduct focus groups. I provided the team members with the necessary reference materials to best inform and support their process within the timeframe provided.

The *Our Learning Environment* survey included two parts that focused on peer observation occurring among grade levels and perceptions of the adult learning occurring at

Owlton. Teachers were offered an incentive to take the survey, specifically, a pass for Jeans Day, a privilege to wear jeans to work. Forty-nine of 52 teachers completed the survey.

The original idea of four focus groups was narrowed down to two in consideration of the customary competing priorities that existed at that time of year (e.g., year-end testing, end-of-year preparation, etc.). The two groups consisted of 10 teachers each who volunteered to participate and who also received an incentive for doing so, namely, an early dismissal pass. The focus group sub-team developed the focus group guide, and I reviewed it. The guide had three questions to explore how the teachers at Owlton viewed their learning environment. Two team members, who served as moderator and assistant moderator, conducted each focus group.

DECIDE: Diagnosis and feedback. This section describes the steps that the action research team and I performed to confirm and decide on the actual problem within the client system. These steps included the use of a logic model, data collection, findings from the analysis, and problem identification and definition. These initial steps helped us to identify the current problem facing the client system, target literature to inform the problem, and explore possible interventions.

Diagnosis and feedback. On May 4, 2011, the team had an all-day in-service meeting where they analyzed and interpreted the data to determine the underlying problem. Before starting the meeting, I provided a mini-workshop on data collection using the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation's evaluation standards as a framework for the discussion. The team was given Marsick and Watkins' (1999) Seven Dimensions of the Learning Organization to use as the model for deductive analysis of the data. The data were grouped into the following four categories: focus group analysis, collaborative sessions, activities analysis, and survey analysis. For each of these categories, the team looked for themes

related to the seven dimensions. Upon completion of the analysis, I compiled the information on one chart to view for interpretation.

The original question, "Do the faculty members view the adult learning environment to be static?" was presented, and the team members did not believe that the learning environment was static, based upon the information provided. The team members concluded that the teachers valued learning as a tool for their professional development. They found the learning they had that year to be beneficial, and indicated they would like to see more reflective and peer observation learning experiences. The common themes seen in all of the data were the need for collaboration and professional learning that was specific to teachers' learning needs. The concerns that were expressed related to the number of training opportunities provided by the school and the district.

Three of the seven dimensions of a learning organization received the most feedback from the data collected and are listed here: a) encourage collaboration and team learning, b) create continuous learning opportunities, and c) promote inquiry and dialogue. Because the data pointed toward collaboration and teacher-directed learning opportunities, the team concluded that the problem at Owlton was that even though the faculty members embraced learning, they felt the learning was done in isolation and neglected to incorporate the teachers' individual learning needs.

Since the majority of the time during March through May was spent executing the tasks of data gathering and analysis and formulating the problem, the next meeting on May 24, 2011 was designed to pause and team build. The key meeting questions/topics were: why we are here, who we are, how we get things done, what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how will we assess it? We discussed and agreed on our common purpose of creating a learning organization

at Owlton, and created a unified vision of what being a learning organization meant to us. The problem statement was confirmed and the team took the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) to familiarize themselves with it. Upon closing, I sought recommendations and suggestions for administering the DLOQ to the staff during the fall semester. A few members asked why they needed to take the DLOQ. I informed them of the need to determine an intervention to address the problem statement. Several members felt that enough data had been collected in the spring and fall, and the teachers would be more inclined to implement something rather than take another survey. I inquired what intervention would best address the teachers' concerns and they recommended peer observation. They shared that it would give teachers an opportunity to learn and collaborate from each other and was something that came out in the data. We agreed. I informed them of my peer observation training program and suggested that we review it and determine if it would be a good fit. The DLOQ was chosen to be administered to the faculty in the beginning of the year as a benchmark. The next meetings were designated to review the training and modify the DLOQ for application in a school setting. This last meeting of the year allowed us to reflect on our process and connect as a team to complete the work ahead.

The next scheduled meeting was planned for the end of the summer, July 28-29, 2011. However, two meetings were offered during the summer to begin tackling some of the tasks in preparation for the August roll-out of the intervention. These meetings were optional because it was off teachers' contract time. For the first optional meeting, four of the seven members attended. I shared with them my peer observation training and program overview. I informed them that the Let's Collaborate seminar was a nationally presented training model that addresses three key factors: building trust, developing conversation skills, and setting learning intention.

The process of the Let's Collaborate training includes three to five training sessions and monthly extended learning sessions to develop relationships, collaboration, and data-collecting skills for a meaningful peer visit. It contains a program development element where routines, procedures, and logistics for implementing peer observations in the building are designed with the client. Typically, schools are provided with various training, but are not often given support for implementing the learning in their schools. However, training and implementation support are included in Let's Collaborate. The team decided it would be a good fit.

During the July meeting, seven team members reviewed the training series and began to create an action plan for training and implementation of peer observation; they also began to modify the DLOQ to address performance measures related to the school's goals. In addition, I advised the team that the intervention moving forward would be part of an action research project. I asked for their consent to participate at that time, providing them with the option to continue on the team or step down.

Project plan. At the conclusion of the summer planning months, an intervention implementation plan was designed to begin in August, 2011, and run until May, 2012. The plan identified the various tasks, start and completion dates, and roles and responsibilities for a successful beginning.

DO: Intervention. The next phase of the action research and OD consulting process was approaching the organization, Owlton, with a new way of doing things. The action research team viewed the information that was gathered, determined an "action" that would best address the issue, and designed a strategy to execute the action (Anderson, 2010). This is the most empowering part of the action research process for teachers because it provides an opportunity for teachers to guide the learning that occurs in their school. For the teachers at Owlton,

implementing a process that was teacher-initiated and teacher-driven was what had been missing in the previous informal interventions.

Peer observation training and implementation. The teachers decided that the intervention should be peer observation. There are a few models of peer observation in schools (Gottesman, 2002; Robbins, 1998), but not all of them emphasize the importance of training. Three key reasons training is important are to: a) break the walls of isolation and foster camaraderie and trust; b) develop conversation skills that promote reflective learning and support; and c) learn how to set learning intentions for peer visits (Fullan, 1993; Garmston, 2005; Killion & Roy, 2009; Lick, 2006). The basic steps of doing peer observation can be taught in one day. However, to create a collaborative process where knowledge, skill, and implementation are achieved, ongoing training needs to occur.

Observation is generally perceived as a form of judgment in an elementary school. This connotation is typically due to the association of observations with the principal's evaluation. Observations coupled with a culture of isolation among peers leads to the need for training to foster a culture where safe, collaborative learning can take place (Gottesman, 2002; Robbins, 1998). Therefore, it is important to provide training to help teachers make the shift from seeing observation as a threatening experience to seeing it as a trusted learning experience when conducted by peers.

Developing a skill for reflective conversation where the focus is listening, clarifying, and probing is important for collaborative learning to take place (Fullan, 1993; Garmston, 2005). Typically, conversations about teachers' practice are directive and evaluative, and are generally from a superior, i.e., their principal. Having the same directive type of conversation with peers will not foster collaborative culture, but rather one that is competitive, judgmental, and

untrusting. Equipping teachers with the skills for reflective conversation can maximize their learning.

When peer observation is a voluntary process in schools, it is important for the teacher to be able to self-assess in order to determine his/her learning intentions (Robbins, 1991). Learning intentions are a teacher's professional goals for growth and development. They can be directly linked to teaching standards or an instructional strategy that an instructor wants to develop. Setting this intention will create purposeful learning experiences through the peer observation process (Robbins, 1991). Peer observation training will provide teachers with a guided reflective process to set learning goals. This is beneficial to teachers as they tend to be limited in professional goal setting because it may not have been required in the past. Identifying specific learning intentions will allow teachers to engage in meaningful learning with their peers (Robbins, 1991).

Using these three outcomes as our goal—collegial collaboration, differentiated professional learning, the vision of becoming a learning organization—I recommended to the action research team the importance of selecting a peer observation process that included training.

How "Let's Collaborate" met the school's needs. We agreed that Let's Collaborate was a good peer observation program for this intervention because it: a) provided the action research team an opportunity to share their ideas, thoughts, and insights to customize a training and implementation process for their school, thus adding more teacher input into the participatory process; and b) contained the necessary training to break down isolation barriers, develop skills for productive learning with their peers, and self-direct their individual learning needs within the school.

Designing the process of peer observation. During the first official summer meeting, the action research team spent a day to design the peer observation training and implementation plan for the fall. The team used the Let's Collaborate Planning Guide to help create the best plan for their school. The guide includes 10 to 15 reflective questions that required the teachers to think about various components of the peer observation training process. The team was given these questions in advance to provide time for meaningful reflection. As the team members shared their ideas, I would occasionally pose further questions to challenge their thinking.

The team was able to reach several conclusions for the intervention. Based on the collaboration activities that were done in the building last year, the team felt that three training sessions would meet their needs instead of the recommended five. We combined the following two training sessions: The Introduction and The Culture. In addition, we decided to eliminate The Collection of Data and integrate the session, The Commitment to New Learning, during the peer observation implementation phase. Three training sessions would be completed by the end of the semester, while also giving the faculty time to settle into the new academic year.

The training and implementation plan was submitted to the principal for approval. The proposal included three 90-minute, job-embedded training sessions occurring October through December 2011. Each training session included four sub-sessions where faculty would be divided into training groups of 12 to 14 people. Once a month, a 30-minute activity would be assigned to these teams and completed during a faculty meeting. This assignment provided an opportunity to extend the learning from class and gave teachers the chance to work with people outside of their grade level. Teachers were also given an extended learning activity to be conducted within their grade levels.

The guidelines for the implementation plan outlined the monthly week of peer observation from January to March (April is testing, May is closing of school). During this week of peer observations, substitutes were made available so that teachers could visit other teachers. The release time was one hour: 45 minutes for observation and 15 minutes for self-reflection. Each teacher received a binder containing supportive forms to house their reflections. Teachers were required to submit requests for visit forms, complete learning intention forms, and next steps forms for each. A schedule including deadlines for the various forms and dates for monthly observations were also provided to each teacher. Members of the action research team were assigned different roles to monitor the implementation process.

Implementation of the intervention. The kick-off for the peer observation training was conducted about two weeks prior to training in September 2011 during a faculty meeting. The principal allotted 30-40 minutes for the team to market the peer observation. Despite the last-minute preparation and planning, the action research team did an excellent job of establishing the tone for the intervention. They set the purpose of the peer observation training by linking it back to the data collected from them last spring. Team members followed up by providing the benefits of participation and why training was so important. They showed an overview of the training dates and content. The session closed with questions.

Some members of the action research team wanted to co-facilitate portions of the training. Therefore, they facilitated the training sessions that they attended, and I facilitated all of the remaining sessions. The monthly link team activities were facilitated by the action research team. Each month, the action research team confirmed that the link activity should be based on suggestions I provided. For 30 minutes during the last Wednesday of the month, the faculty would meet in their link teams, vertical grades 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and so on, to complete the

link activity. There were seven link teams. Each member of the action research team worked with a team during the session. The last training session in December was conducted by my colleague because I was presenting at a national conference. The action research team conducted the final link activity, which occurred the next day. A qualitative faculty feedback form was given to the teachers during the last training and link team session.

The kick-off for the peer observation implementation plan occurred in January and was facilitated by the action research team. They began by sharing the faculty's positive feedback from the peer observation training. The sense of community learning was reinforced by a team member's use of a proverb that linked peer visits to the ease and comfort of visiting a neighbor. Action research team members continued by highlighting the overall expectation for the observation. The faculty asked several questions. Within the next week, I met with each grade level to review the forms in the binders given at the kick-off. I did this because I felt I would be able to provide a clearer overview and explanation in smaller groups as opposed to the larger setting. During the grade-level meetings, a common concern about finding the time to do peer observations was consistently voiced. I emphasized the opportunity for learning and encouraged the teachers to participate at least once during the semester. The recommendation by a couple of groups was to have one week of peer observations in May. I brought it back to the action research team and principal, and all agreed to plan a week of observations in May.

In the first month of implementation, eight teachers participated. In the second month, three participated, and the last month yielded two participants. During a faculty meeting in March, members of the action research team asked the teachers who participated to give a testimony of their experience. This was intended to encourage others to participate. The members of the action research team commented that they saw others had become more

interested. The action research team and I planned a final promotional pitch to obtain more teacher participation in May. However, no one participated in peer observations that month.

In May, 2011, the team identified questions to evaluate the peer observation implementation process. These questions were given to the principal to be included with the end-of-year survey he would conduct in May. The post-DLOQ was also given in May, 2011, as a separate questionnaire to those teachers who completed the pre-DLOQ. Twenty of the 30 who took the pre-DLOQ completed the post. The team also provided a session with the faculty in which they presented an overview of everything that was accomplished with peer observation and aligned it with the action research process, which the team decided to refer to as the "collaborative inquiry process." The goal was to recruit people for the next year to serve on the team. Barred's vision was to have this team be a staple team within the organization; however, he was assigned to a new school and the assistant principal became the new principal. To bring closure to work that had been done with the project, I asked the new principal for assistance and support in arranging a time for me to meet with the team. She informed me that she would be unable to continue with my initiatives as there were many other matters they needed to achieve via district mandates. Therefore, the team did not get an opportunity to review the results of the evaluation surveys and post-DLOQ. I used the results to evaluate the effectiveness of the peer observation process.

DEDUCE: Evaluation and exit. This section includes the evaluation plan for the intervention peer observations. Anderson (2010) referred to evaluations to include outcome variables and process valuables. The evaluation of the outcomes variables consists of the factors that impacted the organization's implementation of the intervention. The action research team conducted an evaluation of the outcomes of the intervention, peer observation, as it related to

addressing the school's problem statement: the need for collaborative learning among teachers and learning that is focused on teachers' individualized needs. This section captures the team's undertakings in evaluating the outcomes of the intervention of peer observations.

The evaluation of the process valuables consists of the factors that impacted the organization execution of the action research process of implementing the intervention. My research study addressed the process of the intervention as it relates to the action research study purpose statement, which is discussed later in the findings and conclusion of the paper. Measuring both the outcome and process variables may help to show the logical link between these factors that impact overall efforts of creating change within the organization (Anderson, 2010).

Evaluation of intervention: Team—outcome variables. Outcome variables usually concern organizational-level outputs such as productivity, customer satisfaction, and quality (Anderson, 2010). The task-oriented nature of schools tends toward outcomes-based results. During the implementation, the action research team met twice a month to review coordination of monthly implementation tasks, i.e., scheduling visits, collecting request forms, securing substitute teachers, and conducting mini-informal evaluations of the implementation. Talking points for these discussions came from the results of monthly peer visit check-ins via online surveys. The survey, designed by the action research team, was given at the end of each month to teachers who participated in peer visitations that month. I asked teachers to share their observations and conversations with their peers to help inform the effectiveness of the implementation.

A Peer Observation End-of-the-Year Survey was given to the faculty at the end of the semester to gain overall input on the implementation process. In addition, the post-Dimensions

of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ), which measures the behaviors evident in the system that resemble a learning organization, was given. Table 7 shows the evaluation timeline plan the team had intended to use. Unfortunately, the action research team did not have an opportunity to review and analyze the results from the various evaluations because of Barred's reassignment to a new school. I used the results of the surveys to determine the effectiveness of the peer observation intervention.

The steps taken to create an evaluation plan included setting purpose, identifying stakeholders, questions, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness. My preparation and thought process in the creation of this plan are described in this section of the paper.

Table 7

Evaluation Plan Timeline

MAY	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	May Retreat
Evaluation Tasks	Peer Visitation Survey	Team Data Analysis	Recommendation	Reflect Process: Identify Next Steps

Evaluation purpose. In addition to the monthly survey of those who participated, an overall evaluation was provided to the faculty. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine how well the peer observation supported the problem statement: there is a need for collaborative learning experiences among peers and self-guided professional learning. Specifically, the evaluation sought to gain insight into what was working and/or not working with the implementation of the peer observation program that may have contributed to the low participation among the teachers.

Evaluation stakeholders. The primary stakeholders of the peer collaboration evaluation were the action research team. This information was intended to help them make the necessary modifications to the peer collaboration program. However, because the principal was relocated to a new school and the new principal's denied my request to meet with the team, the team did not review data from the evaluations.

The secondary stakeholder was the principal. He naturally was interested in knowing the teachers' level of participation, how this process engaged them to take ownership of their learning, and what learning took place to enhance their practice. This information was intended to determine how the peer collaboration was fostering a learning culture in his school. Because this survey was part of the teacher's end-of-the-year completion packet, the principal had access to the survey link and the results. However, due to the reassignment, a collective conversation about the results did not take place.

Evaluation questions. Open-ended questions were used for the end-of-year questionnaire. The team identified questions to evaluate the peer observation implementation process based on key concerns that emerged from our group discussion about the process. These questions were given to the principal to be included in an electronic questionnaire administered to the faculty as part of end-of-year requirements in May, 2011.

Data collection method. All teachers view time as a premium. Offering a data collection method that allows for rich information but does not consume much time is always the goal. Thus, a short, open-ended, electronic questionnaire was suitable for meeting our goal. The DLOQ was used as a pre- and post-benchmark to identify where the school ranked as a learning organization at a single point in time.

Target audiences. The Peer Observation Questionnaire was given to 50 certified teachers in the building. This included PreK-5 teachers, Specialists (Art, Music, etc.), and Special Education teachers. These teachers received the peer observation training in the fall, and had the option to participate in the peer observation during the spring. Regardless of their participation in peer observation, these stakeholders were given the survey. As mentioned, monthly surveys were given to those teachers who participated in the monthly peer visits. In addition, the post-DLOQ was given to the 33 participants who had taken the pre-DLOQ.

Evaluation data analysis and interpretation. I compiled the results from the electronic questionnaire and used the findings to inform my overall research question for my action research study relating to this case. Once the study was complete, I would compile an evaluation report to offer to the principal previous principal and current principal, if by chance they wanted to know the results. The report included the problem statement, a brief description of the intervention plan, data interpretation, and recommendations.

Evaluation of intervention: Process variables. The evaluation plan of the outcome variable provided results-based information on what and how the intervention was implemented. "Process variables evaluation consists of how the intervention may have changed behavioral, people, or task process" within the organization (Anderson, 2010, p. 312). The evaluation plan of the process variables was the research plan of this study, previously stated in the Action Research design and Methods sections. This study provides information that supports the behavioral impact of action research and peer observation on creating a learning organization.

Applying this organizational development evaluation approach of process and outcome variables can offer the organization valuable insights into the outcomes of the intervention and the impact the organization's process may have on those results (Anderson, 2010). Breaking

down the evaluation plan into process and outcome variables will help schools clearly distinguish between the two types of evaluations. The first is an assessment of the interventions (outcome), which examines whether or not it worked, if it met the intended goal, and the like. This is what the action research team did when they created the peer observation survey and evaluated the outcome variables. The second type of evaluation is the assessment of action research cycles (process), which explores how well our process of implementing the five cycles supported moving closer to our desired stated goal.

Summary

This action research case study began by helping the school leader understand the underlying factors for implementing an action research project focused on the peer observation process. This understanding may help guide a school's journey of becoming a learning organization. Since action research is a participatory process, it engages teachers in the process, empowering them to have increased control over their learning environment. In addition, it may add to the accounts of teachers who are willing to confront the status quo through action research and the complexities associated with it (Anderson et al., 2007). A process where teachers *define* the issues that impact their learning needs, *dare* to explore the truth around these perceptions through further inquiry, *decide* on what action to take, *do* the necessary steps to implement that action, and then *deduce* how effective the intervention was in addressing the initial issue may be the greatest way to maximize teacher talent. When teacher talent is fully utilized, it fosters an opportunity for peer observations to be sustainable, thus making a learning organization possible. DEFINE, DARE, DECIDE, DO, and DEDUCE may hopefully generate a means for schools to create authentic educational and social change from the inside.

The team of teachers in this study was effective in executing the process of action research (Table 8). Also important are the team dynamics that come into play as they participate in action research project. The next section discusses the attributes of the team dynamics that helped the team to completely implement the action research project.

Table 8

Overview of the Action Research Team Process

Define	Dare	Decide	Do	Deduce
Principal's problem was accepted by the team for further exploration.	Team learned the process of collecting and analyzing data for further use. Faculty was able to provide insight into the current problem. Assumptions about the problem were tested to generate an authentic learning process for the faculty.	Team engaged in activities to help them provide insight into the learning organization theory. Team made key decisions about the intervention, training design, and program logistics to propose to the principal.	Team led learning experiences during the training. Team managed the logistics of coordinating subs, schedules for monthly peer visits, as part of the peer observation program. Team provided ideas and strategies to engage encourage participation. Team leader was given more responsibility to lead meetings in preparation for leadership next. However, this was not fully embraced.	Team reflected on the implementation to generate questions to inform teachers' lack of participation, perspectives, and ideas for making the peer observation program better. Teachers were not able to review the results of the data due to change in administration.

Our Interactions: Team Dynamics

As the work of action research is dependent on the people executing their respective tasks, it is important to understand and glean the learning from the factors that help support the actual team dynamics. In order to gain a greater understanding of these factors, I used Mink, Mink, and Owen's (1987) five norms that support group development: developing trust, accepting and recognizing individual indifferences, giving and receiving feedback, problem solving, and letting go of the past. I have several reasons for selecting this model for gaining a greater understanding of how these elements of group dynamics impact an action research project: a) the norms are aligned with the theme that emerged from team data; b) the model uses simplistic terms to describe very complex issues; c) the model emphasizes the relationship between individual development and team effectiveness; d) the model has a team development matrix; and e) the model provides strategies to support deficit areas within the team. The Mink et al. model provides the terminology, tools, and techniques to not only allow others to gain an understanding of the group development within this action research team, but also to provide resources that would support schools in their efforts to design effective action research teams.

The Mink et al. team development encompasses the components to guide team leaders and teams to achieve its goals. In addition, their combination of looking at the individual and the team helps to create a suitable and sustainable structure in which a team can thrive. Mink et al. stated that a norm "can be thought of as a freedom and permission the group members give each other and expect in return." With these norms in place, a team can be in a better place to unify and be internally and externally responsive, thereby increasing the potential for productivity.

In this section, I identify the areas where the team's behaviors and experiences related to each of the five norms: trust, individual differences, feedback, problem solving, and letting go. I

also provide Mink et al.'s (1987) definition and then show supportive evidence of the team exhibiting this behavior. The following section also reviews the behaviors where each of the five norms were violated. Lastly, I summarize the group dynamics that existed.

Trust

The first norm is trust, the "process of accepting, making and keeping simple agreements mutually protecting one another, risking" (Mink et al., 1987, p. 64). The intended outcomes of this norm are "group cohesion, interpersonal attraction, affiliation, belonging, information sharing, self-disclosure, and risk taking." Group cohesion, belonging, self-disclosure, and risk taking were the outcomes observed by the team. The teams did not know each other well because they came from different grade levels and/or departments. Each grade level at the time consisted of 8 to 10 teachers, running the risk of teachers of the grade level knowing each other well.

As the team started in March, we faced tight deadlines to design surveys and collect the data before the annual standardized testing period began in late April. As such, team members were actively sharing information with each other via email to complete the tasks at hand. Hesitancy was not present, as the teams members eagerly began drafting surveys and conducting mini-meetings during the course of their workday. Mink et al. (1987) referenced interaction of team members as making and carrying out simple agreements as a form of contract trust which relates to "the extent that people make and carry out simple agreements" (p. 64). Team members were very diligent in honoring each by following through with what they agreed to do and/or agreeing to participate by offering ideas or my offering to pitch in when needed. An example of this was when Cindy was honoring a member's time constraints. Wendy, a fifth grade teacher, needed time to prepare for the standardized test period, which was taking place in a couple of

weeks. She was concerned about being able to juggle between her activity agreement to the team and the preparation needed for her class. Cindy had agreed to complete the task for her in an effort to maintain the momentum of the team work and to relieve Wendy. The benefit of teams operating from this form of trust is the establishment of an environment that is "safe, reliable and predictable" (p. 64). This feeling of security speaks to the teachers' willingness to self-disclose.

For each meeting during the DARE cycle, we provided a check-in where each person had an opportunity to share any comments about their day or what was currently on their mind. In my research observation notes, I noted how I admired one member's openness with sharing her status regarding a personal matter, something she had not disclosed to other teachers in the building. Another team member affirmed she was "fully present today with the team and ready to work." Their willingness to be open and share affirmed the cohesiveness among the team members during the DECIDE and DARE cycles of the action research project.

Mink et al. (1987) talked about trust coming from experiences. When people see reliability and willingness, they will begin to trust and take further risks. A further risk they took was during the DO cycle. Here, they took the risk to go against the status quo and convene a meeting without me, the consultant, to discuss the concerns were having over the action research agenda at that time. The experience of working with each other during the DARE cycle (March-May 2011), such as keeping simple agreements, helped to build the level of trust among the team to address their current concerns cohesively and proactively.

Individual Differences

Individual differences is defined as the process of "listening, self-disclosing, asserting, opening to achieve the outcome of openness, communicating" (Mink et al., 1987, p. 64). The

outcomes of this norm are "in-depth honesty, harmony, identification of individual talents and skills, and recognition being honored" (p. 64). Expressing honesty and identifying each other's strengths were outcomes the team observed as a result of activities they completed during the DARE and DO cycles. These activities included creating surveys, uploading online, conducting focus groups, and so on, which were delegated to different people on the team based on their individual strengths. Members of the team self-identified roles they wanted to have as they related to their strength and comfort zones. For example, Sheila, Darlene, and Cindy volunteered to work on the creation of the survey questions, given their interest to detail and administration. The other members directed their efforts to creating focus group questions once the survey data were collected. When it was time to select a person to facilitate the discussion with the faculty, I sent an email asking for volunteers for this role. Nancy, the team leader, replied, "I will be one." Speaking in front of her peer group was an area of interest and development for her.

The minutes captured the roles different members agreed to lead as we worked to implement the various stages of the intervention. Team members often identified with the differences on the team and honored the differences that each had. I noted in my memos during the September 13th meeting how the following comments were shared: "Nancy, you are good at speaking in front of the group" and "Sheila, you're creative, don't worry, we know you'll come up with a neat introduction." These comments indicated how members of the team were aware of members' talents and encouraged their participation in utilizing these talents to support the team in achieving its goal.

Giving Feedback

The next norm, Giving and Receiving Feedback, is described as "the process of wanting, listening, goal setting, planning, and managing conflict with the outcome of achievement of

goals, enrichment, personal and team competence" (Mink et al., 1987, p. 64). During the DARE cycle, the norm of giving feedback was prevalent. Self-correction was prevalent as all members actively emailed and replied about their insights into key decisions in planning. Again, during this time, the team was using email as their main form of communication. In this one particular thread, five of the seven team members were engaged in conversation after school where the their process of listening, planning and goal setting, and managing conflict was evident as they negotiated the necessary modifications for the survey. The team leader, Nancy, quickly made the modifications on the survey from the feedback that was provided to present to the team during the meeting the next day. This level of feedback was the highest during the DARE and DECIDE cycles of the action research process. During the summer sessions of the DECIDE cycle, the teams were also engaged in providing feedback as they brainstormed, listened, and asserted their conclusions about the data from the surveys and focus groups. Comments such as "What makes you think that?" or "I don't agree" heightened the level of feedback among the team members.

Problem Solving

Attributes of the problem-solving norm were also evident within our group. Mink et al. (1987) specifically defined problem solving as "the process of problem finding, problem analysis, fact finding, discovering solutions, testing, implementing, following up with the outcome of confidence, competence, goal achievement, realization values" (p. 65). The cycles of the action research process provided an ideal opportunity for the team to delve into the problem finding and solving norm. The DARE cycle, as mentioned before, was one where the team members worked diligently to explore what the learning problem was through the initial gathering stage. The transcription from focus groups during the DARE cycle showed the level

of questioning that team members applied and the probing that helped them identify the root cause of the teachers' concerns. An example of their analysis process was when the team interrogated the term *static* as it related to what the principal had defined as the school problem: the school had a static learning culture. After several interpretations that piggy-backed off the other, Nancy shared a description of static using the concept of a television as a good analogy of the current learning culture. As data from the teachers indicated, they disagreed with the principal's assertion that Owlton had a static learning culture. Bridging the two ideas of the principal and the teachers, Nancy stated that while static on a television is moving, it is not really going anywhere or making any significance to the common goal of seeing a clear picture. She felt that, yes, teachers were doing something, but how was it really impacting the overall view (or culture) of learning in the school?

As part of the closing of the year and program, team members offered questions for the program evaluation survey that would shed light on the participation issue for a process the "teachers asked for." In preparation for these questions, I asked each team to answer certain questions to evoke reflection as they thought of questions for the survey. Stacey commented, "I would be interested to find out why the people who were the biggest advocates for collaborative learning during the focus group [DARE cycle] did not even participate in the peer observations."

Unfortunately, because of the change in administration that occurred, the action research team was not able to see and discuss the data from the survey. When I asked to meet with the team for only an hour, the new principal (who was the assistant principal the year before and was in attendance as we implemented the action research project) informed me that she would not be able to continue with "my initiatives" as other district-level initiatives were taking precedence.

Her response was a surprise and made me wonder about the power dynamics that actually existed at the school.

Team Dynamic Summary

The action research team showed evidence of each of the five norms that Mink et al. (1987) identified for productive team development. This development helped them to be a cohesive group who was able to navigate continually through the dynamics of the action research process in an effort to implement and complete the intervention of peer observation. As I look for ways that teachers can be part of the school renewal and reform via action research, it is imperative to explore a means that will allow their collective involvement to be successful. From my experience, this seldom occurs in schools. Mink et al.'s model is one that could be helpful for schools that are trying to shift from directive task-oriented teacher teams to collaborative-focused teams. The findings from this analysis serve as a resource for school leaders who choose teacher teams, specifically for action research, as an opportunity for change. It will provide school leaders with real-life experiences to help them ensure action research teams of teachers who are given what is needed to maximize team growth and productivity in creating change.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Apple, Inc. is a prime example of a company that embraces the concept of shared knowledge and collaborative learning, where knowledge does not reside simply within a person or exist in a department. Tim Cook (cited in Lashinsky, 2009), Apple, Inc. CEO, shared this of the company vision: "We believe in deep collaboration and cross-pollination of our groups which allow us to innovate in a way that others cannot." Deep collaboration can incorporate sharing, discussing, challenging, reflecting, modifying, enhancing, and celebrating among the stakeholders. These stakeholders can be identified as individuals, teams, and organizations such that when they are cross-pollinated, they can generate innovation and creativity that keep the organization on the cutting edge among its competitors. Even though Apple's vision does not identify the company as a learning organization, it does give way to the concept of constant learning for continuous improvement to influence change—the goal of a learning organization (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). In addition, the concept of deep collaboration can easily contain several of the Dimensions of a Learning Organization, such as promoting inquiry and dialogue, empowering people toward a collective vision, encouraging collaboration and team learning, and connecting the organization to its environment (Marsick & Watkins, 1999).

Imagine what public education would look like if teachers were given workplaces with the same capacity and infrastructure as Apple to learn, collaborate, and expand in such a deep way. Teacher learning and knowledge sharing would be sources of ingenuity and creativity; establishing an educational system that would be second to none. The outcome would be

American children viewed as an exceptional source of knowledge, resourcefulness, and innovation. Universities and corporations would wait in lines for days at high school graduations to get the first selection of America's best and most innovative talent. Just imagine.

At Owlton Elementary, Principal Barred imagined such a vision. He imagined what his school could be if he could create a learning culture where the opportunity for collaborating, observing, conversing, and reflecting on one's instructional practice was the norm. The byproduct of such an environment would encourage creativity and innovation, keeping the school on the competitive edge of producing exceptional learning experiences for students while also maintaining exceptional teacher quality.

The purpose of this study was to explore how an elementary school's participation in an action research process that was focused on peer observations impacted the creation of a learning organization. The guiding questions were:

1. What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of the change?
2. How does leadership impact the action research process focused on peer observations?
3. How does an action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?

This chapter is organized by research questions with themes and sub-themes that I identified during data analysis. Table 9 provides an overview of each theme and sub-theme. Each section is supported by evidence of how these behaviors from the various stakeholders, leadership, action research team, and teachers impacted the creation of the learning organization. I conclude each section by discussing how these themes directly answer the corresponding research questions (Table 9). The findings resulted from the analysis of participant

Table 9

Research Findings

Question	Theme	Sub-Categories
1) What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of change?	Participants' roles led to contradictory and inconsistent behavior that influenced the outcomes of the implementation of change.	Consultant/Researcher engaged in contradictory behavior of expert vs. facilitator Team Leader engaged in contradictory behavior of contributing vs. non-contributing leadership Teachers engaged in contradictory behavior of asking for peer observations and not participating in peer observations Team engaged in contradictory behavior of process-oriented vs. task-oriented team involvement Principal engaged in contradictory behavior of collaborative vs. individualized leadership
2) How does leadership impact the action research process focused on peer observations?	Leadership's nature of power and influences impacted the action research process.	Principal selecting the action research team Principal misinterpreting the action research team's data Principal not releasing teachers' resource list for peer observations Team Members designing and implementing peer observation process Team Members scheduling a meeting without consultant Team Members refusing to meeting the first time Consultant imposing a Teacher Development Model on the teachers
3) How does the action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?	Peer observation supports the creation of a learning organization through the collaborative skills learned during training.	Peer observation fosters discussion about instructional strategies Peer observation builds conversational skills for learning through Peer Observation Training Peer observation promotes collegial connections through Peer Observation Training Peer observation provides learning structure that is led by teachers' choice
	Peer observation can suppress the creation of the learning organization.	Peer observation producing unclear logistics and expectations Peer observation taking additional time away from the general work day Peer observation being apprehensive about the process

observations, researcher's notes (identified in the text by italics); phone interviews, Critical Incident interviews, meeting notes, email correspondence and meeting recordings (identified in the text by single-spaced blocked text); documents, focus groups, School Learning Culture Survey, Peer Observation Evaluation Program Survey, Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire, and the experiences that unfolded during the implementation of this action research project. The findings related to research question one are first summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Research Question One Findings

Research Question One	Findings
What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of change?	Participants' roles led to contradictory and inconsistent behavior which influenced the outcomes of the implementation of change. Consultant/Researcher – Expert vs. Facilitator Team Leader – Actively Leading vs. Non-Active Leadership Teachers – Requested Collaborative Learning vs. Not Participating Team – Process-oriented vs. Task-oriented Principal – Collaborative vs. Individualized Leadership

Engagement of Contradictory Behaviors

Many contradictions surfaced among the stakeholders of the action research process in this study. The contradictions, unintentional or intentional, created challenges and confusion that impeded the action research process. The key aspects of the contradiction were seemingly evident in roles that each stakeholder played as a participant of the action research process. As each stakeholder exhibited contradictions, the principal's contradictions were highly noticeable, mostly due to the prominence of his position as leader of the organization. However, this study

sheds light on the contribution *each* stakeholder's behaviors had on the impediment to the action research project in the creation of learning organization. In the next section, I show evidence of the contradictions in behaviors that existed for the teachers, the team leader, the principal, and me, the consultant-researcher.

Consultant-Researcher

In my role as consultant-researcher, I demonstrated different contradictory behavior with the action research team and principal. My responsibility and relationship with each of them led to different role challenges.

My contradictory behavior with the team. With the action research team, I had difficulty with my role as a both consultant and researcher. The difficulty I experienced was balancing my expectations within these roles. My researcher's notes describe my reflection regarding balancing these roles:

> *. . . There is a balance . . . . The conversation I had about doing action research with Dr. Watkins reminded me that I am the 'expert of the process'—but be guided by group (ideas, input etc.). I got those mixed up a lot. How do you guide without telling them what to do? What do you do when the collective wants to go one way and you the other—without seeming directive by saying we are going this way? Many questions . . . Learning by doing—isn't giving me the confidence needed to be an expert, or to assert myself as such to honor the process; or maybe my ego isn't.*

One example of where I struggled with asserting myself was with my desire to administer the DLOQ before determining an intervention. In addition to the focus groups and surveys that the team conducted to help identify the problem, I felt that we needed to also do the DLOQ to determine the best intervention for our identified problem: How do we create individualized

professional learning for the staff and means for teachers to collaborate? The DLOQ is a questionnaire that would have informed which of the seven dimensions of the learning organization were evident and which were not. The data would have offered additional information that I, as the expert, felt was needed to design our intervention to specifically address our identified problem and gaps in becoming a learning organization. The team was not in agreement with another school-wide survey. My researcher notes offered a summary of the conversation:

> *I pose the question to the group, How do we know what intervention to create if we are not aware of the gaps that exist in becoming a learning organization. Tammie [team member] shared, "I can think of fifteen." I asked her to give me one idea. She said, "peer observation." I challenged her to justify how that would best served the school. She continued to share that teachers stated in the focus groups that they wanted to observe each and it would give them a chance to see what they want in learn—therefore allowing them to collaborate and have individualized learning. I asked the team their thoughts and the consensus was that the teachers have gone through a series of surveys, we need to be prepared to begin the school with some outcomes as a result of the survey, not 'to welcome them with another survey.'*

This vignette is an example of how the research team overruled what I really wanted. Tammie's point was correct as the initial data from the focus group included, "I find having the opportunity to observe other teacher is like such amazing tool to evaluate yourself." Other teachers made similar comments during the focus group, such as the following, "When we get a chance to choose something that is relevant, you get more out of it." Both of these comments reinforced the consensus that was shared by the teachers in the survey. Peer observation would

address both of those items. I thought that administrating the DLOQ was a crucial aspect in determining the current learning conditions as they related to the organization. I decided to honor the collaborative nature of the process and agreed with the team. We decided to use the DLOQ as a benchmark. The team members provided justifiable information that supported the teachers and would not hinder the action research process overall. The decision to determine the intervention without the DLOQ data was not how I, "the expert," intended to guide the process; however, I went along.

This internal conflict also brought an awareness of my discomfort of having to reach consensus before moving forward in a certain direction with the team. I perceived the conversation to be confrontational because I had to justify my reasoning for what I felt was best. My contradiction was my inner desire to have things to go my way, even though I would promote the engagement of teachers' insight, ideas, and suggestions. In my role as consultant-researcher, I did not how to balance being aware of my inner desire to direct and my outward desire to collaborate. Therefore, I found myself going along with what the team wanted in an effort to not be perceived as having a directive nature. As a result, I did not always engage in critical reflection conversations in order for us to determine collectively the best possible outcome for the overall agenda. The meeting notes are a clear example of the task-focused discussion we had:

- Agenda for January 11 – Kick-off meeting
    - Explain process
    - Make connections with Teacher Keys
    - DLOQ

- Share what you feel may be engaging, connection to the learning that we are/have been doing
- Need a sub-committee to do above mentioned tasks

Need some kind of qualitative reflection/assessment on the process of Peer Collaboration thus far (Sara will create this)

My contradictory behavior impacted the action research process by not providing the team with the type of leadership they needed to maximize the reflective, focused, critical conversations that are an intricate part of the action research process. Some reflection occurred, but it was not the type needed to interrogate situations from a critical lens in order to investigate the best possible outcomes/solution as a result of the action research process.

My contradictory behavior with the principal. My contradictory behavior not only existed with the team, it also existed with the principal. As a consultant, I was hired the previous year to foster systemic collaborative learning culture with the school. Working with a team of teachers to assist in this school-wide effort was part of our next phase toward this goal. My role as consultant-researcher was added at this time. As a consultant-researcher, I offered the method action research to guide the teachers' process and the model of learning organization as a goal to strive towards. I shared with the principal my role with the team as: "I will be working with the team of teachers, guiding them through the data collection process to help us identify what the actual concerns were relating to the learning culture. This information will guide us to design an intervention that sought to help solve and/or address the formulated problem."

As we started the work, I found myself reverting to my familiar role in the school, that of teacher-leader who facilitates learning. In my previous roles as teacher, teacher coach, and faculty developer, the principal was the decision maker. I found my behaviors to be subservient and compliant to the principal. As with most teacher-leaders' experiences, whether consciously

or not, I was accustomed to following the guidance and direction of the principal. In my researcher notes, I captured my awareness of this internal conflict by stating, "*When I am going to stop holding on to the coat tail of the principal? We are partners in this process!"* During the contracting and entry conversation with Principal Barred, our discussion included our plan for handling disagreement in the action research process. He shared this with me regarding disagreements:

> . . . I think with the disagreements piece, we both work in a very professional manner. Part of this is both us guiding each other through this process and working through this. We both have the same end goals so there shouldn't be a whole lot of disagreement in other than, 'Hey, have you thought about this or have your thought about that.' So I am not worried about it. And at the end of the day I'm the principal. So you know I had to say that.

This conversation indicated the sense of partnership we agreed to as we worked together through the action research process. However, when we did have a difference of opinion, I found myself negating my perspective and going along with the notion that his point was better justified because, at the end of the day, he was the principal. Even though this comment served as a joke at that moment, it highlighted a sense of reality that we both found ourselves subject to, causing us to juggle between our typical school roles as teacher and principal and our roles as consultant and sponsor. It was important for me to assert my position for collaboration and develop the courage to make it happen in my new role as a consultant. My outward expression of this role difficulty was evident when I failed to assert myself at the principal's suggestion to postpone announcing to the team the intent of the process as being part of the research project.

When I had started working with my team as a result of the second phase of our contractual agreement, I was not sure how to introduce the concept of research to the team. My dilemma was due to my experience with how the concept of research is typically received by K-12 educators. Doing research was viewed as something that provided limited benefits to the schools. Instead of seeking advice from my resources as a consultant-researcher (i.e., literature, etc.), I resumed the role of teacher-leader and presented the dilemma to the principal. When I shared my concerns with Barred, he said:

> I think we just need to do it in the fall after you get everything in place and get the permission to do it and just say, "Here's the dissertation to my study, here's how it fits into what we have already been doing and we are just going to keep rolling with what we've been doing." It's that simple.

My researcher notes mention similar thoughts:

> *the concept of researcher has such a negative connotation. It seems that there's something that makes me separate when working with this school. How can I see that my goal is to support then and empower them. Adding this concept of researcher won't help my efforts.*

With us both sharing a similar context for research in schools, I agreed with the principal. It was the path of least resistance at the time. It provided me with an opportunity to focus on doing my initial work as a consultant before integrating the research aspect. At that time (March 2011) as a novice researcher, I was still developing the concept of what that research aspect was going to look like, hence providing me with another reason not to mention it to the team.

My uncertainty in my role as a consultant-researcher as it related to the team as well as to the principal impeded the implementation of the research process because I did not assert myself

as an "expert" in that role. My lack of stewardship of the action research process by challenging the status quo and pushing through my own challenges with confrontation was detrimental. The next section convenes the contradictory behavior that existed with the team leader of the action research team.

Team Leader

The team leader had expressed to the principal her goals to develop stronger leadership skills. She agreed to serve as the action research team leader because she was the professional learning liaison for her school: a person designated to manage teacher professional learning hours, professional learning plans for the school, and professional learning budget to report to the district. As part of the building capacity of the action research process within the school, the team leader's role was to learn how to facilitate the team through the cycles of action research. The goal was to ensure that she understood the principles of the action research practice and the basic dynamics of teams. In addition, she was the liaison among the team, principal, and me, with the primary role of keeping the lines of communication open among us. The contradictory behavior for the team leader was evident in the way she initiated her leadership within the team—active engagement, and the way she initiated her leadership with the principal and me—non-engagement.

Examples of team leader's active engagement. When interacting with the team, Nancy, the team leader, was confidant and engaging, and took more initiative. In the email conversation with the team members during the first cycles of the AR process, we saw her leadership style emerge. The team members were working through designing the survey questions during the DARE cycle.

Sheila, a team member, sent this email to the team after school, with the draft of her sub-team's survey questions attached:

> Please look this over and let us know what you think—we can modify it on Thursday when we meet. Thanks!

Only a few minutes later, team member Samantha replied:

> Thanks, Sheila. Just did a superficial quick read . . . Reads well. . . Just not sure about the word "very" in number one.

Later that evening, Nancy entered the conversation and shared:

> I agree with Samantha, "very" should not be included in #1. Some of the wording could be tweaked a bit (instead of "feel", maybe use "think"). Overall, it looks good. Let's finalize/adjust/discuss on Thursday.

In her response, the leader commented on what was stated, offered a suggestion, and set the intention for engaging conversation to delve more deeply. In addition, her response occurred during the evening, which also implied her enthusiasm and commitment to the process. Another example of her level of engagement was facilitating the team during a meeting reviewing the Seven Dimensions of the Learning Organization. The following is an excerpt of my reflections of the meeting found in my researcher memos dated 2/3/12:

> *Nancy's use of probing questions was effective in getting the group talking today. She didn't back down or move on to the next dimension until the group shared some evidence of that dimension currently happening in the school and with the integration of peer observations. We didn't spend a lot of planning time for this and she seemed so confident. The team came up with some good stuff. Very impressed with her response to the question, why are we doing this—"because we need to make sure what we are doing is helping us to become a learning organization." She gets it. . . .*

Nancy was able to demonstrate a level of certainty in her role as team leader by the way she engaged, communicated, and guided her peers on the action research team. This behavior was when working with the leadership team, consisting of the principal and me.

Examples of team leader's non-engagement. This level of confidence and communication was not always present during meetings between her, the principal and me. During these meetings, she did not share as much and appeared to be a little more passive in her engagement. An example was during a meeting we had at the end of the year where we were discussing plans for wrapping up the action research project for the year. Barred invited Nancy into the conversation by asking her to share some ideas they had expressed earlier. Another situation where her communication waned was during an incident relating to the peer observation training. My researcher notes, dated 10/14/11, captured the scenario:

> *Barred asked her to secure the substitutes for the training that he thought was the next day. She was aware that our training was not occurring until following week, however she did not clarify with Barred of the actual dates and scheduled the subs. She called me later that evening informing me of Barred's was expecting us to have a training. I asked her why didn't she tell him that our training was next week, her reply didn't offer a clear explanation which included "I don't know," "I thought it was something I may not have known about." . . . I told she could have doubled checked with me to see if something else was going on. . . . So nonetheless, subs were there . . . I get a hasty call in the morning from the principal—where are you!—not good. . . .*

Barred noticed "the team leader's level of commitment and communication is waning at a time when we are trying to creating momentum among the teachers."

Nancy's behavior was contradictory in that she led with confidence, engagement, and clarity when her role involved working with the team. This behavior was also evident in her role as a co-collaborator leader, working one on one with the principal or myself. However, when her role involved collaborating with Barred and me together, she became passive, less engaged, and less confident. He mentioned the difference when comparing a conversation with her and the one with us three together by stating, "She and I had a great conversation, I don't know what happened such now. . . . " This was the behavior Nancy continued to exhibit while leading the process. Her contradictions in behavior impeded the implementation of the action research process by not fostering consistent communication among the leaders of the action research process, me and the principal. The next section, I share the contradiction in behavior that existed with the teachers.

Teachers

Teachers also demonstrated contradictory behaviors, as seen in their stated desire for a learning experience like peer observations, but showed a lack of participation once peer observation was implemented. The action research process provided teachers with an opportunity to be decision makers in their learner process versus mandate followers. However, we see the contradiction that exists with this desire with being a decision maker about learning.

Examples of teacher-desired interest in peer observations. During the DARE cycle of the action research process, teachers stated their preference for professional learning that was focused on individualized learning needs and served as an opportunity to collaborate with their peers. The initial data-gathering process conducted by the action research team in this cycle highlighted themes from the surveys and focus groups that were conducted at the time. Key themes that supported their stated interest were:

- request for differentiated professional learning;
- an often-repeated request for more collaborative time and training;
- a request for peer observation;
- collaborating with peers and peers they do not usually work with; and
- teachers making more decisions/taking ownership.

A quote from the focus group transcription stated, "We are often told so often to differentiate instruction for kids, to differentiate instruction for kids, and it's never to differentiated instruction for us." Differentiated instruction is a strategy used with pre-assessments to determine the learning needs of individual students. Based on that learning need, lessons are constructed to help students learn and master the skill based on their individual needs. The interest in having professional learning focused on teachers' learning needs is what these teachers were looking for at Owlton. A similar sentiment was stated in the survey that was conducted and read: "I agree that the professional learning has the potential to help us but all of us do not want to learn the same thing." The desire to want professional learning that was collaborative and catered to their individual learning needs is what the initial data gathered had identified. In the next section, we see examples of the teachers' lack of participation in peer observation that offered collaboration and individualized learning.

Examples of teacher non-participation of peer observations. As a result of the teachers' feedback, the action research team decided on peer observation as an intervention that would capture their learning needs. Despite their stated understanding and interest for collaborative learning, many teachers did not participate in the peer observation experience. The team members were disappointed about the teachers' level of involvement. Their response to this setback was to create a survey to gauge what was working and what was not. However, the

feedback did not provide much insight into what was not working. The meeting notes from February 14, 2012 read as follows:

> All feedback was positive except for one potentially negative comment. The comment led for us to believe that the person who was "unhappy" was the person being observed.

Due to the limited information provided, another strategy was attempted to have teachers who participated "champion" the program at a faculty meeting. This approach was considered a strategy to encourage those who did not participate to do so. The meeting notes from March 13, 2012, showed the ideas that were shared:

- We will have 2 more sessions of Peer Observation.
- We will have one more big push at tomorrow's (3-14-12) faculty meeting for people to participate in the Peer collaboration process.
- Testimonials, Shout-Outs, Incentive (mystery ☺)**.**

The idea of having testimonials was an opportunity for teachers to be reminded of the benefits they could find within this process. During the interviews conducted at the end of the year, the team leader, Nancy, commented, "Having the teachers provide the shout-outs was a step in the right direction. I recall a teacher who was sitting next to me saying, wow, people are having great experiences. Their [teachers'] attentiveness [to the people who shared] was neat to see." Barbara who also participated recalled during her interview, "I was glad to have had the opportunity to share with the staff, my experience was just that good." The effort was put into place by the action research team to try to improve the participation rate. More insight into why the teachers did not participate is shared in later findings.

The teachers' contradiction in behavior was seen in their request for a learning opportunity that included collaboration and individualized learning, such as peer observation, but their rate of participation was low once the learning experience was actually made available.

Given this option of choice, teachers selected not to participate, whether it was from uncertainty about the process, lack of time, or being unable to embrace the non-mandatory learning opportunity fully. A team member, Darlene, made this comment during her interview in reference to teacher participation:

> Well, if you going to give a choice then you have to understand the outcome as well. You have to understand that if . . . you put it out there as a choice and three out of hundred decide to do it, then that's the outcome of you [offering] a choice.

Darlene made an interesting point about outcomes of participation when choice is rendered. Offering choice is a risk one takes when seeking high participation. However, what freedom to choose to build over time is an authentic level of participation that is originated with self-initiated effort versus force (Robbins, 1991). Carrie, a teacher who participated, mentioned in her interview:

> This [peer observation] is a great thing. It requires a willingness to be vulnerable, though. So I can see that it's something that will take time before everyone is on board. That's okay. We just need to keep [peer observations] going and allow teachers to join in the process as they see fit. I really believe in time they will. I really do.

The expectation of the action research team was to provide the teachers with a learning experience that they wanted—hence something in which they would be willing to participate. However, based on the teachers' comments, the role of teachers participating in the decision process of their learning and having the opportunity and option to engage rendered the byproduct of having low participation. As the teachers commenting on choice and participation did offer another lens to consider, the low participation was not a favorable outcome in the implementation of the action research project. However, their insight did offer points to consider

given if the opportunity presented itself with the action research team. The next section relates the contradictions that existed with the action research team members.

Action Research Team

In the beginning of the action research process during the DARE cycle, the team participation from a process-oriented model was evident. In this study, I define process-oriented as when discussing/reflecting/brainstorming ideas toward an intended goal or objective occur. In contrast, I define task-oriented as a process in which steps are taken toward a given assignment in an effort to achieve a particular outcome, with little to no discussion or analysis of the experience. An example of the team's process-oriented behavior was when they engaged each other over the development of the survey and focus group questions. The email dialogue shows the level of feedback engagement several of the team members had about anonymity with the surveys.

> Cindy replied: I do not mind collecting the surveys. I can put a folder in my mailbox and on the email, ask the teachers to turn the surveys to my mailbox. Instead of wasting paper, can we send an email to the teachers who earned a coupon and cc Barred the list of teachers who earned a coupon to wear jeans. It should not take that long to complete the list on Friday.
>
> Darlene emailed: I don't think we need to make passes. I think teachers can turn in the last page of the survey and sign their names. We can keep a list in Word and then post the list or give it to Barred if needed. Does this make sense? I think that Nancy changes were great. I agree! Let me know how I should proceed with the faculty email.
>
> Stacy's response was: I think it needs to feel as anonymous as possible to get the best responses. I think it would be better to collect names rather than have people sign their survey.

The team members were self-initiating roles, brainstorming processes, foreseeing possible dilemmas, and challenging the common thought in order to derive a doable outcome. Wendy's comments provided an insight that helped the team.

> Wendy stated: The last page of any survey done in Survey Monkey is a printout that says something along the lines of "thank you for taking this survey." It does not show any responses or identify you in any way. It only serves as an indicator that the survey was done. (This is how we currently provide evidence that we have taken the "end of section surveys" for the gifted program). I am not sure if that would change the feelings on keeping things anonymous or not.

With this information, the team leader, Nancy, had insight into a plausible solution:

> I believe once the teacher have completed their survey, they can print and sign the completion page. The anonymous part would be their responses. Isn't that what we want?

Another example of the team being process-oriented was during the analysis of the data in an effort to formulate the actual problem. Cindy and Darlene engaged in the following conversation during that session. Cindy said, "For me, it seems like people are expressing a need for more structure, more guidance, and more tailored work." Darlene added:

> That is what I am hearing, too. I don't think that the people think that the adult learning environment is static. I think that the adult teaching environment could probably use some more refining. We are clear about what we want—that's what I'm hearing. We are tired of useless professional learning. That is what everybody's saying.

Cindy then replied, "So maybe the question is, 'Do the faculty view the environment to be one where learning is taking place?'"

This level of engagement of analysis and inquiry was the highest during the DARE cycle of the action research process. The team members offered ideas, provided corrections, questioned others' thoughts, complimented others' efforts, and took initiative for leading a task. These examples of the team's process-oriented role showed the team functioning in a way that was not typical of the task-oriented teacher. Teachers were not given steps to complete to an end. Instead, they engaged each other via discussion and inquiry to determine the solution or new ideas to consider. Stacey mentioned during her interview, "I enjoyed brainstorming with the

team members about the data. I like to ask questions and challenge other thinking—that was a high point for me." This level of engagement took a shift. The team became more task-oriented in the manner in which they engaged in the action research process.

Examples of task-oriented process. The team behavior became more task-oriented with less conversation and lower levels of engagement as the action research process progressed. Sally mentioned, "I was ready to get it done. We were doing all this talking. Let's stop the taking and get it done." The meeting notes from September 1, 2011, informed of the team's desire to just do peer collaboration: "We feel as though we are ready to move into action and begin the process of Peer Collaborations." Their sentiments were also shared in the following meeting dated September 13, 2011: "We would like to play out our plan (re: peer collaboration)—direct our focus to beginning the implementation of peer collaboration, rather than all the "stuff" in between."

Even though little process-oriented discussion occurred around the team's current topics such as what to do to encourage more participation, it did not have the same level of engagement as seen during the initial DARE and DECIDE cycles. The focus had become more about completing the task of implementing peer observations, and less about wholeheartedly engaging in the process of implementing peer observations. The teams appeared to be doing what they needed to do to complete the "task" of implementing the peer observations.

The team's contradiction in behavior by being process-oriented participants versus task-oriented participants appeared to have shifted with the misinterpretation of the data, the "research" connection to this project, and the mandatory collaborative grade-level meetings. The team's willingness to be creators of change had reverted to their role of executors of tasks at this

time of the action research process, which impeded the quality and depth of its implementation. Next, the contradictory behavior of the specific principal will be discussed.

Principal

Often, a principal may face contradictory behavior as he/she begins to lead change from a collaborative framework versus an individualized framework. Principal Barred toggled between his unfamiliar collaborative leadership role in which he welcomed engagement, dialogue, and feedback, and his familiar directive leadership role in which he gave instruction, guidance, and direction. Several scenarios occurred in which contradictory behavior between the principal's stated thoughts and actions existed.

Examples of participatory leadership style. One example of the contradiction occurred during the entry and contracting process in March, 2011, in preparation for the research study. Barred expressed that he supported a collaborative environment and wanted to give teachers a voice and the autonomy to create a collaborative culture. He appeared to understand the impact of teacher involvement and the different ideas that may surface through a "dynamic and fluid" process. He stated:

> I think AR [action research] lends itself to being a positive way to do it [collaborative learning culture]. First of all, you are going to involve the stakeholders; the teachers themselves. Second, it's a dynamic and fluid process so we are not headed down some path and then realizing later on, "Well, that wasn't even the problem." This allows you to identify the problems and shift and move into providing interventions that are more appropriate for the staff.

At the end of the study, he continued to show his understanding of the collaborative involvement of teachers in cultivating a learning organization:

> The [action research team] had two main purposes: The first being to help . . . teachers have a more direct voice to the administrators about professional learning. . . . One of the things we were having a lot of trouble with was getting direct input from teachers about their own professional learning. And part of the key to building learning organization is to have that piece there.

He stated the second purpose of the action research team:

> . . . we were going from a very static culture of resistance to change, not wanting to learn new ideas, not wanting to do things differently, and trying to put in a more dynamic situation . And in doing that we needed something closer to the teacher level to work on that piece of culture. . . . it's one thing for the principal to come in and say, hey, this is what we are going to do. . . . but when you get some buy in from teachers and have some direction from teachers and more importantly teacher leadership in trying to change the culture, it is going to be more effective.

These three examples indicated that from the beginning to the end of this study, Barred's thoughts about teacher involvement and participation in creating a learning culture were apparent. The action research team was the team of teachers who used the participatory process to capture the teachers' voice. The team's objective was to identify teachers' professional learning needs and to shift the learning culture from being a static to a more dynamic environment. Barred saw this as a way to gain teacher buy-in. These are several examples of Barred's perspectives on the collaborative involvement of teachers in developing a learning culture. He clearly described creating a collaborative culture as a participatory process. The next section of this research shows examples of his contradicting individualized leadership style.

Examples of individualized leadership style. The next several examples provide actions and comments that contradict this participatory approach of teacher voice and perspective and support a more individualized, self-guided method to becoming a learning organization. In his comment below, we see his coordination of designing the school-wide learning process:

> What I don't want to do is hijack their common plan so they don't have their planning time but what I do want to do is give them some focus. So on Monday, we have collaborative and it is going to look much like this . . . they'll have a protocol [to follow] where . . . you come in and have to . . . look at a standard and look at this or that and put it in context to the standard. . . . Everybody's got a goal, so they talk about that on Monday. The reason we picked Monday is because that way they would have all week to deal with it. What I then recommended is that on Friday, they also do collaborative. [So the process would be talk—do—talk].

Barred's own plan for collaborative learning among teachers offered an opportunity for a meaningful learning experience. However, creating his own design for collaboration contradicted his stated perspective for engaging teachers' input, insight, and ingenuity in its creation.

Further, when I asked the principal to share a high point of the action research process focused on peer observation, he mentioned the following:

> But literally every week they were hitting it on all cylinders and their collaboration together and visiting each other's classrooms and working on developing lesson plans together even though they were all in different content areas led to a lot of collective . . . work.

The level of excitement in his voice, along with the details he continued to provide, was apparent in this conversation. However, his description did not pertain to the action research peer

observation process which, for example, occurred monthly, not weekly. Therefore his comment was as more so describing *his* collaborative learning model. His response suggested that the high point of the action research process stemmed from the efforts with his collaborative model.

Another incident that was evidence of his own efforts toward establishing collaborative learning in the building was through his implementation of the district's teacher performance measurement pilot. He shared how he used "his model" to foster that learning:

> I used the model that we had built for collaborative everything in the building and because of that . . . because of using that model we [achieved] my expected outcomes for any kind of collective learning or collaboration . . . peer collaboration. It wasn't so much about the [teacher performance] evaluation itself as it was about the overall learning. And the overall feedback I got at the end of the learning was, this process works for us and we get it, and we are glad that we did it together.

When I sought to clarify more about the process he used with the pilot, he asserted "the process being what I built for the professional learning cycle . . . collaborative learning."

It was evident by his words "I built" that he did have his own approach for instituting a collaborative learning culture. I respected Barred's value of ongoing learning and the passion that drove his efforts to ensure that it occurred. Nevertheless, the evidence from this study indicated the contradiction between his initial collaborative approaches and his actual individualized approach in order to achieve his desired outcomes.

Research Question One Summary

What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of the change?

The findings from this study showed that contradictory behaviors impeded the implementation process. They impeded the implementation of the action research experience by

the lack of continual engagement among team members, lack of consistent communication among the leaders of the action research project, low participation of peer observation among the teachers, and lack of in-depth modes of critical inquiry guided by the facilitator. However, despite the contradictions that the stakeholders demonstrated in the participation in an action research project, they did not stop the implementation of the action research; nevertheless, they did limit the full expression and benefits of the action research being a collaborative process for creating genuine solutions to daily work issues.

In the next theme, power and influence among the leaders, we see the impact this had on the action research process. The findings related to research question two are first summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

Research Question Two Findings

Research Question Two	Findings
How does leadership impact an action research process focused on peer observations?	Leadership's nature of power and influences impacted the action research process. **Principal** Selecting of the action research team Misinterpreting the action research team's data Not releasing teachers' resource list for peer observations **Team Leader** Designing and implementing peer observation process Scheduling a meeting without consultant Refusing to meet the first meeting of school year **Consultant** Imposing Team Development Model

Experiences of Leadership's Power and Influence

Hargreaves and Dawe (1998) informed readers about the challenges faced when implementing a collaborative culture within a bureaucratic system: " . . . prejudicial to the development of a collaborative culture which is trusting, sharing, reflective, and critical are the hierarchical relations embedded in bureaucratically driven systems" (p. 84). Hierarchical, as defined by Merriam-Webster, means relating to a group that controls an organization and is divided into different levels. The findings from this study speak to groups within the action research project that at one point or another controlled outcomes as a result of utilizing their power and influence in the given situation. The groups in this study are teams as individual people. The action research team and team leader exerted hierarchical behaviors of power and influence when their development of trust, sharing, and reflection had been betrayed. In addition, the emergence of these hierarchical relations was evident with the principal as a means of regaining control when the status quo was being shaken as a result of the action research project. Power and influence, for me as consultant-researcher, was used less as a means to regain control, and more as being the expert of the action research process to guide it. However, the findings also show what happened to me as a consultant when the team exerted power and influence and the impact it had on me in leading the process.

The next section shows evidence of the leadership's (principal, team members and leader, and consultant/researcher) use of power and influence in a democratic process. I begin with the principal, then address the team leader, and end with myself as consultant/researcher.

Incidents of the Principal's Power and Influence

This section includes three incidents of the action research project or peer observation process where power and influence were asserted and its impact on the creation of the learning

organization. The incidents are the selection of the team, the misinterpretation of action research data, and the withholding of the learning exchange document (a list of teachers' names and their self-identified strengths as a resource for teachers to select peers for observations).

Selecting and providing clear vision to the action research team. Barred and I had decided that Year II of my consulting phase would include teachers to work alongside me. I shared with him in one of our planning meetings, "for this process, we are going to need teachers who are willing to go against the norm and be ok with it." We agreed to select teachers who were innovative, creative, and out-of-the-box thinkers. However, during a conversation we had later that school year, he commented on additional factors he used for as criteria:

> I think about that and I kind of try to apply that to what we have going on here with this Action research team Committee. I think you got a lot of people that got to the table because they were that person that was out there voicing their opinion. Some of them were voicing positive opinions and some were voicing negative opinions about what this place needed. That was part of my criteria for bringing them onto this team.

His selection process served as a means to utilize teachers productively who may have voiced an opinion about school culture by affording them an opportunity to impact school improvement. A team member, Stacey, shared a similar comment at the beginning of our meeting during our data-gathering stage:

> We are selected for this committee because at one point or another we were very honest about what we thought about how things at the school were going. I know for a fact and I know the exact conversation I had with him that got me on this committee and it was me being extremely honest with him about a situation.

The construction of our team was not on a volunteer basis. It was based on a selection process using the criteria that has been previously mentioned. The principal exerted his power and influence to select members who would serve on the team in a manner he felt was permissible. My researcher notes captured my reflection regarding team selection:

> *Interesting enough he shared a good reason for when I inquire about his reason for not selecting teachers who I saw being creative thinkers to be on the team. Seemingly his reasons had a common theme, they were already on his leadership team, or he felt they would derail the process—which he provided a scenario to support answers and in hearing the scenario—I just wondered who were the teachers did he trust in this building.*

As part of the participatory aspect of action research, team formation is voluntary. By our team being selected, it negated a teacher's ability to decide to be on the team, which is a key component of action research.

In addition, having a clear and consistent understanding among the team, principal, and consultant seemed to create stagnation once the team was selected. Barred noted in his interview, "One of the things that I realized after a month or two was that I didn't feel like they understood the vision or mission of the team was." An impact that the selection of the team had was that team members did not have a clear understanding of their purpose. Stacey, a team member, mentioned during her interview, "Well, I don't think everybody bought in. I think that it was a situation where nobody was on the committee because they choose to be on the committee. It would have been better served to have people who said, 'Yes, this is what I want to do.' But instead you had people who were told, 'This is what you're gonna do.' There's going to be some resistance every time." This lack of buy-in and resistance contributed to the teachers' full understanding of the vision and mission of the team. Tammie, another team

member, shared in her interview, "I just never really figured out the focus of the team." This was the sentiment of many of the team members when we began the implementation of peer observations, the DO cycle of the action research project. The September 1, 2011 meeting notes stated, "Members are having difficulty determining what our actual purpose is and where we are going with everything." Barred also mentioned at his interview:

> All the tasks got done [by the team] but I got to the end of the year and there still wasn't a sense of "we get why we are here" by the team. And I even at that point, I said okay . . . if my description of why you are here isn't good enough, what is your description of why you are here? I got nothing. So that was kind of frustrating.

Here, he was sharing a conversation he had with a team member toward the end of the school year, indicating the confusion still remained. An impact of Barred's selection of the team on the action research process was having the team members participate in a process for which they had limited understanding and clarity of the overarching vision and mission of the principal. Stacey stated these sentiments later in her interview, "I think for several people including myself at the very beginning, it was not very clear what exactly it was we were doing." This lack of clarity caused some team members to not develop a fully clear understanding of the team's purpose throughout the majority of the project.

Misinterpreting the action research team's data. In the action research process, data were collected as an initial step to ensure that the identified problem is truly the problem within the organization. Chapter 4 provided more detail on the data collection process that the action research team underwent in spring 2011 to gain an understanding of the teachers' thinking about their learning culture. I shared with Barred the data collection process and its purpose as it was outlined during our entry and contracting conversation prior to beginning the project:

> SB: Okay. Well, just to kind of let you know, I will be meeting with the team of people that you selected to do some initial surveys to get some root cause analysis going on to see if by chance what you stated as the problem is in alignment with the staff and their problem with it will be. It's important to make sure that any work that we do has an intentional purpose and use. So I will begin setting some timeframes to meet with them and talk to some key informants. Are there any questions from that particular process?
>
> MB: No; sounds like you got a good structure in place. . . .

In the beginning of the following school year, fall 2011, I noticed a shift in the teachers' enthusiasm as compared to the prior spring and summer. The action team meeting notes on September 1st included some of their concerns that created this shift:

- Members are having difficulty determining what our actual purpose is and where we are going with everything.
- We feel as though we are ready to move into action and begin the process of Peer Collaborations.

Their concern regarding their actual purpose initially confused me because during the summer months, we had delved into the purpose of becoming a learning organization and the intervention of peer observations, and designed an action plan to implement it. However, with further analysis of the data and recollection of the experience, I noticed events that might have created the shift from a sense of clarity to confusion for the teachers. Some of these events included the overall mixed messages that the team had received. The key factor of mixed messages was the misinterpretation of the team's data for the principal's own initiatives. The meeting notes on September 13th shared team members' thoughts about the data:

- Data from last year has led to 2x as many grade-level meetings—feels like a misinterpretation of data.
- It feels as though we are being guided in certain directions, yet we are told to believe we are creating the path.

During this meeting, teachers shared their concern for misinterpretation of the data. The team saw it as misinterpretation of the data because the data collected to design and customize learning experience for the faculty was the premise for the principal's decision to increase teachers' mandatory grade-level meetings from once a week to twice a week. This concern also surfaced among the faculty. Jackie's account of the situation was:

> During the faculty meeting, he changed the mandatory collaborative meetings from 1x a week to 2x a week. When questioned about the change, he stated because it was what we wanted based on the data you completed last year.

The misinterpretation of data confirmed the team's doubts about having a sense of autonomy in this action research process and gave space to doubt all intentions associated with the project. As evidenced in the following meeting, the notes provided some initial insight that I thought created a shift in the area of trust, not necessarily among the team members, but more with regards to the trust and integrity of the action research process.

During the September 27th meeting, more specific information was shared to cement evidence that trust in the purpose and process was lacking. When asked to provide issues that led to their feelings of manipulation, the meeting notes captured the team members' following sentiments:

- Data leading to more grade-level meeting time (collaboration)—pushed off as something "we want/asked for."
- We feel manipulated. If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there. Sometimes I still lose sight of what we are doing or supposed to do. Maybe it's just me in my fog; feeling unclear—Anyway! There's a place where we're going and we just need to get there already.

- Purpose—teacher excellence. Some outcomes seemed predetermined activities geared to move the group in certain directions. Purpose was unclear—many questions about purpose went unanswered. Homework assignments not directly linked to purpose.
- Beginning: expectations were thought to be different. Now: we are being told the direction we need to go. Beginning: told to be creative, think outside of the box. Now: being placed in a "box."

The common feelings described reflected that a majority of the team felt "manipulated." The team feeling of manipulation was because the intention of the team collecting data to have a level of autonomy to customize professional learning for the faculty was now being compromised by the principal's mandates for additional grade-level collaboration during the week. His reasoning for increasing the mandates was because of his misinterpretation of the data to support his initiatives for collaborative learning in the school.

As part of the problem solving for this issue of manipulation, the team came up with several solutions relating to their concerns. One was to have the principal involved in this meeting. I thought this was a great way to incorporate the principal into the conversation of the team by means of invitation from the team. However, when reading the minutes, Barred did not see the moment of empowerment among the team members that was occurring. Rather, he saw the teachers' feelings of manipulation as a possible derailment of the action research process that might be emerging. During his post-interview, Barred subtly spoke on the issue of manipulation and shared the following:

> So then I would try and step in and get some feedback and then that was the whole, you know, subversive stuff and manipulation that was the word that they would use. We

> were being manipulated and I'm like all right, time out. Everybody, this is insane. And so the frustration that I felt with it was I'm just trying to give teachers a voice and I'm trying to give us a collaborative culture and it's getting taken way down some other funky road and I don't even know why you guys are meeting. So part of me just wanted to say stop. Just stop. I can do this without you.

Suggestively, Barred's comments above spoke to a desire for collaboration and engaging teachers, but when the process took an uncomfortable path, the principal felt the urge to regain control through his power and influence by stopping the process.

Not releasing the names needed for peer observations. Peer observation was identified as the learning model to use in creating a learning organization through this action research process. The peer observation model was used as a grassroots approach where teachers self-identified their learning strengths and areas of improvement. This approach individualized their learning needs and gave them the choice to: a) decide what best practices they wanted to model, b) self-determine their own instructional needs, and c) identify peers who model their instructional objective. During a faculty meeting, the action research team compiled a list of teachers who self-identified subjects and instructional strategies they felt strong in and would be interested in having someone come to observe. Anita, a teacher, whose interview captured her experiences during the meeting, said:

> . . . the team told us, "We wanted to do peer collaborations, but in order to do that, we want to help you identify strengths and weaknesses so that way you can observe somebody that may have something you're interested in trying out." For example, I was interested in observing somebody with centers because I don't do centers and I know that students learn very well from that, so I'd like to know, but I didn't know who would be

> really good at it. Then they passed out note cards to us asking us to write down the things that were our strengths, what we are good at. For example, one of mine [strengths], I think I'm pretty good at classroom management. I think I do really well at keeping my class together. . . . So that way, if anybody wanted to observe classroom management, they could observe me. So, we did that, [and] turned in our note cards.

The notecards that were collected at this meeting were transferred to a list referred to as *The Learning Exchange,* which was sent to administration for approval to be disseminated among the staff. There were two attempts via email to the principal to check on the status of approval for *The Learning Exchange*:

> **Sent**: Friday, January 13, 2012 11:46 AM
> **Subject**: Approval & Distribution Request: Peer Visitation: Learning Exchange List
>
> Good Day Mr. Barred,
>
> Attached is the Learning Exchange list that I referenced on Wednesday. As I shared, it's a list of teachers who have identified areas in which they are comfortable in having another colleague watch. It doesn't include a list of experts—hence the name . . . learning exchange. Through the process of peer collaboration, learning is possible for all involved.
>
> I would like to thank the team members for facilitating the activity and for promptly compiling the information for us.
>
> Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. If not, will you please email the list to the staff today—which can be used as a reference when selecting colleagues for their peer collaboration request forms.

My second request was followed by his response of not wanting to distribute at that time.

> To Barred
> Jan 24, 2012
> Good Day!!
> Did you get the email below? Is there anything you want to add to the form before I send out again?
> thanks,
>
> From Barred
> To Me
> Jan 25, 2012
> Sorry. I am not quite ready to distribute. Some good feedback came to me in IL about this so we may want to make some changes. I can talk about it more later this week.

Unfortunately, that conversation never happened.

The findings suggest that *The Learning Exchange* never got its approval because of the principal's development of the *Book of Professionals*, a resource book of teachers who were experts on certain topics. Barred shared this comment during his interview:

> We [he and I] didn't really talk about this very much but one of the *other goals* that we had for that team was them building sort of cadre of internal people that can do training and bring things to the table. Sort of a here's our book of professionals on these certain topics. Let's tap into what we have here, so that with our limited resources we do not always have to go out and find somebody. Plus, it gives more empowerment to the teachers that are in the building.

This was not mentioned during our discussions throughout the year. Reviewing my researcher's notes, I noticed a comment I made about "team members mentioned them leading mini-workshops with their peers after school; I guess this must be a part of their Wednesday meetings. I wonder?" I concluded that what Barred referenced during his interview was also what the team members had referenced. Having a *Book of Professionals* who were designated by the administration to be experts or model teachers in the building did not coincide with the teachers self-identifying their strengths for peer visits. It resembled a more controlled approach of

managing teacher talent within the building. Even though we both had a similar idea—a database of teachers' professional strengths—my database was teacher self-selected and his was mostly administration-selected. In the findings about the benefits of peer observation training, teachers showed the sense of empowerment and efficacy that emerged when teachers self-identify themselves versus being designated by administration.

Impact of the principal's power and influence. Barred's use of power and influence by withholding *The Learning Exchang*e stifled teachers' participation in the peer observation experience. The findings from the peer observation survey resonated with one teacher's comment on the survey, "I had a desire to participate but not knowing who to visit stopped me." Anita voiced, "Like I said, I would have loved to participate. The teachers that I did ask that were good at what I wanted to see really didn't prefer me observing them. They didn't feel comfortable with it." By having the list available, Anita could have identified a teacher who felt comfortable being visited by a colleague and avoided the rejection she experienced. *The Learning Exchange* list was a needed resource that could have supported teachers' participation in peer observations.

Collective Power and Influence of Team Leader and Members

The findings in this study showed where the action research team and leader used power and influence during the action research process. The next section shows evidence of the nature of power and influence among the team members: designing and implementing peer observation (a school-wide initiative), scheduling a team meeting without me, and boycotting a team meeting.

Designing and implementing peer observation process. The leader and team members were in a position to control what type of professional learning was going to be implemented that

year, and this was an example of the power and influence they had. The action research project created for them a framework that incorporated the gathering of information from the staff to guide their decision.

In the design of the training, the team members had the power to determine what the training model would look like. To involve their participation, they received two emails during the summer that led up to the optional June meeting and to the principal-requested summer meeting in July. The first email included these items for team to begin considering:

> Good Day Committee!!!
> I trust all is well. For those of you who are not able to attend the meeting tomorrow, please answer the following questions in order to incorporate your insight to the topics we plan to discuss.
>
> 1. Based on the data we've collected, analyzed and discussed, are you in agreement to implement peer observations as our first intervention beginning Fall of 2011?
>
> 2. If we do implement peer observations, what are some things we may need to consider regarding training and implementing the process at Owlton?
>
> Thanks,
> Sarah

Going into the June meeting, I wanted to confirm everyone's intention for the intervention and to be thinking about what it would look like. After the June meeting, we walked away with a tentative action plan, ideas for DLOQ revisions re: performance outcomes, and the decision to use my peer observation program. The team members (four of the seven) who attended reviewed my program and determined it would be a good fit. Having the teachers review the material ignited an intense conversation for me. Per my researcher memos, I captured my thoughts about engaging the teachers to be part of the decision-making process:

> *I felt like I was pushing them in an area they did not want to go. Sheila's comment, "Whatever it is that you want us to do and we'll do it," struck me because my goal is not*

for me to tell you but for us to come up with it together. Then Tammie's comment made me feel that growing through the process would be a waste of time, when she shared "If you have something already and you know it works, then why don't we just use it." I continued to emphasize the importance of you all sharing in that process of determining if it would work or not—the perceived notions with teachers is that they already have too much to do—so giving them more i.e. to review the program is perceived as adding more onto their plate. Yet I am here to engage them in a process where their participation is the main part of what we do. It was really uncomfortable to push them to explore while not being perceived as the bad guy by adding more things on their plate to do.

As we were able to decide on peer observation for the program use, I followed up with an additional email leading to a principal-requested meeting in July. The email included this information relating to peer observations:

Good Day!

I trust the summer is going well.

Attached you will find . . . Peer Collaboration Planning Form . . .

1. Peer Collaboration was decided as the intervention for the fall to achieve our goal in meeting the teachers' need for individualized learning and peer collaboration. Let's Collaborate training seminar and Peer Collaboration implementation process are two resources to guide this process. (See attached)

a. Read over the training and implementation overview (this will be modified based on our needs).

b. Complete the reflection/brainstorming activities to generate your thoughts and ideas toward the training and implementation process.

Looking forward to having a productive meeting and a creative, innovative and exploratory school year that will lead to the outcomes we want to see for the teachers and students at Owlton!

Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments....

All the best,
Sarah

I wanted the team to have some time to look over the peer observation components and determine what was best for the faculty. During the July 2011 meeting, I reviewed their feedback and, from the team consensus, I compiled their information to design the peer observation training and program. Tables 12 and 13 show excerpts from the final compilation of ideas.

From this feedback, the training plan was designed, proposed, and approved by the principal and presented to the faculty during the Kickoff meeting. Figure 1 is the visual created by the team to summarize for the staff our plan of action during the kick-off.

Table 12

Peer Collaboration Training Development Planning Form

Criteria	Examples Comments	Decision
1. Will the training be site-based after school or job-embedded?	90-minute planning blocks Two-hour training rotations	Training will be site-based job-embedded for three 90-minute sessions per day
2. Monthly Link Activity will be completed during: a. faculty meetings monthly (30 minutes of meeting) b. teachers' own time convenient for them c. other	Faculty meeting's agenda includes time for Link Teams to work. Link teams coordinate their own time to meet, i.e., after school, off campus	Faculty meetings will be used for teachers to complete their link activity with their link team.
3. The number of training session preferred: a. 3 sessions b. 4 sessions c. 5 sessions or more	Use results from collaborative readiness assessment to deter culture's trust/relational levels.	3 sessions

Table 13

Peer Collaboration Program Development: Step 1-Brainstorm

1. What options do you plan to provide for your staff to select their colleagues for visitation, i.e., grade level, content-related, vertical teams, cross-departmental teams, etc.?	Teachers will be able to select the colleagues that they will like to see.
2. How well does your current master schedule allow time for teachers to visit others: • on their grade level/department • outside of their grade level/department?	Teachers could see each other during their specials/activity period.
3. Would planning time be an effective time for peer observation conferences? If not, when during the day could be designated for peer collaboration conversations?	Peer Collaboration Conversations will take place as follows: Pre: During Wednesday faculty meeting time prior to Peer Observation Week. The recommendation is to designate this Wednesday as Teacher Excellence where teachers who are not participating in Peer Collaboration would work on Teacher Excellence/Teacher Performance Measurement activity TBD by team. Post: 1-3 days after visitation—on teachers own time i.e. after school.
4. What resources would be needed to cover classes for peer collaborations?	Starting in January, each month will have a Peer Collaboration week. Substitutes will be provided for those teachers who would like to request a visit during this time. Teachers are able to visit during their free time as well.

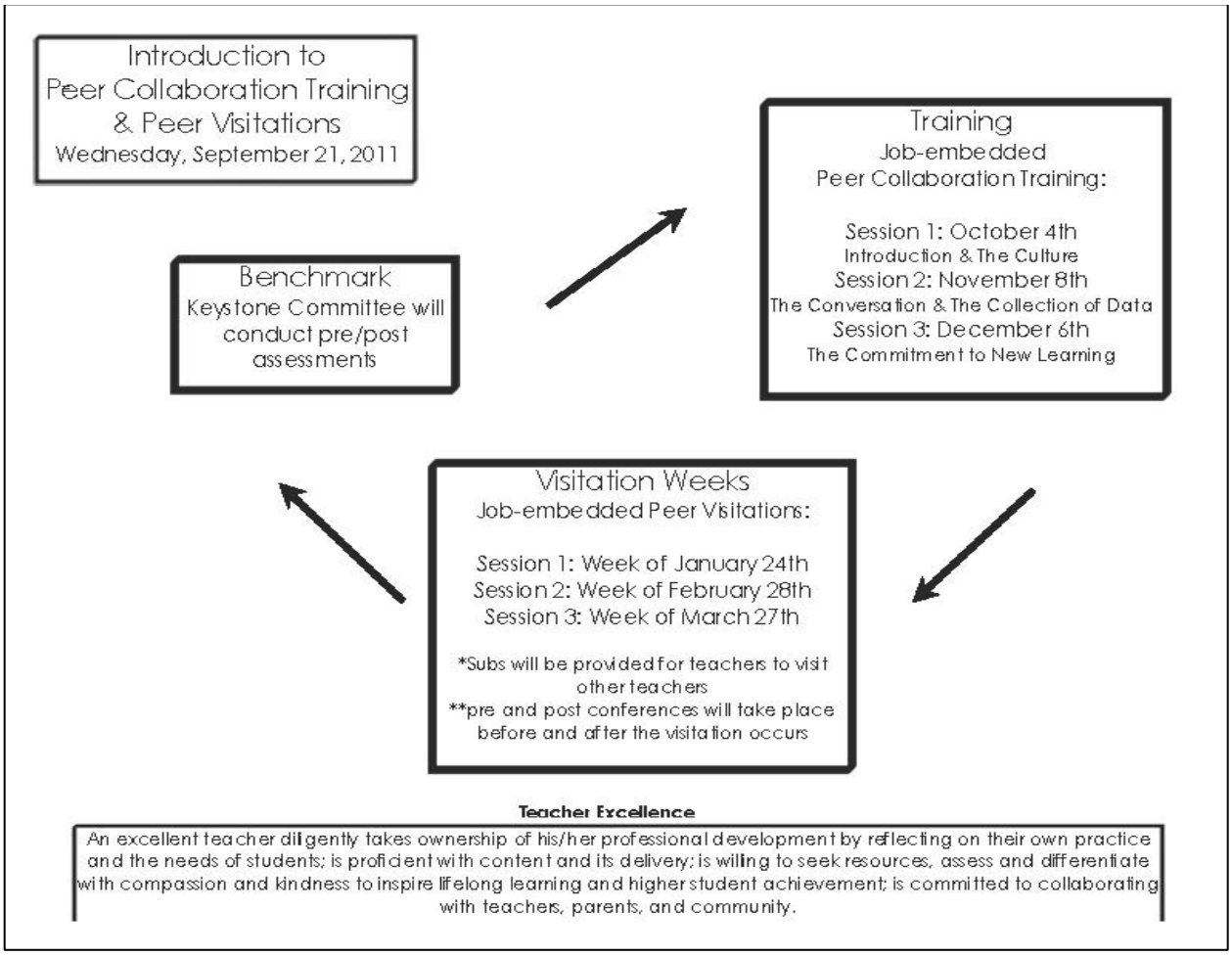


Figure 1. Peer observation flowchart

These examples show the power and influence that the team had in designing systemic learning experience for the staff. Darlene commented during her interview, "I think that at first the process started well because . . . we got data saying they wanted to do this . . . and the high point was being able to tell the teachers this is something that asked for and that this is something we're going to implement for you." Seldom do teachers have the power to implement a program that is custom designed for them. The next section shares how the team's use of power and influence shifted from constructing problems to deconstructing political norms.

Scheduling a meeting without consultant. The team leader and members exerted their power and influence when they scheduled a meeting among themselves without my attendance. Nancy, the leader, mentioned to me that they were planning to meet. I captured our conversation in my researcher's notes:

> ***August 28, 2011*** *- Nancy called me yesterday informing me of a meeting that the team was planning to have without me. She told me that she had been meaning to meet with the team outside of the research just to see where they are and to touch base with them. I asked if is something wrong, she said that she didn't think so and hoped not. But she just wanted to meet with them. . . . It was difficult to get a clear answer from her. I finally stopped asking and asked her to let me know what happened. She told me not to worry. I found this conversation unusual. Needless to say I was livid. What could possibly be going on team that would caused them not to meet with me? What am I doing wrong—what is causing them to rally against me. . . . I went to Barred today to see if he was aware of this. He told me that "yes, Nancy asked me if they could meet without you having to be there. I told them, sure." He saw the puzzled look—told me not to worry about it. Not the answer I wanted to hear. My trust is now being shaken.*

This vignette or experience provided an example of how the team leader asserted power to organize a meeting without me. She took the initiative to ask the principal and gather the team to discuss their concerns. Stacey mentioned in her interview, "That meeting was nothing more than us coming together to express our concerns about it appearing as if another agenda was going on." This element of power and influence can be considered another anomaly in schools among teachers. We seldom hear of teachers in the daily course of school coming together to stand up when they are sensing things may not be happening to serve their best interest. Their level of assertion of power and influence continued over the next several days as they decided to not attend the first action research meeting of that school year.

Refusing to meet at the first meeting. Power and influence continued with the team leader with a meeting that I had scheduled, the first action research for the year (outside of the off-campus meeting in August). I received the following email about the conflict regarding the meeting time and date:

> Sarah,
> We have pictures after school on Tuesday so it might be crazy trying to have a meeting while we are getting called for pictures.
> Cindy

I had inquired with Cindy to verify if the following Tuesday was a meeting for the Instructional Leadership Team. She informed me that it was. Therefore, I responded to the team:

> Monday, August 29, 2011
> Ok thanks . . . my recommendation is that we meet tomorrow. This will give us an opportunity to prepare for Grade Level—Sensing Activity (Due 9/12) and to review/assign tasks leading up our meeting on the 21st with the staff.
> Team, share with me your thoughts.

The team did not respond, indicating that Nancy had taken the lead in asserting the team's position of utilizing their power and influence to not meet. Nancy replied:

> Sarah- 8/29
> With the all that's going on tomorrow, it would be best if we meet on Tuesday, September 13, 2011. In addition, will have an opportunity to discuss and work through Ms. Smith's role with the action research team and/or Peer Observation piece. Thank you!
> Nancy

In my reply, I shared the reasons the team need to meeting order to stay in sync with our action. As I was sensing there was more going on about the need to meet, I also inquired about the possible issues that were brewing. I replied:

> Good Day!
>
> Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Nancy. From my understanding picture taking is all that is going on tomorrow. Is there something else?
>
> My concern is waiting until the September 13th will put us behind our schedule. The week of September 12th is when we had planned to share with the teachers our Sensing Journey Review Activity—which hasn't been completed or finalized as an activity to do.
>
> Per our meeting on Friday, we were planning to meet either this Tuesday or next depending on Leadership meeting cycle—which either one would have provided another meeting time prior to September 12th.
>
> If someone has a solution to how we can get the work done that needs to get done in alignment with our action plan other than meeting tomorrow, do share. Otherwise, I still recommend that we meet tomorrow.
>
> If there are some other issues/concerns that people are having, please send me a personal email regarding.
>
> Thanks,
> Sarah

No further emails on this topic were sent. I approached Nancy in school that day about the situation. After offering several possible options for meeting, she countered each with a reason that it would not work, then gently, yet firmly, concluded the conversation with the statement, "We are not meeting on Tuesday." With the intervention of the principal, we agreed to meet on the following Thursday in order to maintain the timeline of the action plan. The team and

leader'z power and influence led to the decision of us not having a meeting on Tuesday. During the meeting on Thursday, the meeting notes from September 1, 2011 read:

- Confusion on the purpose of re-capping the Sensing Journey's from last year. Sarah explained . . . the purpose of the Sensing Journey Re-cap during grade-level meetings was to review results from previous year, compile in designated form and distribute among the staff so the entire staff would have access to the school's results. It was decided that the Sensing Journey does not need to be administered to the entire staff again.

It appeared as though the initial concern the team had was finishing up the sensing journey activity. By asserting their power and influence from wanting to schedule a meeting after the timeline for the sensing journey activity to voicing their concerns at the meeting, the team members and leaders were able to get the results they wanted by not continuing with the sensing journey.

The collective voice of teachers. The following meeting was another example of how the teachers asserted collective power and influence by voicing their concerns. During this meeting on September 13, 2011, each teacher's comments reinforced a consistent theme. The meeting notes stated, "During check-in time, it was noted that the 'stuff' in between seems to be a bit overwhelming. Members shared how they did not know what was going." The stuff in-between was most likely the sensing journey and teacher leader development model that I had proposed to the team in August as a way to support the learning goals they had set during the summer. My researcher's memos captured what I recalled as a powerful statement from the team leader as she summed up team's thoughts: "We feel we are being manipulated, I thought we were designing professional learning for the staff, not all this other stuff."

The collective voice activist of the teachers stopped me in my tracks. My researcher notes captured my internal response:

> *I was unnerved to say the least by all the teachers teaming up saying that they did not know what all this stuff was. How could they not know we met last year, summer, came up with action plan for this year, together—what did I miss? What's going on— They're teaming up against me for sure, first the secret meeting, not wanting to meet, now this. Feeling manipulated is not the goal. And they all feel this way! I knew I had to deal with this so, I made the recommendation for us to finish-up with our plans for the kick-off meeting and to spend our next meeting dedicated to exploring their concerns of manipulation further . . . is it going to get any better than this???.*

I found the collective voice of the team intimidating, but I knew these concerns had to be addressed in order for the team to move forward. The team again asserted their level of power and influence by collectively letting me know they were not content with what was going on with the process. At the time, I did not view this as a powerful moment in the action research process. I was too busy thinking about what I may have done wrong, and perhaps I did not effectively communicate what we were doing. However, through critical analysis of the data, I was able to see the collective power of the teachers and how it allowed them to pause the process in a way that allowed their voices to be heard. The action research process yielded opportunities for the team's voices to be used and heard, rendering their power and influence in this project.

Collective power and influence declined. The level of power and influence that was demonstrated by the team had shortly subsided. When Barred saw the meeting notes from our manipulation discussion meeting, he felt we were not "heading in the right direction." He shared during his interview:

> If I see things are going well and heading down the right track, we just kind of keep going with it. … If I feel like things are not going down that road or I see data that is showing it is not heading in the right direction, I'm very open to stopping and retooling and look at what we are doing things.

With regard to the action research process, we actually were not far off track. The teachers were voicing their concerns about a process that was labeled as participatory, but appeared to be "directing them where to go." Barred did stop and offer an opportunity for retooling to occur when he scheduled a mandatory meeting with the team, without me, to discuss the issue of manipulation. Barred informed me that he was attending the meetings as part of the team's request. The team members did not comment much, if at all, about the meeting, nor did I ask. My researcher memos highlight this shift:

> *The team never really mentioned much about the meeting with the principal. I just keep things moving. I did not revisit our steps from our manipulation discussion either—we all seem to just look at what it was we had to do next and that became the topics of our discussion. . . . Barred started to come to a couple of meetings afterwards—something he said the "teachers wanted him to do" as a result of the manipulation meeting. Perhaps so, but more so on their terms—not his. Ironically our meeting conversation was heading us into that direction—that was my point to him that was never heard.*

After this incident, the collective power and influence of team did not emerge in this capacity during the remaining of the project. Yet its impact on the action research process was made. It provided validity to the attribute of action research being a process that provides empowerment and voice among its participants. It also reminded how that sense of

empowerment through action research can be neutralized by the system in which action research is situated. The team's power and influence also allowed them to design and implement a system-wide learning experience for their colleagues. This was another example of the empowerment through the process of action research.

Consultant-Researcher Power and Influence

In my role as consultant, I had the power and influence to lead the team through an organizational change process. The principal bought into my decision to use action research with a team of teachers as means to create a learning organization in the school when he agreed to the process during our entry and contracting meeting. I also had the buy-in of the team during the initial stages of the action research process. However, buy-in of the team changed during the later cycles.

The initial cycles of the action research process occurred at a very busy time of year for teachers. In addition to their regular responsibilities with teaching, they were also involved in and/or with the responsibility of additional tasks (i.e., administering the state criterion-referenced exam, final grade reporting, end-of-the-year program, packing up their classrooms, etc.).

The team's active participation described in Chapter 4 in executing the action research cycles, especially during the initial stages, was an example of their decision to buy in to my power and influence of leading this process. However, my power and influence with the team shifted in the beginning of the DO cycle that started in the fall, 2011. The shift was evident in the way the teachers responded to my Teacher Leader Development Plan. The concept of this model was spurred on by the team setting teacher leader goals, which were introduced during the summer after completing our SWOT chart as a part of our team development. I asked the team if they would be interested in setting goals that would support the feedback they shared on their

chart. I informed them it would be optional. Four teachers completed that work and turned it into me. The goals these team members selected were:

> Wendy – To be a positive advocate for my peers while successfully doing my job.
>
> Sheila – To improve my ability to speak in front of my peers and validate the quality of my instruction by sharing knowledge/ideas with my colleagues in a professional development/formal setting.
>
> Tammie – To be a leader that helps effectively implement programs that are beneficial to the schools.
>
> Cindy – Improve relationships with my peers. Be a better partner, understand their goals and needs, and learn to work together to help achieve each other goals.

The Teacher Development Model came about as a result of my "uncertainty" about what to do next with the team. I had completed all the actionable portions of the action research process, gathered data, analyzed it, determined the problem, and designed a solution. My researcher notes shared my thoughts about creating this model:

> *. . . My intent for creating this model was not be 'like the principal' by giving directives. It was an idea I had but did asked them for feedback. It was a follow-up from the SWOT activity. But also it came because I was uncertain about "what to do" with the team since my facilitating of all the actionable components of the AR process had been completed. To implement the action plan of peer observation—only involved assigning people to conduct trainings and setting up logistic for peer observations to occur—I wouldn't require two meeting a month for the remaining of the year, so I created the Teacher Leader Development Model—for us to do—it was something I was certain about (teacher support and coaching) and could support the teachers. I knew how to do that.*

Despite my efforts at creating something to do that related to a previous interest, the model was not well received by team when I introduced it in August, 2011. This was during the

same timeframe when the team was meeting privately and asserting their power and influence. This email from Stacey showed an example of the feedback received**:**

> Hi Sarah,
> I am sorry, but I just don't have the time right now.
> This is a new grade level for me and I am busy getting my self adjusted.
> Sorry!
> Stacey

In the team meeting it was clear, as stated in other sections, that they were not looking for other "stuff" to do and were just interested in "playing out the plan" for peer observations.

My facilitation of the initial cycles of the action research process happened with no overt resistance to the process; even during one of the busiest times of the school year, the teachers complied. However, this was not case when I attempted to facilitate the Teacher Leadership Model. The teachers resisted. These two experiences facilitating action research cycles and Teacher Leadership Model helped me to see my power and influence. Specifically, it helped me to see how conditional my power and influence were as they were not based on my positionality but on the teachers' willingness comply or resist. The findings from the study show how the power and influence I had decreased when the team's power and influence increased. This occurred once the idea of distrust in the process emerged. Yet, their power and influence did not impede the power and influence of the principal.

When power and influence work in schools. This section provides evidence of the principal asserting his power of influence to affect the intended outcomes. However, there are times when asserting power and influence can serve as a means to impact outcomes effectively. I provide the perspective that Barred shared with me regarding his rationale for using power and influence when striving to achieve an intended goal. This further lays the foundation of how the principal's power and influence became a mitigating factor in the action research process.

Principal's perspective on power and influence. Toward the latter part of first semester, we began discussing the effectiveness of the team which led to a conversation in which Barred asked a powerful question: "What do you do to remove the power and influence and still have things work?" I responded by saying "I don't know" and he continued to shed light on his perspective with my follow-up inquiry:

> MB: You can't. And I will tell you why you can't. If you could, communes would have worked. If you could, communism could have worked.
>
> SB: So what motivates you with me? No one tells me to do what I am doing.
>
> MB: We are passionate about what we are doing and there is an inherent trigger in people that get passionate about what they do. That's why I said earlier, you're not always going to find a mama in there but you can train people to be that way. I mean, you are getting in to some deep-seated internal motivations and long-term behavior modification by systems. I mean we have modified people's behavior to act this way even when they don't want to act this way sometimes. So we go back and modify the behavior again.

This conversation provided some insight into Barred's perspective for employing power and influence. He was aware and understood the impact that systems, in particular bureaucratic systems, have in manipulating the way teachers think about their behavior. He was not hesitant to discuss the issue of power and influence as he saw it as a means to an end for achieving his outcomes. He continued to explain when I asked how the school (as another system) impacts that behavior by saying:

> Clear expectations, you have to insert a little bit of power and influence—you have to. There's no way to start that process without having some of that and then provide environments that support what you want. . . . That's all you can do.

In analyzing these conversations, I shared a degree of agreement that the system at large has begun to alter the way teachers tend to think and has generated a group of people who need to be guided and given clear expectations in order to execute the intended goals of leadership

properly. As such, it had become his innate way of governing the school. The findings of this study support the advantages for power and influence regarding teachers' participation with peer observation participation. Power and influence were not employed for this learning experience; hence, many teachers did not participate. Conversely, the principal's mandatory grade-level collaboration meetings had full participation. The level of participation contributed to an increase in the area of Team Learning, one of the seven indicators of the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire—hence meeting the principal's mark toward the intended goal of becoming a learning organization.

As power and influence seemed to be the easy means to an end, I observed the principal's a sense of sincerity for applying a shared leadership approach to leading through the action research process. He shared during the year-end interview:

> That's something I really want to figure out how to better balance. How do you stay involved but also give them autonomy? So there's really two questions to that. One is you either get involved and lose autonomy or you put a group of already developed all that stuff in place and let them have the autonomy and just stay away.

In his response, Barred mentioned the idea of having a "developed team" as the answer to being able to not be involved. This perspective lends itself to the bureaucratic philosophy where the product is the emphasis over the process. Teams of teachers leading professional learning culture changes in schools are atypical. Therefore, it takes an approach such as participatory action research to put the structure in place to begin the *process* of developing a team. All in all, his expressed desire to learn how to create balance between leadership involvement and teacher autonomy was shifted, resulting in this action research process

Research Question Two Summary

How does leadership impact the action research process focused on peer observations?

The findings on the theme of the power and influence of leadership on action research process helped me see the different facets of power and influence. It was easily identified with the designated leader, the principal, as we saw with the evidence. His power and influence impeded the participatory aspects of the action research process by misinterpreting the data to the concept of collaboration relatable to his initiative. This impacted the trust the team had in the process and created a shift in their enthusiasm, but it did not stop them from completing the peer observation process. His power and influence also allowed for an action research process to be introduced to teachers. In addition, it caused teachers to participate in collaboration, which created a positive attitude towards collaborative learning in the building.

The team's power and influence impacted the action research process by creating learning experiences that were aligned with the needs of the teachers. This power and influence also impacted the action research process by demonstrating an example of what teacher empowerment looked like during this process and the shifts it created. The team responses to my introduction of the Team Development Model brought awareness to the type of power and influence I had as a consultant and how the affective nature of trust can impact that positionality.

The next section discusses the impact peer observation had on the creation of a learning organization. Table 14 first summarizes the findings from research question three.

Impact of Peer Observations on Creating a Learning Organization

Robbins (1991) asserted that "peer [observations] . . . [provide] a structure for building a shared knowledge base capable of advancing not only teaching profession by the educational process that contributes to the collective success of individual students" (p. 13). The action

research team determined that peer observations were the best tool to achieve the outcome of creating a learning organization culture at Owlton. In some school settings, teachers do not see peer observations as an equitable learning exchange process among peers; rather, they see it as a punitive tool for marginal teachers to learn from or be evaluated by the "master teacher." The combination of training and practice afforded the action research team to help lessen some of those perceptions in order to create a more non-threatening, collaborative learning experience.

Table 14

Research Question Three Findings

Research Question Three	Findings
How does the action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?	Peer observation supports the creation of a learning organization through the collaborative skills learned during training Fostering discussion about instructional strategies Building conversational skills through Peer Observation Training Promoting collegial connections through Peer Observation Training Providing learning structure that is led by teachers' choice Peer observation can suppress the creation of the learning organization Producing unclear logistics and expectations Taking additional time away from the general work day Generating apprehensive about the process

The findings for research question three are categorized into two groups, Supportive and Suppressive. The supportive themes that I identified during this phase included: a) fostering discussion about instructional strategies; b) building conversational skills through Peer Observation Training; c) promoting collegial connections through Peer Observation Training; and d) providing learning structure that is led by teachers' choice. The suppressive themes I identified were: a) producing unclear expectations and logistics, b) taking additional time away from the general work day, and c) being apprehensive about the process.

Supportive Factors of Peer Observations

Peer observation was the intervention used to meet the learning needs of the teachers as part of the action research team's initial findings. After the analysis of the end-of-year surveys and teacher interviews, I noticed the teachers' overall perception of the peer observation experience was positive. The factors contributing to the positive perception of peer observation were fostering discussion about instructional strategies, building conversational skills through Peer Observation Training, promoting collegial connections through Peer Observation Training, and providing learning structure that is led by teachers' choice. These factors are discussed in the next section.

Fosters discussion about instructional strategies. The Peer Observation Year-End Evaluation Survey, designed by the action research team, was administered at the end of the school year. The survey was an online survey consisting of nine open-ended questions that indicated how teachers saw peer observations as an effective tool to learn, collaborate, and share with their peers. Since comments were not associated with the teachers' names, comments from the survey were referenced by the teachers. Table 15 is a summary of the results from the survey. In addition, teachers' interviews were included in this section as well.

Table 15

Peer Observation End-of-the-Year Survey Summary

Expectation of Process From Peer Observation Training	Motivation in Process	Hesitation/ Prohibition in Process	Application of Conversation Skills Collaborative Learning	Learning Outcomes Due to Process	Satisfaction Level of Process
To learn new strategies, best practices from peers	Improve my craft	Time restraints/ too busy	Discussion after visit, a few discussed prior	New math method introduced	Continue volunteer basis
Facilitate learning from each other	Opportunity to learn from and gain feedback from peers	Current demands, mandates, and obligations	Reflection	Strategies for small group instruction	Well-run program
More involvement	To see what's successful in other classrooms	Paperwork involved with participating	Asked questions	Gain insight into student expectations	Impromptu/ uncertainty about the process
Sharing of ideas promote learning for both.	Support school initiative	Fear of judgment/anxiety	Shared ideas	Ideas for teaching writing	Enjoyed once I did it
	Curious	Not knowing who to see/Not sure who to visit	Compare/contrast/ combine approaches used in each classroom	Strategies for dealing with behavioral issues	Able to collaborate with peers
		Unclear about the process: how to sign up; substitute schedules		Classroom Organization	Like the ability to learn something of my choice
		Didn't want to take time away from classroom time			
		Too formal of a process			

Forty-six of 52 teachers completed the Peer Observation End-of-the-Year Survey. Of the 46 teachers, 41% participated in peer observation and 59% did not. Participation included requesting to observe a teacher and/or being observed by a teacher. Despite the level of participation, the expectation after peer observation training resonated with the notion that peer observations served as a means for learning among peers. Several teachers' expectations from the survey were in alignment with the following teacher's comment, "I expected to learn from my peers and take away helpful practices that I could use in my classroom." Peer observation training that the action research team provided helped many teachers to see the peer observation process as a means for learning versus being a punitive, judgmental experience. This helped set the tone for the teachers' discussion about learning.

Shared learning builds new knowledge. Many of the teachers who participated in the study provided specific concepts and comments about what they learned. One teacher shared what she learned as a result of her observation with the statement, "I was able to view small groups within a lower-grades class. We discussed the management and curriculum for this type of class, and compared/contrasted the small groups that I use in my own classroom." Another teacher mentioned, "My coworker came and observed . . . how I transitioned from whole group to small group. She was able to observe how I managed learning in the room and the strategies I used for different learner." A teacher shared how he was able to gain a new approach from his experience: "I observed math centers, and my math centers were also observed. We were able to pull ideas from both sets to create something totally new. It was great! All constructive!" Teachers offered each other learning experiences that expanded their current knowledge base. In addition to instructional strategies, classroom management techniques also served as learning moment for teachers. A teacher shared, "I was able to learn how my colleague dealt with

behavioral issue[s]." The survey provided examples of the knowledge that was gained and the knowledge that was shared among participating teachers.

In addition to the surveys, the Critical Incident interviews that were conducted continued to identify the same common theme regarding peer observation as an opportunity to learn from each other. A teacher participant, Jackie, stated:

> I got to go see a teacher that I really wanted to go see and observe . . . I got to step into her classroom because I really just wanted to see not how she teaches but how she runs her classroom and the [learning] stations so that I knew how to better prepare my kids for the following year. . . . just that opportunity was a big, a huge high point [in the peer observation process].

Not only were teachers' learning about new ideas, but they were applying what they saw in the classroom. Brad commented during his interview, "The biggest outcome for me was when I implemented [the strategy] in my classroom, which I started right away. I could see the success, the learning with the students." The findings from this study show how peer observation initiated dialogue, inquiry, and application of instructional strategies to improve teacher practice.

The teachers at Owlton had a desire to learn from each other and, more importantly, saw the value that their colleagues brought to their own learning experience and interest. The teachers' selection of such words as helpful, strengthen, opportunity, learn, compare, and collaborate identified actionable outcomes resulting from peer observations. Within the creation of a learning organization, the ability for the system to see meaningful outcomes for navigating into an open system for learning is important. It is what will produce ongoing learning for continuous improvement.

Shared learning builds pride. This type of learning interchange occurring in a school not only improves teachers' instructional practice, but builds a sense of pride. A teacher commented in the survey, "A peer asked if she could come visit and I was pleased to have her do so. It was nice to have someone think they could benefit from seeing what I do." As resources to help teachers identify who to visit, the action research team created a list of teachers' strengths. Even though this list was not disseminated among the staff due to political issues that were occurring at the time, the facilitation of this activity did render a high point in the peer observation experience for participant Jackie:

> I think a high point would be just the fact someone asked, "What are you good at? And what someone else could benefit from [as it relates to your teaching]? I thought that was wonderful for teachers because oftentimes we're never asked, "What you are good at?" It's mostly, "Let me teach you this, Let me teach you that." So to be asked, "Hey, write down two things or if there is one thing that you're really good at, write it down because somebody in this room may need to come to you for help or assistance in how to get better at it."

Teachers seeking each other for learning different instructional strategies fostered a sense of pride among some teachers.

Through peer observation, teachers' talents began to be viewed, experienced, and respected as a valuable knowledge source, thereby promoting an environment where ongoing learning for improvement could occur. Teachers engaging in inquiry—whether it was asking herself/himself "What is it that I want to learn?" or asking peers, "Can you tell me more about the technique I saw you do?"—combined with dialogue generated a vehicle for teachers to share, expand their instructional knowledge, and, in some cases, "create something totally new." The

opportunity for teachers to engage in dialogue about their practice also prompted teachers to have a level of ownership and mindfulness about their practice. As a teacher shared, "[It gave me an] opportunity to self-reflect and work on [my learning] goals."

Builds conversational skills. Peer observation training provides the added benefit to the peer observation experience by equipping the teacher with the skills for effective conversations; shifting the process from an evaluative experience to a reflective learning outcome, reducing anxiety with the concept of "observation," and promoting congeniality. With these elements present, an open system for learning is created. The action research team leader, Nancy, made the comment during her interview, "I think by teachers learning the different components and the different steps of peer collaboration, teachers are now more willing to open up and discuss and share strategies or techniques to other teachers." This development of collegial conversation was sorely needed as many school settings can be deemed closed systems with the tendency for work to occur in isolation. The conversation skills learned during this training supported the concept of a learning organization as it provides a common language for engagement in pairs, teams, or as an organization. Creating a congruent voice for learning and growing is a step in the right direction for ongoing learning and continued improvement that impacts change.

Fosters dialogue and inquiry. The Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) was also given to the faculty of teachers as a pre- and post-assessment of the learning culture. The DLOQ uses the seven dimensions of a learning organization to determine an organization's status at that moment in time. The seven dimensions include Continuous Learning, Dialogue and Inquiry, Team Learning, Embedded System, Empowerment, System Connections, and Provide Leadership (Marsick & Watkins, 1996). It served as a benchmark to see what impact, if any, the action research project focused on peer observation

had on the creation of a learning organization within the school. The change in scores between the pre and the post questionnaire indicated a 30% increase in the area of Dialogue and Inquiry (see Figure 2).

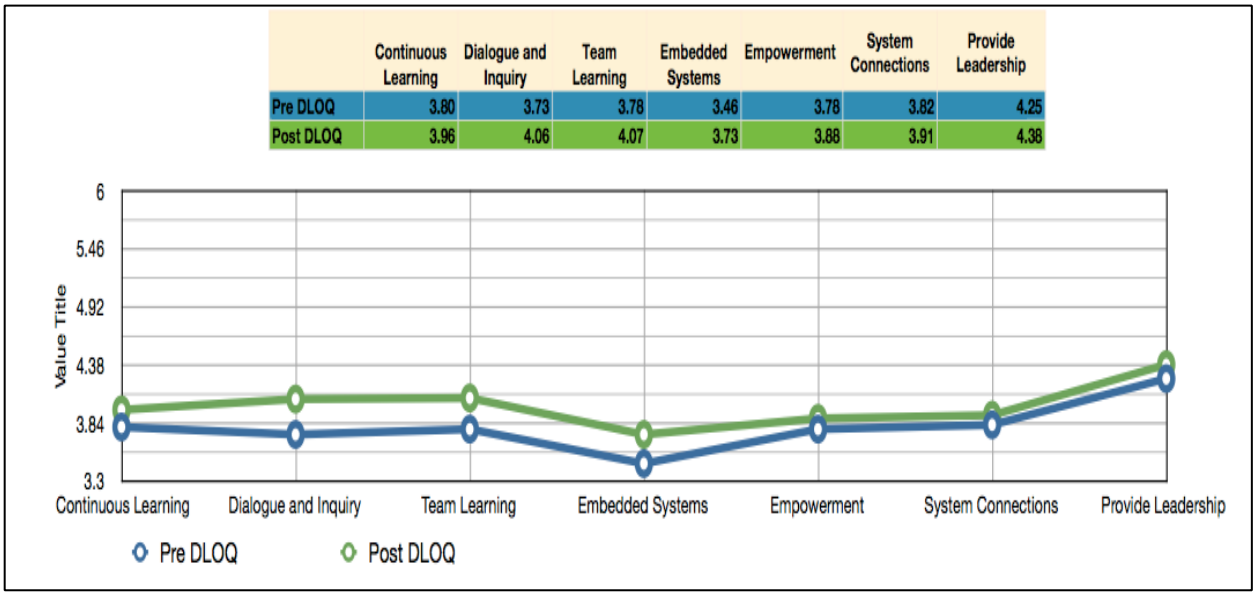


Figure 2. Pre and post results of the Dimension of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DOLQ)

This dimension was described by Marsick and Watkins (1996) as "people gain productive reasoning skills to express their views and the capacity to listen and inquire into the views of others; the culture is changed to support questioning, feedback, and experimentation" (p. 34). This percentage score increase can be attributed to the knowledge that the teachers gained during the peer observation training, i.e., questioning skills, paraphrasing, commenting, listening. An example of these skills from training being applied within the organization was captured in my researcher's notes. A teacher during a leadership meeting made this statement as she raised her hand to interject her thoughts: "I have a clarifying question, as we learned during our training."

As an example of inquiry skills learned, Jackie mentioned how she actually used the questioning skills during her peer observation experience:

> We talked about . . . what we saw, what we liked. We asked different questions. Like I had noticed some things in her classroom that I wanted to ask about and so we just kind of discussed those things. It was either later that afternoon, like after school or the next day or something [when we met]. Not shortly after.

Jackie and her colleague "ask[ing] different questions" was another example of the use of dialogue and inquiry that was part of the training's conversation skills module. Bob also used questioning skills; however, his experiences were more self-reflective. During Bob's interview, we saw the nature of inquiry being used as a self-reflection tool:

> Once I saw the activity that was being used to teach a lesson, I thought, "Well okay, why do they use that—why do they use that activity as opposed to another activity. I was curious to know what their thinking was behind the lesson and was looking forward to talking about it afterwards.

Teachers benefited from learning how to communicate effectively with each other as well as the means to be reflective practitioners. Developing an approach and common language around asking questions created an acceptance and expectation for inquiry among teachers.

Another key component to cultivating effective dialogue and inquiry is listening. Carrie, a teacher, shared during her interview, "[Training] heightened her sensitivity to the skill of listening." Jackie shared her lack of awareness of her ability to listen and how the training changed her perception about the value of listening. She stated:

> I remember this one activity that we did . . . I totally bombed it because a story was read and we had to listen for the words like "left and right" and pass something left or

> right depending on the story and all I was listening to was for the words "left" and "right." And when questions were asked about the story afterwards I had no idea what the story was about and it just taught me a lesson like, "Okay, you need to listen to the big picture."

Jackie's recognition about herself led to the realization of the need for listening skills in conjunction with dialogue and inquiry:

> You know, just learning how to ask follow-up questions and different types of questions that there are, that [is not enough] because . . . teachers ask questions all the time and you know we talk all the time but we don't always know how to listen. And so I think that that's something that I know I needed to work . . . so I enjoyed [the activity].

Peer observation training brought awareness or remembrance of the conversational skills commenting, listening, and questioning that may often be taken for granted. The training helped teachers reassess their functionality of these skills when collaboratively learning with one other. Conversation skills equip teachers with the tools for productive inquiry and dialogue, a key element for transitioning teachers from isolation to collaboration.

Promotes collegial connection. In addition to conversational development, the training offered a sense of connection among peers. One of the key elements of the training goals was to create a safe space for learning among their peers. A personality test, True Colors, was given to the teachers that allowed them to self-identify into a particular personality type. True Colors is a personality assessment designed by Bob Lowery that categorizes people into four types: Gold, Orange, Blue, and Green. It was derived from the Myers-Briggs personality model because it was often used in school settings. Connection and bonding begin with a sense of understanding of one another, and this activity provides an opportunity to begin that understanding. The

interviews, as well as the survey, indicated the True Colors portion being a high point for many teachers. Renee shared, "I remember doing the [personality] thing, you know, defining everyone's [personality] and learning how to communicate with [people] . . . and learning to look at people and accept them for who they are . . . [while] helping to push them." Anita shared her encounter with the training: "[W]e were able to answer the questions and identity our [personality type] and then share it with everyone else, we joked about it by saying, 'Oh, that's why you're that way because you're that color.' I think that was probably why I think it's a high point [because] we were able to say that though out the rest of the yea[r]." The personality assessment during peer observation training allowed teachers to bond by understanding and honoring the similarities and differences each had.

Accepting similarities and differences. Peer observation training set out to create an opportunity to explore teachers' similarities and differences and to create space for acceptance that could support genuine learning experiences existing among the staff. Barbara's comment during the interview was, "I think the outcome for the teachers that not everybody is the exact same, and yet you can learn from one another," which shed light on the fact that the goal of collegial connections was made. Mary agreed, "I thought it was really excellent to get to know the other teachers, get to know their strengths, their areas they want to improve. It was helpful in building [this kind of] support and a structure within a faculty."

The peer observation training also allowed teachers to create an increased level of acceptance. Carrie concurred by sharing her value regarding this part of the training as "the one that stood out the most for me was just accepting people, as we are [all] different . . . with the different learning styles." She continued to share how the training made her "less fearful" and "more comfortable about doing the whole [peer observation] process as a result of this activity.

The training fostered elements that increased the feelings of comfort, acceptance, and respect among teachers. With these elements built into a culture, openness and willingness to learn from one another can become the norm.

Encourages team learning. Even though many teachers did not participate in the peer observation process, the conversation skills became a common practice in daily discussions among teachers in their frequent team meetings. Nancy, team leader, shared during her interview that "actually the teachers . . . enjoyed communicating, they enjoyed sharing experiences . . . making connections with their colleagues. Teachers were applying these skills immediately into their group meeting settings; grade level and leadership." This use of these skills in their grade-level meetings was aligned with the increase of 28% that the DLOQ showed in the area of Team Learning. Watkins and Marsick's (1996) description of team learning in their model of learning organization was "work [that] is designed to use groups to access different modes of thinking; groups are expected to learn together and work together; collaboration is valued by the culture and rewarded" (p. 34). Since peer observation did not have high participation, the increase in this dimension was most likely due to mandatory collaborative meetings, peer observation training team learning activities, and professional learning meetings required by the principal. However, the findings show how teachers found ways to incorporate these skills into their daily collaborative experiences. Anita shared how this training transferred into her grade-level team experiences by saying, "Now when we would go into our meetings, we can understand why some people speak up and some people don't and why some people take charge and say 'Hey, I'll do the minutes, you just give us some input.' . . . So we were able to give out and accept jobs a little easier."

Provides learning structure with a focus on teachers' choice. The initial data from the DARE cycle indicated the teachers' desire to have professional learning focused on their needs. Peer observation was a process that allowed teachers to self-select other teachers to observe that would support their learning goals and/or interests. One teacher comment from the survey stated, "I like to visit teachers of my own choice and look for teachers who would benefit mine." When asked what they would like to see with peer observation in the future, the teachers' interest in keeping the process voluntary indicated their appreciation of this learning model as one of choice. A teacher commented on the survey, "Allow teachers to choose which classroom to visit and allow teachers to decide what they want to look for [regarding their learning needs]." Another teacher offered the potential consequences to the process if peer observations were not a chosen effort: "For those on the fence or oppose to peer observation, making this . . . a demand will only further segregate the staff. For those comfortable in their 'teaching skin,' this won't be a bother, but to someone who quakes at the thought of another somebody coming into their classroom, this could be a real stress inducer." This teacher saw the benefit of a learning culture that incorporates teacher observations by allowing teachers the choice to participate when they are ready to do so. This teacher's emphasis on peer observations being a teacher-led process appeared as a common theme in the survey. Another teacher commented in the survey, "Only if you have something that you would like to implement in your classroom should you do peer observation." Again, the emphasis was being placed on teachers making the decision about the best time for their participation. In Barbara's interview, she shared that the high point of peer observations was the having the opportunity to choose. She stated:

> I got to go see a teacher I really wanted to observe. . . . I got to step into her classroom because I really just wanted to see not how she teaches, but how she runs her classroom

> and the stations so that I knew how to better prepare my kids for the following year. So . . . just having that opportunity was a big, a huge, high point.

Teachers prefer to have choice as it relates to their professional learning. Peer observation is a learning system that can offer the level of choice and autonomy in their learning. Jackie shared an insight to the potential benefits of choice impacting learning:

> I think . . . the biggest . . . thing is choice. If you don't have choice, people are not going to want to learn, like you know, from each other . . . when you decide you want to do something because you chose to do it, you're going to put your everything into it.

By choosing what one wants to learn, one allows the learning to become a more meaningful source of knowledge. The peer observation models that were used in this study fostered choice, which the findings indicated was a key component when creating learning experiences for teachers. The next section explores the suppressive factors that impacted the peer observations.

Suppressive Factors of Peer Observations

While teachers expressed their interest for peer observations, collaboration, and learning with their peers in the findings, there was a lack of participation among the staff. After analysis of the end-of-year surveys and teacher interviews, evidence such as perceptions of unclear expectations and logistics, time, and apprehensiveness about the process was identified as constraints that impacted participation in the peer observation experience. The next section includes findings that informed the reasons for the teachers' lack of participation.

Unclear logistics and expectations. When interviewing teachers about any overall low points in their reflection of the peer observation process, one theme that I identified was the logistics of the actual program implementation. One concern regarding logistics of the program was the teachers' inability to identify peers to visit for their peer observation experience. In the

survey response, a teacher simply indicated "I did not know who to go visit" as the reason for not participating. The action research team was proactive in addressing this need by creating a teacher learning exchange list, where teachers identified their instructional strengths. The purpose was to provide a resource for teachers' strengths. The list, which was titled *The Learning Exchange*, was sent to the administration to disseminate among the faculty via the online communication center, the schoolhouse, but this was never done. During the interviews, Barbara shared, "I was waiting for the list to come out so I can pick someone to visit, but it never did so I didn't bother." The hesitation of the administration to share the list was never fully explored at that time. However, the lack of this integral tool resulted in some teacher frustrations and lack of participation in the peer observation experience.

Planning and scheduling. Another logistical concern was planning and scheduling. The action research team designed a structured timeline for teachers to observe another colleague one week out of each month. Substitute teachers were provided and the action research team was responsible for handling the logistics of securing the substitute and confirming observation schedules for that week. The teachers had to submit a request form two weeks prior to indicate their interest for observation. The teachers indicated there were several incidents where information on logistics to request an observation was not properly disseminated. Jackie went into significant detail about a logistics dilemma that frustrated her and her colleague with shortened time to observe each other's classroom:

> The one thing that I got frustrated with was . . . basically the planning of it. . . . We emailed the contact person several times to confirm receipt of our peer observation request but never got a response and then we were assuming okay, well, I guess it's fine because we were the only people, I think, doing peer observation at that time. So we

> assumed that we were going to have a sub for the visits since there was no one else to share the sub with. However, that sub got pulled to go somewhere else. So that affected our experience and it was disappointing and frustration. The person who I went to observe and I . . . just decided . . . we'll just make the best of it even though we have like thirty minutes or twenty-five minutes in the classroom. We should have each had the opportunity to go in and observe for at least an hour.

She identified this incident as a low point in her peer observation experience.

Here, it was important for the system of peer observations to be working well to support the overall goal of the learning organization. The combination of teachers feeling "frustrated" and "agitated," as Jackie described, along with insufficient allotted time for visiting, significantly negated the intended goal of learning. Jackie's sentiments not only referenced logistical concerns but learning concerns as well.

Other examples of peer observation system concerns included Patty's comment during her interview, "Due dates for request were not clearly stated," and Sharon's thoughts, "I signed up for the final one but never got any info." These two logistical issues had to do with the lack of clear expectations and procedures. In a learning organization, systems are created to assist the flow of learning to ensure that access is provided and integrated with the work. It is important that any hindrance to the flow of learning is addressed and modifications are made.

Additional time commitment. The word *time* was a very prominent response in the survey for why the teachers did not participate in the peer observation experience. It also appeared frequently when teachers commented on their own hesitation in participating. Several teachers provided more specific reasons for not having the common response of "no time" within the study.

Time away from classroom. One reason was teachers not wanting to divert their time "away from the classroom" and their students. A teacher responded in the survey, "At that time, there was a lot on my plate with the 16 boys." Similarly another teacher shared, "[My] class was very challenging and I wanted my full attention on my students." A broader perspective summarized the dilemma faced with classroom time and peer observation time when a participant stated, "I feel many teachers were overwhelmed this year with just keeping up with mandatory everyday tasks and just didn't have time." When giving the choice in teaching, a key part of the mandatory everyday tasks versus teacher learning, it appeared that the option to teach and work with their students was the prominent decision.

Carrie, a teacher who participated in an interview, provided a nice vignette of her time priority with both being a teacher learning and being a teacher:

> My main focus is the children and if it comes down to me focusing on something with staff development and meeting with a parent . . . I personally will choose my children first. So that [peer observations] may not be a priority at the time for me. I mean it's all wonderful but in my eight hour-plus day, and the more children you get, the more you have to give. . . .

Carrie identified certain specifics that teachers may face in the course of doing their job and the conundrum of building in time for her learning needs.

The peer observation had a time requirement of one hour observing, with the suggested timeframe of 15 to 30 minutes prior to and after observation to discuss the learning, which typically took place during non-instructional time. Some teachers found preparing to be away from the classroom to be more work in and of itself. In the survey, a teacher commented that, "It is easier to be in your own classroom and teach than it is to plan for a sub." Jackie shared similar

sentiments during her interview as she highlighted in more detail her experience for planning for a sub for her peer visit:

> We had a sub for two hours and it was a little bit of work to prepare for the sub because you know that's always the case—it sounds great "I'll just get a sub" but that's work, too. You know, you might stay after school a little bit to do that but it was [worth it].

The time commitment for participating in peer observation seemingly was perceived as greater than the one-hour timeframe given. It included the preparation for being away during that timeframe, which seem overwhelming for many teachers in light of what they had to do.

Demands outside of the classroom. A teacher shared that not only her classroom dynamics impacted her participation, but also confirmed the additional things that were lurking around as well when she said, "The makeup of [my] class was strange and very difficult. Add that to everything else, it ended up as too much right off." The "everything else" that she mentioned mirrored the sentiments of other teachers regarding the current demands they were faced with. These demands were a common perspective many teachers had that prohibited their participation in peer observation. As a teacher shared, "Teachers have so little time to do all of the demands place on them." An assessment of the demands placed on teachers during the year of the study was summarized by a participant: "Teachers were busy and overwhelmed with the amount of work they already do. We have so little time to do all of the demands placed on us. I think it became one more thing on a list." In Carrie's interview, she stressed the reality of these demands, even for an experienced teacher: "So I mean there's a lot of demands on teachers and me being an experienced teacher, it is more and more every year and that is not just a cliché but it truly is." A few teachers shared similar sentiments along the lines of those by this teacher

from the survey: "I did not make time for it . . . I regret that, I think it would have been a good experience." As a result of the demands, a teacher expressed her disappointment in not participating: "I would have loved to [participate], I was focused on the 'mandatory' obligations. It was also interesting to see in the findings that several teachers felt that making peer observations a mandatory process would have increased it participation rate." Even though the majority of the teachers stated in the survey that peer observation should be a voluntary process, it was interesting to see several teachers' perspective about wishing it were another mandatory thing that had to be done.

Lack of participation in peer observation appeared to result more from teachers' perception of their lack of time, due to such demands as classroom responsibility and the overall obligations of teaching in public school. Time for professional learning is a prominent challenge faced in schools today. These findings support the theory that lack of available time continues to be a primary reason shared by teachers as a hindrance for engaging in professional learning.

Some teachers in the survey thought a way to eliminate time as a hindering factor and increase participation was to make peer observation mandatory. This is in contradiction with the majority of the teachers' responses supporting the need for it to be choice-based. A teacher commented on the survey, "[Peer observations] needs to be mandatory (or seemingly so)." Another teacher agreed and added on, "One [observation] per semester at your convenience should be the requirement." Both of these suggestions for a mandatory peer observation process leave little room for choice. Nonetheless, it was interesting to see teachers express an association that full participation typically requires a mandated expectation, something that teachers, in general, greatly oppose.

Apprehension about the process. Even though the training's goal was to reduce the level of anxiety about being observed, some teachers were still not comfortable with the process. A teacher shared in the survey that "fear of judgment and anxiety" was something he believed prohibited peer observation from being more successful. The "fear" is not only for new teachers as this teacher's comments indicated, "It still takes some breaking down walls between people. There are a lot of new people who don't always feel comfortable being vulnerable. (Guess that's true for 'old' people too.)" This statement sheds light on the human factor that exists with inviting another colleague into the classroom. The teachers indicated that the shift in perception about peer observation still happens over time. A teacher's survey comment stated, "They [teachers] have to get used to the idea and realize it is not threatening." Teachers may understand the concept of peer observation as a means of learning, yet not partake of the process because of their apprehension.

Amy experienced an encounter with a teacher who had some apprehension and described it:

> I was asking some of my peers who was really good at teaching centers. They said, "Oh, you need to see so-and-so or so-and-so." I said, "Okay." So I went to those individuals and I asked them, I said, "Hey, can I come observe you? I heard you're really good with centers and I would like to see how it's done." They said, "I prefer not to because I am not comfortable with people observing me." I think that's where we struggled because a lot of people wouldn't participate. I did get observed, but I didn't have the opportunity to go observe what it is I wanted to observe.

Amy's request to observe a colleague was greeted by the teacher's apprehension of the process. The experience led her to not participate in observing a colleague because she "did not want to

risk being told no again." As teachers' timing in embracing peer observation as a source of learning may vary, we see the importance of creating a list of willing participants in an effort not to stifle the learning of others.

Even though peer observation training emphasized that the purpose of observations was to learn and not evaluate, the perception of observation being evaluative is a deep-seated mental construct from years of observation as a means for evaluation, judgment, and critique from a supervisory point of view. However, it may require some teachers to actually participate in a peer visit for them to change their perspective. As Carrie shared in her interview:

> I think it is one of those experiences that people are still really hesitant to do but I think if they actually tried it and saw that it's not scary and no one is coming to judge them, it's more a learning experience [where] you can learn new things from other people, I think it would help change attitudes a lot.

Carrie's comment reflected the hope for peer observation as a source of learning for teachers: "We always have [something] we have to learn, but in this respect this [peer observations] individualizes it for the teacher and I think over time the process would engage and promote the dream [a learning culture]."

The findings from the study helped illustrate how the natural aspects of time, anxiety, and logistics can hamper teachers' involvement. However, peer observation training helped to bring a sense of connection, understanding, and value for teachers to learn from one another.

Research Question Three Summary

How does the action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?

The findings indicated that teachers did see peer observation as a means for them to connect and have collegial conversations about instruction with their peers. The connection and conversational skills they learned during the peer observation training allowed them to engage in dialogue and inquiry about their practices. Peer observation met the teachers' need for individualized professional learning because they could observe and learn from other teachers based on their interests. The findings indicated the importance of providing a list of teachers and topics to help them select those teachers who would best assist in their learning needs. Not knowing whom to observe prohibited participation in some cases. Also, having clarity around how the logistical systems works, i.e., scheduling a peer observation, classroom coverage, was a concern that limited teacher participation in the peer observation. In addition, time was noted as an inhibitor to participation. Concerns with time ranged from the designation of a specific week for observing to the feeling of having too much on their plates to try and coordinate an observation.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Owlton consistently met and exceeded its annual yearly progress (AYP) goal, a national measurement for academic progress in schools, by scoring 75% on state skill assessments. Owlton's scores were among the highest in the state. In addition, students scored well into the 95% to 98% range on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), a national standardized test. Even though the school was meeting and exceeding state and national measurements for academic success, the principal saw that the learning culture among his faculty lacked collaboration and opportunities to develop and grow as professionals. Emphasis on nation-wide averages to determine the academic success of schools can result in a false pretense of academic success for schools whose student population overall enters with a high inclination to achieve. Teachers in this setting can become complacent with their practice when they exceed the academic indicators. The principal's goal was to foster a learning organization that would shift the focus from state and national matrices that determine student success to cultivating teacher excellence that actualizes student success. He sought to create an environment where teachers' talent and expertise were the key components for meeting the ever-changing learning needs of their students. The goal of this action research project was to determine the underlying issues facing the teachers' learning culture and to create interventions that would help it become a learning organization.

The purpose of this action research case study was to explore how an elementary school's participation in an action research process that was focused on peer observations impacted the

development and creation of a learning organization. The three guiding questions of this study were:

1. What impact do participants' roles have on the implementation of the change?
2. How does leadership impact the action research process focused on peer observations?
3. How does an action research project focused on peer observation support the creation of a learning organization?

The chapter provides a summary of the findings outlined by the three research questions. Four conclusions follow that were drawn from the study results. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study

This project consisted of an action research study in a PreK-5 elementary school in an affluent community in the southeastern region of the United States. The action research team consisted of seven teachers at the elementary school: two specialty teachers (art and music), four general education teachers, and one special education teacher. The purpose of the team was to guide the creation of the learning organization as part of the principal's vision for teacher development in his school. Watkins and Marsick (1996) defined the learning organization as continuing learning with the capacity to transform itself. This team used the action research process focused on peer observations as an intervention. The team selected peer observation as the best means to address the teachers' desire for collaboration with each other and for individualized professional learning. The teachers' learning desires were derived from focus groups and surveys conducted during the initial stages of the action research process to determine how the faculty viewed its current learning environment. The action research process

led to the creation of peer observation training and peer observation process for the faculty of the elementary school. Data were collected from six teachers, four team members, and the principal through Critical Incident interviews, which were conducted at the end of the study. In addition to the interviews, email correspondence, researcher's notes, meeting notes, surveys, and questionnaires were triangulated to develop the findings of this study. Noteworthy learning outcomes were achieved as a result of this study regarding the challenges faced when implementing an action research approach that is focused on creating a learning culture in a school that emulates a bureaucratic system. It also unveiled the impact of stakeholder roles, which demonstrated contradictory behaviors when engaged in an action research process. The study's findings also brought insight into how the leaders of the action research process leveraged their realm of power and influence when implementing action research in a school setting. In addition, this research revealed how action research that is focused on peer observations supports collaborative teacher learning in a school by engaging conversations, reflection, and inquiry about instructional strategies; by offering choice in the learning process; and by building connections through acceptance of each other. It also revealed how time, current demands and obligations, logistics of peer observation, and overall anxiety about visiting peer classrooms can limit teachers' involvement in peer observation, hence hindering the potential for learning. The findings were structured by their association to the three research questions and were presented in the Chapter 5.

Conclusions

> Empowerment begins with a group of educator practitioners who views themselves not merely as consumers of someone else's knowledge but as knowledge creators in their own right.
>
> – Anderson, Herr, & Nilhen

The six main conclusions of this action research study moved us closer to discovering ways that teachers can be creators of knowledge with less dependency on the knowledge that is created outside of them. The conclusions drawn from this research project were: a) stakeholders' contradictory behavior is a natural byproduct of the mere nature of action research being infused into a social institution driven by bureaucratic structures; b) an action research process can trigger action research team members to enact their realm of power and influence; c) the action research process triggered the consultant-researcher to relinquish her power and influence and become less participatory as the expert of the action research process; d) peer observation training and peer observation experience included activities and concepts that teachers needed to be involved in as a means of becoming a learning organization; e) the role of principalship is challenged during an action research process in the creation of a learning organization; and f) mishaps in the implementation of a process such as action research in an elementary school can render learning opportunities to create more authentic process to outcomes. Each conclusion is expounded in the next sections.

Conclusion 1: Stakeholders' contradictory behavior is a natural byproduct of the mere nature of action research being infused into a social institution driven by bureaucratic norms. Contradictory behavior that existed among the stakeholders of an action research process is nestled in the larger construct of contradictions within the institution. The infusion of action research into a social institution such as schools creates the larger construct of contradiction within the system as two different political agendas became present (Hutchinson &

Whitehouse, 1986). These two different political agendas, bilateral and unilateral control, are principles under the philosophy of action research and bureaucratic structures, respectively. Action research is a collaborative, participatory, inquiry-based problem-solving approach that promotes effective and practical change (Stringer, 2007). It encourages bilateral control in resolving issues within the system. Metha (2013) stated that

> bureaucracy is organized around a logic of managerial control, with power largely concentrated at the top and workers seen as largely interchangeable at the bottom. In such a system, standardization is ensured by creating elaborate rules and procedures that cover the range of circumstances that actors in the system are likely to confront. (p. 467)

Bureaucratically governed systems encourage unilateral control where resolving issues reside at the managerial level. Even though the bureaucratic system intended to, and did in many cases, provide structure within organizations in an effort to maintain efficiency and increase productivity (Wong & Sunderman, 2001), its structural format can limit opportunities for employee and organizational development and change. When action research emerges in a social institution such as a school that has the historical presence of an authoritative, top-down, and task-oriented political agenda (Kimbrough & Todd, 1967), a disturbance in the system has the potential to occur. Argyris and Schön (1978) emphasized that "social systems are self-reinforcing systems which strive to remain in something like an equilibrium" (p. 80). The political agenda of action research began to tip the equilibrium that social institutions such as schools often like to uphold.

In the implementation of this action research process, I knew that action research had the potential to get "messy," but I was unaware of the deep-seated impact the process could have on the school. Anderson et al. (2007) made this statement: "the task of action research is to strip

away the unexamined theoretical baggage that accumulated around almost everything we do in schools" (p. 6). The unexamined theoretical baggage in schools rests in the bureaucratic norms that exist in this environment that tend to govern most things done in schools (Kimbrough & Todd, 1967, Metha, 2013).

The inconsistency of the behavior among the participants in this study was indicative of the social context in which the stakeholders were a part. Trent and Lim's (2010) study on teacher identity formation among secondary teachers served to inform that educators' identity of their role is related to the "social, cultural and political contexts" of the school (p. 1618). The participants' contradictory behaviors were merely emulating the larger construct of contradiction occurring within the social context of the school.

The action research process generated contradiction within the system by providing an opportunity for teachers to assume roles and responsibilities at the school's systemic level that were not common in their typical social structure governed by bureaucratic norms. These roles and responsibilities generated the following new behaviors: teachers gathering data from their peers to determine the root causes of stagnating teacher learning in their building; teachers designing professional learning at a systemic level; teachers openly voicing their concerns about feelings of manipulation; and teachers having a choice to identify learning needs and collaborating with others to meet those needs. These scenarios of teacher participation on a systemic level disturbed the typical hierarchical relationship. Kimbrough and Todd (1967) helped us to understand how these action research scenarios contradicted the hierarchical relationships within the school system:

> School systems develop specific rules of procedures, which are legitimatized by the force of specialized knowledge and weight of hierarchical authority built into the system.

> These rules are designed to encourage rational behavior that is expected to achieve the goals often predetermined within the hierarchy. Irrational behavior in the form of student or faculty cliques, (informal organizations) is neither expected nor condoned in theory. (p. 221)

The action research team's new participatory behaviors could be viewed as "irrational" because they related to the typical expectation of teachers' roles in the hierarchy of authority within the system. Therefore, when the principal became disturbed by the "irrational" behavior of the teachers voicing their concerns, he began to identify with his role as a unilateral leader. He felt he could achieve his predetermined goal of a collaborative learning culture when he stated, "I can do this without them [the team]" during the post-interview. His reversion to his status quo leadership positionality, where the hierarchy predetermines the goals in the system, created a reaction from the action research team and teachers. These participants reverted to their own roles within the original political agenda of the social institution by being task-oriented and skeptical of the process (team), doubting the concept of teachers' choice (teachers), and engaging less as a leader when among principal and consultant (team leader). Their reactions were characteristic of behaviors typically seen and/or felt in the current system. I also found myself reverting to the typical social norms of following the leadership of the principal versus directly testing the leadership's actions as a collaborative partner in facilitating the action research process. Hutchinson and Whitehouse (1986) shared how action research can be its own worst enemy: "the paradox confronting action research is that its very strength in being able to critically challenge . . . is also its weakness when it confronts the status quo" (p. 86).

The mental maps created by the bureaucratic systems in which we work as teachers and leaders tend to govern our actions more so than the thoughts and perspectives we espouse. The

impact these socially imposed mental maps have on the actions of teachers or leaders may be something of which they are or are not aware. This concept can be further understood by examining Argyris and Schön's (1974) theory of action, which identifies the contradiction that we see in the organization and among the participants. To this effect, Argyris and Schön (1974, cited in Smith, 2001, 2013) stated:

> When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of incompatibility of the two theories. (pp. 6-7)

The principal's espoused theory (bilateral control) was not compatible with his theory-in-use (unilateral control). The consequence of this triggered a reaction in the system, resulting in the exposure of incompatibility between the espoused theory and the theory-in-use among the other participants in this study. Governing variables, values that people pursue to satisfy, can motivate our theory-in-use when triggered by threatening or embarrassing occurrences (Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985), causing their reasoning and actions to conform to particular behaviors such as "defensiveness, self-fulfilling processes, unilateral control, to win and not lose, suppress negative feelings" (Argyris & Schön, 1996, p. 92). When threatening or embarrassing circumstances occur, our espoused theory (what we say) is put to the test as our true governing variables begin to guide our actions. The governing variables of the participants were influenced by the current social context of bureaucratic norms.

The introduction of action research into the system gave the teachers permission to engage in a way that was contrary to the current social structure. This in itself can trigger a threat by shifting the ways things typically have been done in a school. The action research team voicing its concerns about manipulation prompted a perceived threat by the principal, thereby putting his theory of action to the test. The behaviors the participants reverted to were primarily seen in the social context of schools that are governed by bureaucratic norms: hierarchical control, task-oriented structured roles and responsibilities, and the like (Metha, 2013; Wong & Sunderman, 2001).

Argyris and Schön (1974) created a model that describes the theories in use that can stifle an organization's ability to delve beyond the surface when seeking solutions to its problems. This inability to delve keeps the organization in a single-loop learning process, whereby problems are technically handled, but core solutions are seldom achieved and routine behaviors seldom changed (Argyris & Schön, 1974). The goal is to move towards double-loop learning, whereby ideas are challenged and assumptions are tested not only to solve the surface problem, but to change the norms and values governing the initial problem. Creating change at that level produces more effective and sustainable outcomes within an organization (Argyris et al., 1985).

The model is categorized into two components, Model I and Model II Theories-in-Use, and identifies inhibitors to double-loop learning and ways to enhance it. Each component identifies the governing variables, action strategies, and consequences people tend to exhibit when behaviors in one of the two components are present. The governing variables are driven by the values, beliefs, and policies that exist and are safeguarded by action strategies that protect these variables. These actions are followed by consequences that are intended to gratify the governing variables (see Table 16).

Table 16

Governing Variables, Action Strategies, and Consequences

Governing Variables	Action Strategies	Consequences
Values that actors seek to satisfy	Sequences of moves used by actors in particular situations to satisfy governing variables	Those outcomes the actor believes will result from the action and will satisfy governing variables

Source: Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith (1985)

The extensive research conducted by Argyris and Schön (1974) showed a consistency among the theories-in-use of nearly everyone they studied. Their research enabled them to create their master program of Model I Theories-in-Use that consist of these four governing variables: a) achieve the purpose as the actor defines it; b) win, do not lose; c) suppress negative feelings; and d) emphasize rationality.

We find these variables to be similar to the characteristics of social institutions governed by bureaucratic norms (see Table 17), where the hierarchy serves as the key source of communication and delegation of purpose, rules and overall authority, official roles among employees, and rules and policies that can foster win and do not lose environment (Metha, 2013, Wong & Sunderman, 2001). The table also references action strategies and consequences when people are operating in Model I behaviors, such as mistrust, defensives, and unilateral control, which were also evident in this study. Model I Theory-in-Use orientation has similar attributes found in the social context of schools.

Table 17

Comparison of Characteristics of Bureaucratic Norms to Components of Model I Theory-in-Use

Bureaucratic Characteristics	Governing Variables	Action Strategies	Consequences
Routine Standardization of work processes Managerial control by administrative class Implement directives from above Hierarchical: strong state, weak practitioner class (Metha,2013) Authority is exercised through the hierarchical ordering of relationship and systems of communication Impersonal relationships are assumed to assure the detachment necessary for efficiency to govern administrative decision (Wong, Sunderaman, 2001) Assignment of activities to individuals as fixed duties (Smith,2001)	Unilateral control Maximize win Minimize loss Minimize expressing or generating negative feelings Be rational and minimize emotionality	Design, manage, and plan unilaterally Own and control the task Unilaterally protect self and others Evaluate others in ways that do not encourage testing the validity of the evaluation	Defensiveness Mistrust Competition Conformity Use of Power Low risk taking Low freedom of choice Decreased effectiveness

Source of Components of Model I Theory-in-Use: Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith (1985)

The second component is Model II Theory-in-Use. While the concepts in Model II are not novel, they tend to be theories people actually espouse to and seldom put to use. The governing variables of Model II are: a) valid information, b) free and informed choice, and c) internal commitment (Argyris et al., 1985, p. 98). Producing actions consistent with these governing variables are intended to interrupt the counterproductive components of Model I (Argyris & Schön, 1974). They also foster double-loop learning, whereby resolutions to issues are challenged and integrated in order to get to the root cause, generally our governing values, to create sustainable change.

The components of Model II resemble the characteristics of the action research process (see Table 18). Action research is a process that has a better chance of thriving when Model II behavior exists in the organization because action research principles are aligned with the governing variables, action strategies, and consequences of Model II. Even though Model II behavior is most desired, it is difficult to achieve because many organizations exist in the Model I orientation (Argyris et al., 1985). Therefore, it is important to be aware of differing political agendas and their respective governing variables in order to better handle and navigate contradictions in behavior that may surface when suggestions of change are seen as posed threats. It is important to understand that these contradictions are naturally occurring byproducts of infusing change within the system.

Engaging in an action research process, with the awareness and application of Model I and Model II Theory-in-Use, can assist school systems in shifting from an organization rooted in bureaucratic norms to one that is engaged in participatory processes and shared leadership, and that is willing to undergo the turbulence the occurs with such a shift. The goal is to help schools "reflect on the world they create and learn to change it in ways more congruent with the values

and theories they espouse" (Argyris et al., 1985, p. 98). The alignment begins by being aware and openly discussing the fact that the two different agendas exist.

Table 18

Comparison of Characteristics of Action Research to Components of Model II Theory-in-Use

Action Research	Governing Variables	Action Strategies	Consequences
"democratic, dialogic, empowering, collaborative exploration, humanizing approach to inquiry" (Stringer, 2007) Fact-finding (Lewin, 1973) Jointly explore problems, initiate action, and evaluate outcomes where the overall goal is organizational change (Anderson, 2010)	Maximize valid information Free and informed choice for all concerned High internal commitment	Design situations for success Jointly control tasks Make protection of self and others a joint enterprise Encourage inquiry and testing for growth and effective resolution	Minimally defensive interpersonal relationship Collaboration Cooperation Trust High individuality Open confrontation on difficult situations High freedom of choice Public testing of theories and attributions Increased long-run effectiveness

Source of Components of Model II Theory-in-Use: Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith (1985)

The concepts of shared leadership and collaborative learning are common buzzwords in K-12 education. I agree with Metha's (2013) statement that "[Schools] need an upward spiral in which [teachers and leaders] are seen more as partners than adversaries" (p. 478). In order for schools to have the success and sustainability of these concepts, they require understanding and acceptance of the unilateral system that is now present in order to warrant authentic actions toward what they espouse: shared leadership or bilateral control. The theories of action research joined with Model I and Model II Theory-of-Use can serve as the upward spiral for this to occur.

The issues of contradictory behavior in this study are supported by literature as behaviors that may be triggered when implementing action research. These behaviors are typically evident when the person and/or system is threatened or embarrassed. The nature of action research can create threatening feelings and a sense of unease as the process begins to shift the status quo. Keeping in mind the contradiction that results from the impact of action research on the social institution can broaden the participants' understanding and increase their apprehension of the potential domino effect on the stakeholders. This awareness of conceivable contradictory behaviors can promote a proactive stance in dealing with those behaviors. In addition, an understanding of the particular theory of action in the system is necessary for beginning conversations that will help surface obstacles created by a group dynamic that is hindering the process of change.

Conclusion 2: An action research process can trigger action research team members to enact their realm of power and influence. The principal is expected to assert power and influence because he is in a position to do so. However, this study also showed how the action research team members utilized their realm of power and control in several ways. The team designed a systemic learning program for the faculty. It is more common for teachers to use

action research to implement change in their practice or curriculum versus on a systemic level (Zeichner, 2003). In addition, schools tend not to postulate this level of influence among teachers. Marks and Louis (1999) conducted a study on teacher empowerment in several restructuring site-based managed schools, which are schools where the administration has some control over how the school is managed. They shared, "because most teachers were unable to exercise influence in the [site-based managed schools], they did not apply their collective energies to discussing and resolving important school-wide issue" (p. 731). The opportunity for teachers to apply their power and influence to address school-wide issue seldom occurs. In this study, the action research process served as a conduit for the action research team to exercise power and influence in designing a school-wide learning experience that addressed the teachers' learning needs, challenges, and goals.

Several of the unexpected power and influence behaviors during the action research process included their collective effort voicing their concerns about manipulation, scheduling their own meeting to discuss their concerns without the consultant, and canceling a scheduled meeting during the action research process. The action research goal for this study was for teachers to use their skills and talents to implement a learning experience that met their peers' learning needs. What occurred through this process was a sense of emancipation among the teachers. Carr and Kemmis (1986, as cited in Herr & Anderson, 2005) shared that the ultimate goal of emancipatory research is the "emancipation of participants from the dictated or compulsion of tradition, precedent, habit, coercion and self-deception" (p. 48). Herr and Anderson (2005) also mentioned Habermas' description of emancipatory interest research as one that "orients the research toward release of human potential and the investigation of ideology and power within the organization and society" (p. 27). Even though this behavior may not be

typical in the social institution of the school, the literature of action research supports this type of emancipation among teachers within the process. Wicks and Reason (2009) noted that "action research creates tension as it attempts to address solving problems with the ambition to liberate people from oppression" (p. 251). The concept of teachers being oppressed is not a commonly expressed perspective in schools. However, the presence in the literature of the concept of teacher empowerment implies that a non-liberated, oppressed state of teachers must exist. Despite the challenges that the action research team faced with the flow of the process, success was seen through the collective effort of teachers being empowered to resist the status quo of not having a voice. Even though in my study the teachers were not emancipated, "set free from constraints—delivered from physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual [binds]" (p. 252), what we can conclude with the support of the literature is that action research can create opportunities for teachers to assert power and influence in a way that frees them from current constraints, if only for a moment.

Conclusion 3: The action research process triggered the consultant-researcher to relinquish her power and influence and become less participatory as the expert of the action research process. Another interesting aspect of power and influence among the leaders of the action research process was in my role as the consultant-researcher. As the power and influence of the team began to rise, I realized the limitations of my power. The rise of their power and influence resulted from their feelings of injustice: the emergence of a perceived alternative agenda to the action research process. My reaction was to reduce the tension by avoiding conflict to maintain a pretentious sense of harmony. Therefore, I took the position of relinquishing my power and influence as the expert of the action research process. I did not engage them with the level of confidence and did not advocate the processes' critical inquiry of

our experiences. This would have, in my opinion, caused opposition, confrontation, vulnerability—especially when our experiences included feelings of manipulation and distrust. Also, I did not want to appear as if I was telling them what to do as the expert, appearing as if I had my own agenda, especially because doubt was lingering around the intention of the project. I took the team's assertion of power very personally. In addition, as result of the team's inclusive actions, I developed a lack of trustworthiness with the team, which also caused my lack of courage to engage fully.

The struggle of novice action researchers is in maintaining their power and influence as experts, and this struggle has its presence in the literature. Hyland (2009) mentioned in her action research study, "In my effort to avoid imperialism, and telling people what to do, I failed in my struggle to reopen the communicative space" (p. 352). Hyland shared her struggle with having to assert her expert knowledge in doing what was best for the group while she feared appearing too domineering. Also as a novice action researcher, she made the comparison between learning about and doing action research, and acknowledged the feeling of being "in unchartered territory" (Hyland, 2009, p. 352). I too found myself with similar struggles as I navigated between what I espoused as collaboration and critical conversations and my governing values and beliefs of conflict avoidance, intimidation, and self-doubt.

Arieli, Friedman, and Agbaria (2009) shared that as they were attempting to create a space for relationship building and honest conversation with their action research group, they noticed their own level of avoidance of conflict in having those conversations among the participants of the action research process. Friedman even shared his level of experience and knowledge of action science, a strategy for fostering long-term individual and group

effectiveness (http://www.actionscience.com/actinq.htm*)* that he still reframed from engaging in the conflict.

Arieli et al. (2009) recounted another incident when an expert surrendered her role: "[Daniella] held back and focused on smoothing over the relationship rather than engaging the conflict. In this way, she silenced her own voice, contributed to the blindness, and relinquished a potentially constructive leadership role" (p. 275). My best mode of coping with the disturbance occurring at this time with the action research team was reverting to more of a compliance mode and not forging ahead confidently to engage the conflict as a means to learn, grow, and develop. I continued to guide the group through the process, but did not fully engage in critical inquiry with the team for fear of confrontation. These challenges that face action researchers center around asserting their power and influence to uphold the integrity of action research process, i.e., critical inquiry, conflict management, guiding without challenges are common occurrences (Arieli et al., 2009; Chataway, 1997; Hyland, 2009; Ospina et al., 2004; Wicks & Reason, 2009). Arieli et al. (2009) also noted the complexity of participation in action research among participants, which the researcher needs to explore continually. This need is crucial for maintaining the rich outcomes in the schools we work in or serve. Ospina et al. (2004) shared how the participants are embracing a process as well: "we are learning that owning and taking up one's authority is necessary to create a truly democratic space to engage in co-production" (p. 66).

Conclusion 4: Peer observation training and peer observation experience included activities and concepts that teachers needed to be involved in as a means of becoming a learning organization. Peer observation experience and training involve activities and concepts for teachers that support the creation of a learning organization. In creating a structure in an

elementary school for ongoing learning, peer observation was a means in this study that proved to reach that end. The literature has stated that peer observation has the capacity to provide an organization with the reflection, inquiry, and collaboration needed for learning to take place (Hall & McKeen, 1991; Robbins, 1991). In this study, participation of the peer observation experience was limited. However, it did provide those who participated with an opportunity to engage in a learning organization configuration by being involved in five of the seven dimensions of the learning organization (from Watkins and Marsick's model of a learning organization) as a result of participating in peer observations (see Table 19).

Table 19

Peer Observation Findings Linkage to Seven Dimensions of the Learning Organization

Seven Learning Organization Dimensions	Findings
Create continuous learning opportunities	Peer observation fosters discussion about instructional strategies
Promote inquiry and dialogue	Peer observation builds conversational skills for learning through peer observation training
Encourage collaboration and team learning	Peer observation promotes collegial connections through peer observation training
Create system to capture and share learning	Peer observation fosters discussion about instructional strategies
Empower people toward a collective vision	Peer observation provides learning structure that's led my teacher's choice
Connect the organization to its environment	N/A
Provide strategic leadership for learning	N/A

Peer observation is a conducive intervention for a school to create a learning organization that is characterized by continual learning for continual improvement by the capacity to transform itself (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). This study did not show evidence of peer observation transforming the organization. However, Joyce and Showers (1996) asserted that peer observation is "a component of staff development that drives organizational change" (p. 1). Therefore, with full participation and a longer time period, it has the potential for transformation to occur (Aubusson et al., 2007; Elder & Padover, 2011; Hall & McKeen, 1991; Robbins, 1991; Sinkinson, 2011).

The peer observation training helped drive several key components of the seven dimensions. Through the training, which focused on relationship building and conversational skills (reflective and inquiry-based dialogue), teachers were able to use these skills to engage in meaningful dialogue about their practice. Garvin et al. (2008) identified that a building block for a learning organization is to have "concrete learning process and practices" (p. 110). The peer observation training was successful in establishing a building block by providing teachers with specific techniques to engage in a productive learning process with their peers. Lick (2006) emphasized the importance of incorporating formal training that fosters synergistic relationships focusing on interaction skills such as "effective communication, active listening and creating trust and credibility" (p. 92). The foundation of the peer observation training curriculum used in this study was built on these learning outcomes.

In this study, the peer observation training and experience were aligned with what the literature stated as key components for the creation of a learning organization in schools. These components included: choice, learning and application of new strategies, collaboration, and reflective conversations about practice (Joyce & Showers, 1996; Robbins, 1991: Sandt, 2012).

The learning organization in schools also renders these and similar components such as collective inquiry, trust, new idea and knowledge sharing, and shared commitment and collaborative activity (Bowen et al., 2006; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Mark & Louis, 1999). Given the study in conjunction with the literature, we see how the concepts of peer observation and learning organization support each other's efforts. This study exhibited peer observation as a conduit for becoming a learning organization. In addition, the quantitative data from the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) showed an increase in the areas of Inquiry and Dialogue and Team Learning. Even though a direct correlation with peer observations cannot be made due to other collaborative initiatives occurring simultaneously, the literature and the findings in this study showed a stronger relationship with peer observation and the creation of a learning organization.

Peer observation also fosters a sense of empowerment by its very nature to have teachers identify their professional strengths and be asked by their peers to model their strengths (Robbins, 1991). This value and awareness of one's talent and the talent of their peers create a level of respect and confidence among the staff that makes ongoing learning a viable venture. Peer observation used in the creation of a learning organization is a step toward helping teachers self-actualize the talents and resources they bring to the table and begin to increase their value as professionals.

Conclusion 5: The role of principalship is challenged during an action research process in the creation of a learning organization. In this study, the concept of shared leadership among the team and principal was the intention. The characteristics of a leader of a learning organization in schools rest within these descriptors, namely: is strategic about the use of learning to create change, creates a structure for shared decision making, and supports

leadership that is decentralized and facilitative (Marks & Louis, 1999; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Watkins & Marsick, 1996). We see that a key factor to lead a learning organization successfully is the capacity to share the role of leadership. This did not happen in this study. What unfolded in the study, however, was the level of complexity that exists within the theory of leading a learning organization when applied to practice. The concept of sharing decision making in schools is a challenge because of the history of the hierarchical nature of schools (Kimbrough & Todd, 1967). In the study, the principal raised the question: "How do you balance teacher autonomy and principal directives?" Marks and Louis (1999) joined in this quandary by mentioning that effective organizational leadership needs to maintain a supportive and authoritative perspective so that the goals of the organization are productive for everyone. Even having that perspective leaves only limited room to know how to actualize it. Obstacles in the school culture exist that need to be addressed, such as power and influence, control, role identity, gender, among others, all of which have the potential to hinder the shared decision-making process. These were the obstacles faced by a leader who understood and valued the benefits of shared leadership, yet did not know how to navigate these obstacles to achieve the balance of teacher autonomy and principal directives. Therefore, leading a learning organization requires additional support and intervention in dealing with the political and social ramifications that can result from its creation, particularly when action research is used in the creation process.

Conclusion 6: Mishaps in the implementation of a process such as action research in an elementary school can render learning opportunities to create more authentic process to outcomes. This study included several mishaps that defied the action research concepts of a "democratic, dialogic, empowering, collaborative exploration, humanizing approach to inquiry" (Stringer, 2007, pp. 10-11). Stringer's (2007) descriptives of action research embodied the

concept many theorists have of action research (Anderson et al., 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Zeichner, 2003). The several incidents (mishaps) in the study were not aligned with these characteristics. These mishaps included: disclosing the action research project also as a study to the team later in the process, misinterpreting action research data to mandate team collaborative learning in the school, the consultant-researcher lacking full engagement of the critical inquiry process of action research process, selecting a team that is less voluntary and more contrived, the principal exerting his power as leader, and the consultant/researcher relinquishing her power as expert. Ospina et al. (2004) noted that the "democratic aspirations behind action research are much harder to achieve in practice than in theory" (p. 48). This study is evidence of this challenge.

Many mishaps were created as a result of trying to navigate between the two political agendas that were happening in the system: action research (democratic and participatory) and social institution (authoritative and top-down) (Hutchinson & Whitehouse, 1986). Anderson et al. (2007) emphasized keeping the political aspect of action research in mind and not getting caught up in the "unrealistic expectation of doing neat and tidy studies in a political vacuum" (p. 57). The mishaps in this study then created a realistic view of action research to help educational practitioners understand and be accepting of the messiness they may encounter. The main focus for action researchers is on making greater meaning of whatever reality is before them rather than on figuring out how to create the "right" reality according to certain expectations. This is important because schools often like to implement programs and even some processes with the intended goal of doing it "right" and getting the "right" outcomes. However, right is relative. This study is a good example of how action research negates the possibility of a direct linear approach to change. It is a cyclical process that generates

meaningful, genuine, and impactful outcomes (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Hyland, 2009; Stringer, 2007; Wicks & Reason, 2009; Zeichner, 2003) that have the potential to create more established change efforts. This cyclical process can create the right outcomes when we see its potential to expand our understanding of school life with the intention of cultivating ourselves as teachers and servicing our students (Anderson et al., 2007).

On this side of the action research project, I have come to appreciate the mishaps and respect the learning that has evolved from them. It is important to provide educators with examples of the insurmountable learning that comes from unintended circumstances.

Summary

What the findings and conclusions brought to light was the need to create a structure for open conversation to dispel assumptions, institutional conditionings, and fearfulness of being vulnerable that can act as "organizational learning disabilities" in order to ensure more productive organization outcomes (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Argyris and Schön's (1996) Model I and Model II Theory-in-Use serve as theoretical underpinnings to promote these conversations. Intended outcomes can be generated when an individual's (or organization's) current governing variables or values (e.g., Model I) are identified and modified to a more productive governing variables or values (Model II, i.e., valid information, free and informed choice, etc.) through conversation. This conversation invites the confrontation of views and emotions of self and others in order to get to the truth (Argyris & Schön, 1996). What was missing in my study was the engagement of courageous conversation about what each other's reality really was. In addition, what was missing was the awareness that this engagement needed to exist and how the process was both challenging and beneficial. Much like a doctor's forewarning of painful burning sensation from a shot that will nonetheless ensure long-term and pain-free benefits to a

patient, this study demonstrated this duality. The principal in particular and action research team in general would have yielded a more double-loop learning when things appeared to have "gone down a funky road." This, then, leads to my implication for practice.

The next section shares some insights that educator practitioners can apply as a result of the learning that emerged from my study. Action research does promote the creation of a learning organization when clarity around roles, learning initiatives, authority and autonomy, power and influence, and theory of action is developed and engaged. These factors, which were identified as impediments (as addressed in my conclusions), led to a common need when implementing action research in schools—intentional conversation.

Implications for Practice

Action research is a messy endeavor. More accounts of the challenges action researchers face provide learning opportunities and reassurance as we "radically lead change" that involves "high hassle and high vulnerability" (Buchman & Boddy, 1992, as cited in Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 63). The account of action research generally tidies up the struggle of the work (Cook, 1998). At the conclusion of their action research study, Snoeren, Neissen, and Abma (2012) asserted, "the messiness of participatory research should not be polished into nice smooth paragraphs: unrealistic images represented in terms of propositional knowledge do not give (novice) researchers a clear picture of what this sort of research entails in practice" (p. 202). Cook (2009) confirmed, "If accounts of research omit descriptions of the messy areas experienced by so many researchers, descriptions of research in practice remain incomplete and do not offer a true and honest picture of the research process" (p. 279). To create the change we want to see in schools, there is a need to be more explicit about the challenges, struggles, disappointments, and failures we experience while investigating the various phenomena.

Snoeren et al. (2012) encouraged us to "be honest and vulnerable about our wrestling and searching, struggling, and striving [as action researchers], because there are no easy answers" (p. 202).

What has been learned from this study about ways to maximize teacher talent in schools via an action research process is to create a structure for intentional conversation about the process and all aspects that impact the process. Inviting teachers to engage in a preconversation about action research and the challenges faced while implementing such as contradictory behavior, power and influence, role identity, and so on, may proactively address and generate a mindfulness of what is to come. Wicks and Reason (2009) referred to the pre-initial stage as "opening up the communicative space" (p. 243). Communicative space provides an opportunity to introduce the components of the action research process. According to Wicks and Reasons (2009), the theory behind communicative space stems from Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action. Through Wicks and Reason's (2009) research on Habermas' (1984) theories, I want to highlight the following two key points:

(1) "A key aspect of Jurgen Habermas' critical theory is its concern with how a collective of diverse individuals may effectively coordinate their actions and orientations."

(2) "Habermas . . . advocates the need for ongoing critical discourse amongst members." (p. 245)

These points help to provide purpose and meaning for opening a communicative space as a pre-initial stage to the action research process in schools, namely: a) the coordination of diverse individuals to b) engage in ongoing critical conversations. Kemmis (2001) stated, "a communicative space is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as fostering democratic expression of diverse

views" (p. 100). Habermas' (1984) emphasis on diverse views of individuals in a communicative space is important especially in schools because the tendency of thinking other than what is status quo can be futile and/or ostracizing. To encourage an honest conversation, it is important to welcome differences. Through these differences and within a safe environment, openness and learning for the individual and the collective can flourish (Snoeren et al., 2012).

The theory of a communicative space does serve to meet my focus of creating "pre-conversation" when initiating action research in schools. However, studies have shown that the establishment and existence of a communicative space do not make the engagement and participation any easier, but they do create the expectation of challenging and reflective conversations to occur (Abma, 2001; Hyland, 2009; Snoeren et al., 2012).

As a result of this study, I proposed a model, The Cycles of Learning (Figure 3), for schools as they seek to implement action research in the creation of a learning organization. The construction for this model incorporates the learning that was gained through the missteps and successes of this study, and the theories of communicative space, action research, and learning organization.

My model, The Cycles of Learning, suggests that schools first establish a communicative space as a primer to the action research process. Open and honest conversation about action research and learning organization are the topics that would be initially discussed. This conversation would include all teachers so that the school community can be aware of what is happening and what to expect. Teachers would then be asked to volunteer to participate in the action research team to support the system-wide teacher learning problem. If no one offers to volunteer, I would ask for recommendations from the principal and staff and invite those nominated individuals to serve on the action research team. This approach would eliminate the

principal selection process that was experienced in my study, which created a sense of obligation from the teachers because of the principal's power and influence.

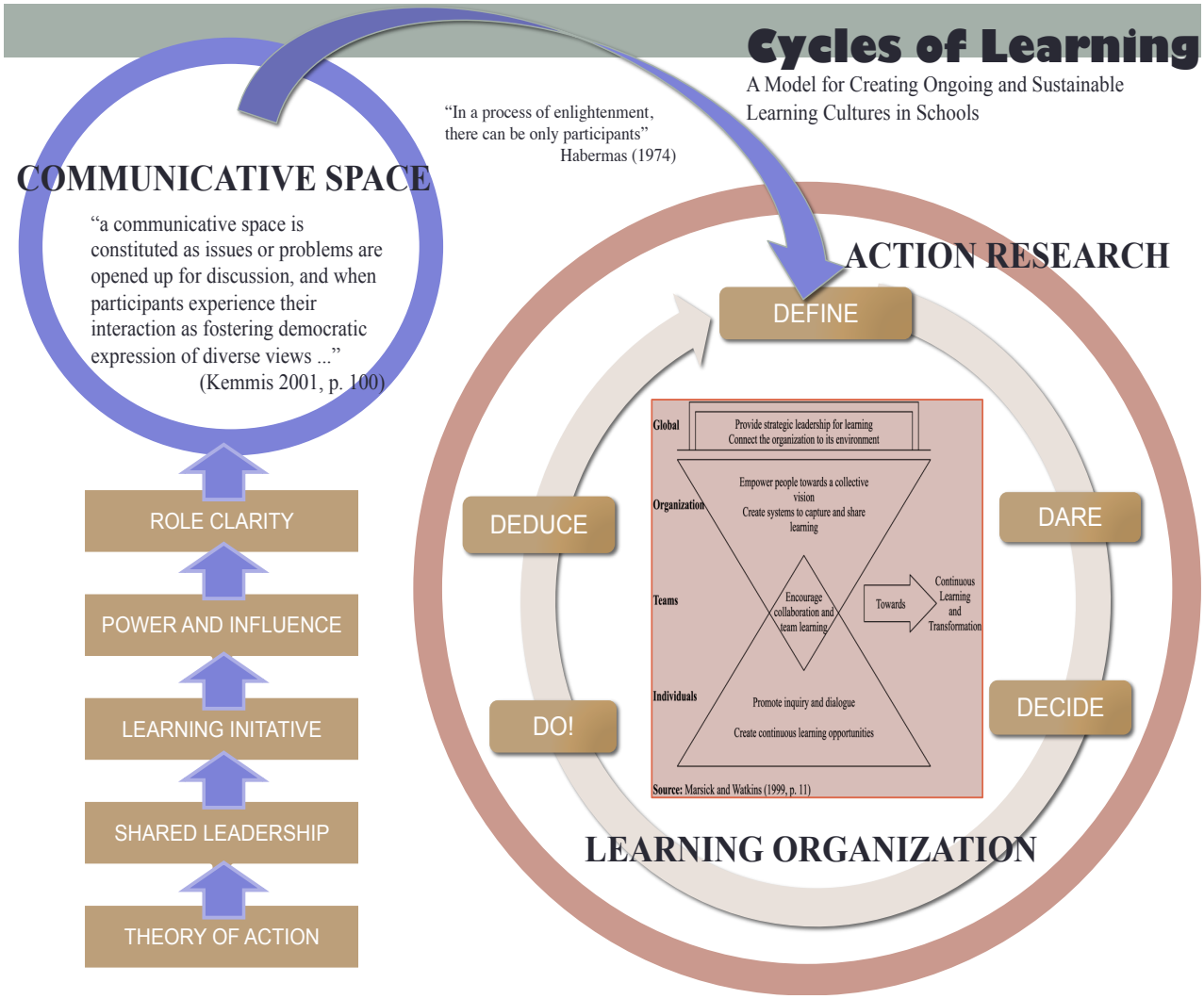


Figure 3. Cycles of learning model

Once the team has been identified, I would re-engage the team with the principal and administrative staff in a similar discussion but delving more deeply: sharing the implication of participation. Specifically, the topics of role clarity, power and influence, learning initiatives, and theory of action would be items to explore as this study and the literature have identified

these topic as problematic in the action research process (Ospina et al., 2004). I would also emphasize how authority would look in this participatory process, with the focus on balancing democracy and authority in action research (Ospina et al., 2004). Argyris and Schön's (1996) Model I and Model II Theory of Use would be the theoretical technique I would use to engage these conversations.

The overall process of opening a communicative space would be structured after Wicks and Reason's (2009) Model, which includes a theory of group development that suggests a progression through phases of inclusion, control, and intimacy (see Table 20). Modifications will be made to the process, but the integrity of the model would be maintained.

Table 20

Wicks and Reason's Phases for Opening a Communicative Space

Phases	Focus
Inclusion	Begins at the first contact and concerns membership. The aim is to challenge and support people to contribute, and to clarify the inquiry task and the meaning of the inquiry. Issues and differences regarding process and procedures can arise.
Control	A safe climate in which participants feel free to express and explore differences. Issues are negotiated successfully, relationships can grow and become more flexible and tolerant.
Intimacy	As a result of participant flexibility and tolerance, they will find their own identity in harmony with the identities of other participants, which enable the groups to carry out the task effectively.

Source: Snoeren, Niessen, & Amba (2012), p. 191

The team would use these cycles to determine an intervention to meet their school learning concerns and explore how they would want to use the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) to engage in the data gathering process of the Action Research cycle. The communicative space would be used on an ongoing basis to engage in critical conversations about the action research process, intervention, and social and political issues.

Currently in most schools, systemic change (i.e., creating a learning culture) is initiated by administration. Therefore, my entry into the organization most likely is through a principal's defining a problem within the organization. However, I would not rule out an invitation by a team of teachers, which would offer a dynamic learning experience and add substantial knowledge to the knowledge field.

Once the communicative space has been established, the participants will begin the action research cycle. The Cycles of Learning Model introduces the five cycles of the action research plan: DEFINE, DARE, DECIDE, DO! And DEDUCE. These cycle titles were adapted from Anderson's (2010) description of the action research cycles (see Figure 4).

This study has increased my understanding of the action research process, learning organization, and peer observations as sources to maximize teachers' talent and design school-wide learning experiences that capture their creativity, ingenuity, and knowledge. My learning has resulted in the Cycles of Learning Model that will help me and encourage other educational practitioners to apply these concepts of action research, learning organization, and communicative space to create and sustain the exceptional teacher learning we want to see in schools.

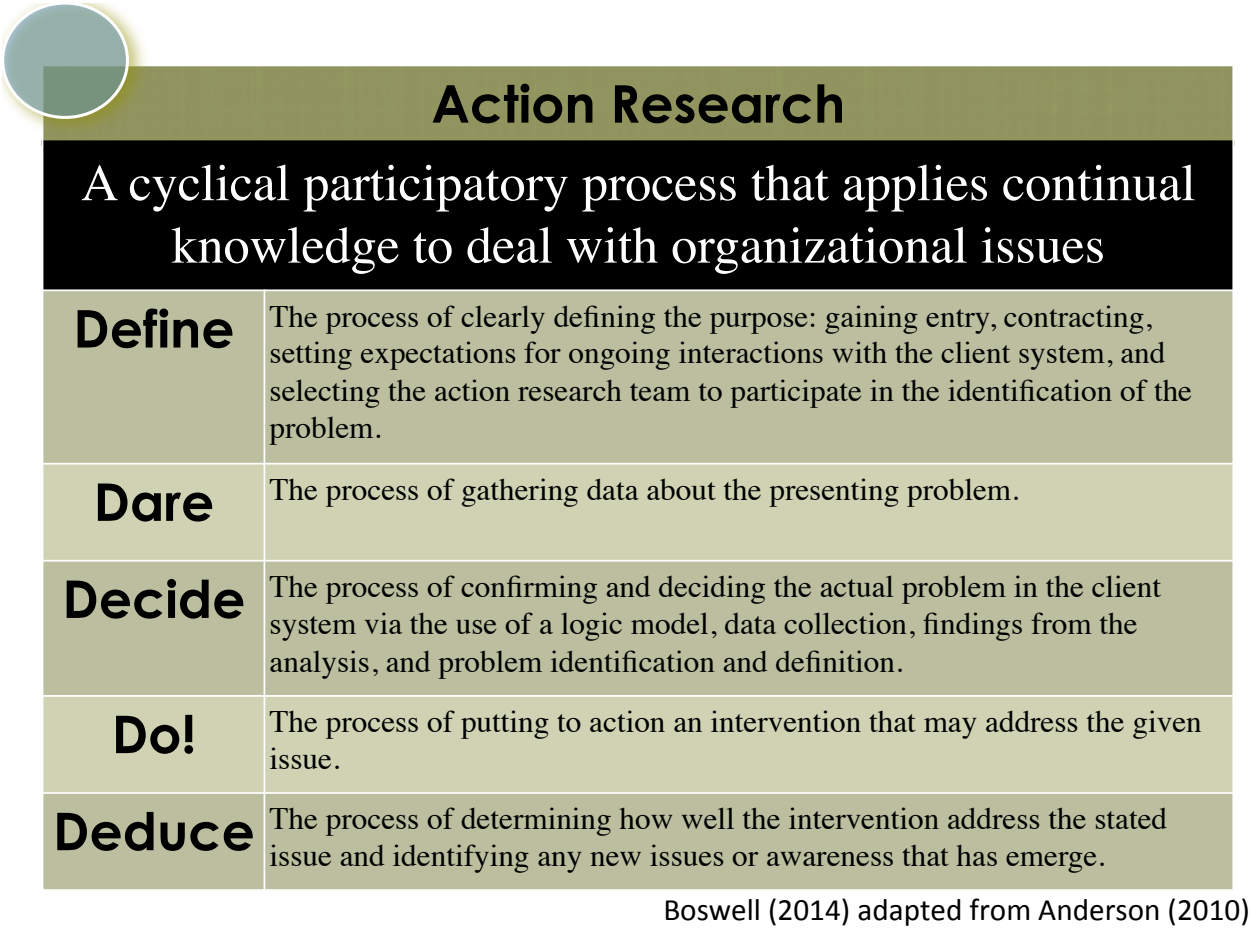


Figure 4. The cycle of action research

Contributions to the Field

The use of inquiry and reflection to engage teachers' participation and perspectives can yield a more authentic outcome about how theory works in real situations (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). The cyclical approach of action research—designing, planning, implementing, and reflecting—created a fluid format for elementary teachers to explore their learning processes that impacted their growth. This methodology helped to describe and understand how elementary school teachers created an operational structure and a collaborative professional learning model through peer observations in order to develop a learning organization. It provided critical

analysis of action research processes to help create a systemic process of learning via peer observations. The results of this study informed how the theories of peer observation, learning organization, and action research can be practiced in this localized setting of elementary school teachers (see Figure 5).

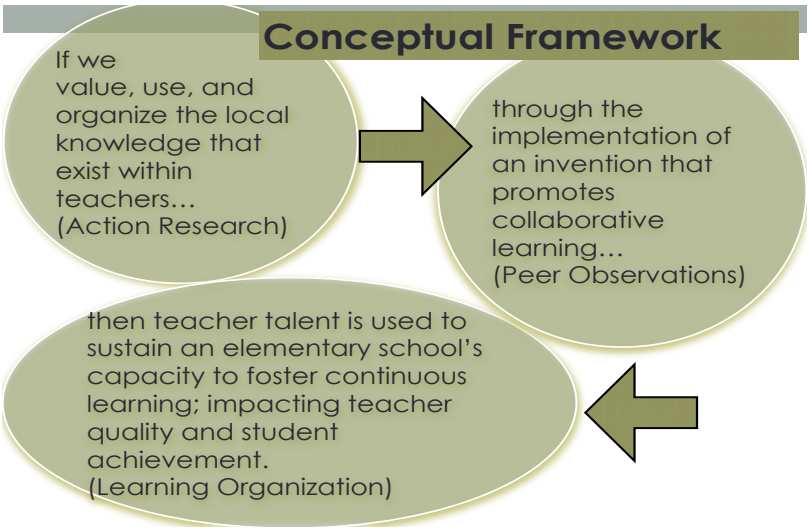


Figure 5. Conceptual framework for research study

The study can begin to eliminate top-down approaches to professional learning where "teachers can become dependent and begin to rely on others outside the school to determine what works" for them (Eaker, Dufour, & Dufour, 2002, p. 24). Action research empowers teachers by uniting practice and theory to construct and use their own knowledge to impact change (Anderson et al., 2007). By providing schools with a grassroots approach to solving the problems and enhancing the success of practice, teachers can begin to demonstrate to others and themselves their readiness to be treated and viewed as professionals (Hord & Tobia, 2012). Teachers' participation in four of the five parts of action research allowed them to examine their professional learning needs and explore the type of learning intervention that best addressed their needs. Constant planning and reflecting on learning have the potential to produce a culture of

learning where collaboration, inquiry and dialogue, and systematic learning process can occur (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). This study contributed to the field by sharing the inner social and political dynamics of an elementary school utilizing action research and peer observations systemically in order to create a learning culture for teachers in schools.

Future Research

There are many different areas to explore as a result of this study. The concept of action research in schools impacting systemic-level professional learning for teachers is limited in the literature. This would be an ideal area to explore as we look at ways to empower and equip teachers to design their learning in the midst of a system that is focused on top-down approaches to govern teacher learning.

More empirical data on the creation of a learning organization in schools would help to discover what approaches in addition to action research have been applied to its creation. Also, it would be beneficial to learn the overall impact learning organizations in schools have on the school's performance outcomes, i.e., teacher performance measurement, student learning, and school climate and culture.

According to the literature, school-wide peer observation has transformational outcomes within schools (Robbins, 1991). My study also indicated the benefits of peer observation for collaborative learning with schools. It would be interesting to see what causes the shift in emphasis on school-wide peer observations within teams of peer coaches in a school to individual (instructional) coaches assigned in some cases to more than one school.

Research is needed on the effectiveness of Argyris and Schön's Model I and Model II Theory in elementary schools to foster double-loop learning where ideas, thoughts, and opinions around problems and solution are tested to reach the source of the problem and create practical

and lasting solutions. This will help address potential challenges and successes schools may face when they begin to openly discuss bilateral and unilateral control within schools.

Lastly, it would be helpful to see how the combination of communicative space, action research, and learning organization supports the establishment of healthy learning environments for teachers. The theories point in the direction of productive outcomes; however, it is in the application of the theories that practical learning and knowing emerge.

REFERENCES

Abma, T. A. (2001). Reflexive dialogues. *Evaluation, 7*(2), 238-252.

Anderson, D. (2010). *Organization development: The process of leading organization change.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Anderson, G., Herr, K., & Nihlen A. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Argyris, C. (1989, Autumn). Education for leading-learning. *Organizational Dynamics,* 5-15.

Argyris, C. (1991, May-June). Teaching smart people how to learn. *Harvard Business Review,* 99-109.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978) *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1996). *Organizational learning II*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & McLain Smith, D. (1985). *Action science: Concepts, methods, and skills for research and intervention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Arieli, D., Friedman, V., & Agbaria. (2009). The paradox of participation in action research. *Action Research, 7*(3), 263-290.

Aubusson, P., Steele, F., Dinham, S., & Brady L. (2007) Action learning in teacher learning community formation: Informative or transformative? *Teacher Development, 11*(2), 133-148.

Bana, Z. (2010). "Great Conversation" for school improvement in disadvantageous rural contexts: A participatory case study. *Educational Research, 18*(2), 213-237.

Bacharach, S. B., Baurer, S. C., & Shedd, J. B. (1986). *The learning workplace: The conditions and resources for teaching.* Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Benjamin, D. (2011). The school as learning organization: Validation of the DLOQ with school staff. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 72*(2-A). ProQuest Information & Learning.

Bierema, L. (2010). *Implementing a critical approach to organization development.* Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Bowen, G. L., Ware, W. B., & Rose, R. A. (2006). The reliability and validity of the school success profile learning organization measure. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 26,* 97-104.

Bowen, G. L., Ware, W. B., Rose, R. A., & Powers, J. D. (2007). Assessing the functioning of schools as learning organizations. *Children and Schools, 29*(4), 199-208.

Brown-Easton, L. (2008). *Powerful designs for professional learning*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

Bush, R. N. (1984). Effective staff development. In *Making our schools more effective: Proceedings of three state conferences*. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratory.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research.* New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Chataway, C. J. (1997, Winter). An examination of the constraints on mutual inquiry in a participatory action research project. *Journal of Social Issues, 53*(4), 747-765.

Chermack, T. J., Lynham, S. A., & van der Merwe, L. (2006, September). Exploring the relationship between scenario planning and perceptions of learning organization characteristics. Available from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED492859

Christensen, R. (2006). *Roadmap to strategic HR: Turning a great idea into a business reality.* New York, NY: American Management Association.

Christenson, M., Slutsky, R., Bendau, S., Covert, J., Dyer, J., Risko, G., & Johnston, M. (2002). The rocky road of teachers becoming action researchers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(3), 259-272.

Coghlan, D. (2007). Insider action research doctorates: Generating actionable knowledge. *Higher Education, 54*, 293-306.

Coghlan, D., & Brannick T. (2010). *Doing action research in your organization.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Collinson, V., & Cook, T. F. (2007). *Organizational learning: Improving learning, teaching, and leading in school systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cook, T. (1998). The importance of mess in action research. *Educational Action Research, 6*(1), 93-108.

Cook, T. (2009). The purpose of mess in action research: Building rigour though a messy turn. *Educational Action Research, 17*(2), 277-291.

Coppieters, P. (2005). Turning schools into learning organizations. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 28*(2), 129-139.

Dillman, D., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design methods*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Dufour, R. (2004). What is a "professional learning community"? *Educational Leadership,* 6-11.

Eaker, R., & Dufour, R., Dufour, R. (2002). *Getting started: Reculturing schools to become professional learning communities.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Elder, D., & Padover, W. (2011) Coaching as a methodology to build professional practice. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching, 4*(1), 138-144.

Fien, J., Kumar, P., & Ravindranath. (2001). An action research network as a strategy for educational change: The learning for a sustainable environment project. *Journal of Educational Change, 2,* 207-221.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Changes forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. London, UK: Falmer.

Garmston, R. (2005, Spring). Create a culture of inquiry and develop productive groups. *Journal of Faculty Development, 26*(2), 65-66.

Garvin, D. A. (1993). Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review,* 78-91.

Garvin, D. A., Edmondson, A. C., & Gino, F. (2008). Is yours a learning organization? *Harvard Business Review,* 109-116.

Gottesman, B. (2002). *Peer coaching for educators*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Gray, J. (2000). How schools learn: common concerns and different responses. *Research Papers in Education, 15*(3), 235-239.

Greene, T. (2004). *Literature review for school-based staff developers and coaches.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and this rationalization of society* (T. McCarthy, trans, Vol. 1). Boston, MA: Beacon.

Habermas, J. (1998). Remarks on legitimation through human rights. *Philosophy and Social Criticism, 24*(2/3), 157-171.

Hall, L., & McKeen, R. (1991). Peer coaching as an organization development intervention in public schools. *Education, 11*(4), 553-558.

Hargreaves, A., & Dawe, R. (1990). Paths of professional development: contrived collegiality, collaborative culture, and the case of peer coaching, *Teaching and Teacher Education, 6*(3), 227-241.

Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2005). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hiatt-Michael, D. (2001). Schools as learning communities: A vision for organic school reform. *School Community Journal,* 113-127.

Hord, S. M., & Sommers, W. A. (2008). *Leading professional learning communities: Voices from research and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Hord, S. M., & Tobia, E. F. (2012). *Reclaiming our teaching profession.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hutchinson, B., & Whitehouse, P. (1986). Action research, professional competence and school organisation. *British Educational Research Journal, 12*, 85-94.

Hyland, N. E. (2009, September). Opening and closing communicative space with teachers investigating race and racism in their own practice. *Action Research, 7*(3), 335-354.

Jaipal, K., & Figg, C. (2011). Collaborative action research approaches promoting professional development for elementary school teachers. *Educational Action Research, 19*(1), 59-72.

Joyce, B., & Calhoun, E. (2010). *Models of professional development: A celebration of educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1982). The coaching of teaching. *Educational Leadership, 40*(1), 4-10.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Educational Leadership, 53*(6), 12-16.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement: Through staff development.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Kemmis, S. (2001). Exploring the relevance of critical theory for action research: Emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jurgen Habermas. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 94-105). London, UK: Sage.

Killion, J., & Roy, P. (2009). *Becoming a learning school.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

Kimbrough, R. B., & Todd, E. A. (1967, December). Bureaucratic organization and educational change. *Educational Leadership,* 220-224.

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Lashinsky, A. (2009, January 22). The Cook doctrine at Apple. Retrieved from www.fortune.com

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (1995). An organisational learning perspective on school responses to central policy initiatives. *School Organisation*, *15*(3), 229-252.

Leithwood, K., & Seashore-Louis, K. (Eds.). (1998). *Organizational learning in schools.* Exton, PA: Swets and Zeitlinger.

Lewin, K. (1973). *Resolving social conflicts:* London, UK: Souvenir Press.

Lick, D. W. (2006). A new perspective on organizational learning: Creating learning teams. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 29,* 88-96.

Lien, B. Y., Yang, B., & Li, M. (2002). An examination of psychometric properties of the Chinese version of the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire in the Taiwanese context. In T. M. Egan (Ed.), *2002 Academy of Human Resource Development conference proceedings* (pp. 854-861). Bowling Green, OH: Academy of Human Resource Development.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lopez-Pastor., M., Monjas, R., & Manrique, J. C. (2011). Fifteen years of action research as professional development: Seeking more collaborative, useful and democratic systems for teachers. *Educational Action Research, 19*(2), 153-170.

Marks, H. M., & Louis, S. K. (1999). Teacher empowerment and the capacity for organizational learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 35*(5), 707-750.

Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (1992). *Informal and incidental learning in the workplace.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (1999). *Facilitating the learning organization: Making learning count.* Brookfield, VT: Gower.

Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (2003, May). Demonstrating the value of an organization's learning culture: The Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 5*(2), 132-151.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McHargue, S. (2003). Learning for performance in nonprofit organizations. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *5*, 196-204.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Metha, J. (2013, Fall). From bureaucracy to profession: Remaking the educational sector for the twenty-first century. *Harvard Educational Review, 83*(3), 463-488.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, B., Lord, B., & Dorney, J. (1994). *Staff development for teachers: A study of configurations and costs in four districts.* Newton, MA: Education Development Center.

Mink, O. G., Mink, B. P., & Owen, K. Q. (1992). *Groups at work.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research evaluation methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Olson, L. (2008). Quality counts 2008: Tapping into teaching: Human resources a weak spot. *Education Week, 27*(18).

Ospina, S., Dodge, J., Godsoe, B., Minieri, J., Reza, S., & Schall, E. (2004). From consent to mutual inquiry: Balancing democracy and authority in action research. *Action Research, 2*(1), 47-69.

Palmer, P. J. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (10th Anniversary ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008). *Handbook of action research.* London, UK: Sage.

Roark, A., & Davis, W.E. (1981). Staff development and organization development. In B. Dillon-Peterson (Ed.), *Staff development/organization development.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Robbins, P. (1991) *How to plan and implement a peer coaching program.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ruona, W. E. (2005). Analyzing qualitative data. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton (Eds.), *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry* (pp. 223-263). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Sales, A., Traver, J. A., & Garcia, R. (2011). Action research as a school-based strategy in intercultural professional development of teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 911-919.

Sandt, F. (2012). Peer observation action research project. *School Leadership and Management*, *32*(4), 355-373.

Scharmer, O. (2009). *Theory U*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Schechter, C. (2008). Organizational learning mechanisms: The meaning, measure, and implications for school improvement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*(2), 155-186.

Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shoeren, M. W. C., Neissen, T. J. H., & Abma, T. A. (2012, June). Engagement enacted: Essentials of initiating an action research project. *Action Research, 10*(2), 189-204.

Senge, P. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat: Leading and learning together in schools.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shani, A. B., & Docherty, P. (2003). *Learning by design: Building sustainable organizations.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Silins, H. C., & Mulford, W. R. (2002). Schools as learning organizations. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(5), 425-446.

Sinkinson, C. (2011). An assessment of peer coaching to drive professional development and reflective teaching. *Communications in Information Literacy, 5*(1), 9-20.

Smith, M. K. (2001, 2013). Chris Argyris: Theories of action, double-loop learning and organizational learning. In *The encyclopedia of informal education*. Retrieved January 18, 2015 from [http://infed.org/mobi/chris-argyris-theories-of-action-double-loop-learning-and-organizational-learning/

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Slater, C., & Simmons, D. (2001). The design and implementation of a peer coaching program. *American Secondary Education, 29*(3), 67-76.

Trent, J., & Lim, J. (2010). Teacher identity construction in school-university partnerships: Discourse and practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*, 1609-1618.

Truesdale, W. (2009) *Peer coaching on transferability of staff development*. Germany: Lambert Academic.

Tschannen-Moren, B., & Tschannen-Moren, M. (2010) *Evocative coaching: Transforming one conversation at a time.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tschannen-Moren, B., & Tschannen-Moren, M. (2011). Coaching: The new leadership skill: The coach and the evaluator. *Educational Leadership*, *69*(2), 10-16.

Ulrich, D., & Brockbank, W. (2005). *The HR value proposition.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Wagner, R., & Kegan, R. (2006). *Change leadership: A practical guide to transforming our schools.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Walker, M. (1994). Professional development through action research in township primary schools in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development, 14*(1), 65-73.

Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (Eds.). (1996). *In action: Creating the learning organization.* Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Wicks, P., & Reason, P. (2009). Initiating action research: Challenges and paradoxes of opening communicative space. *Action Research, 7*(3), 243-262.

Wong, K. K., & Sunderman G. L. (2001). How bureaucratic are big city school systems? *Peabody Journal of Education, 76*(3/4), 14-40.

Woolley, M. E. (2006). Advancing a positive school climate for students, families, and faculty. In C. Franklin, M. B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.), *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals* (pp. 777-783). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Yang, B. (2003, May). Identifying valid and reliable measures for dimensions of a learning culture. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 5*(2), 152-162.

Zwart, R. C., Wubbels, T., Bolhuis, S., & Bergen, T. (2007). Teacher learning through reciprocal peer coaching: An analysis of activity sequences. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24,* 982-1002.

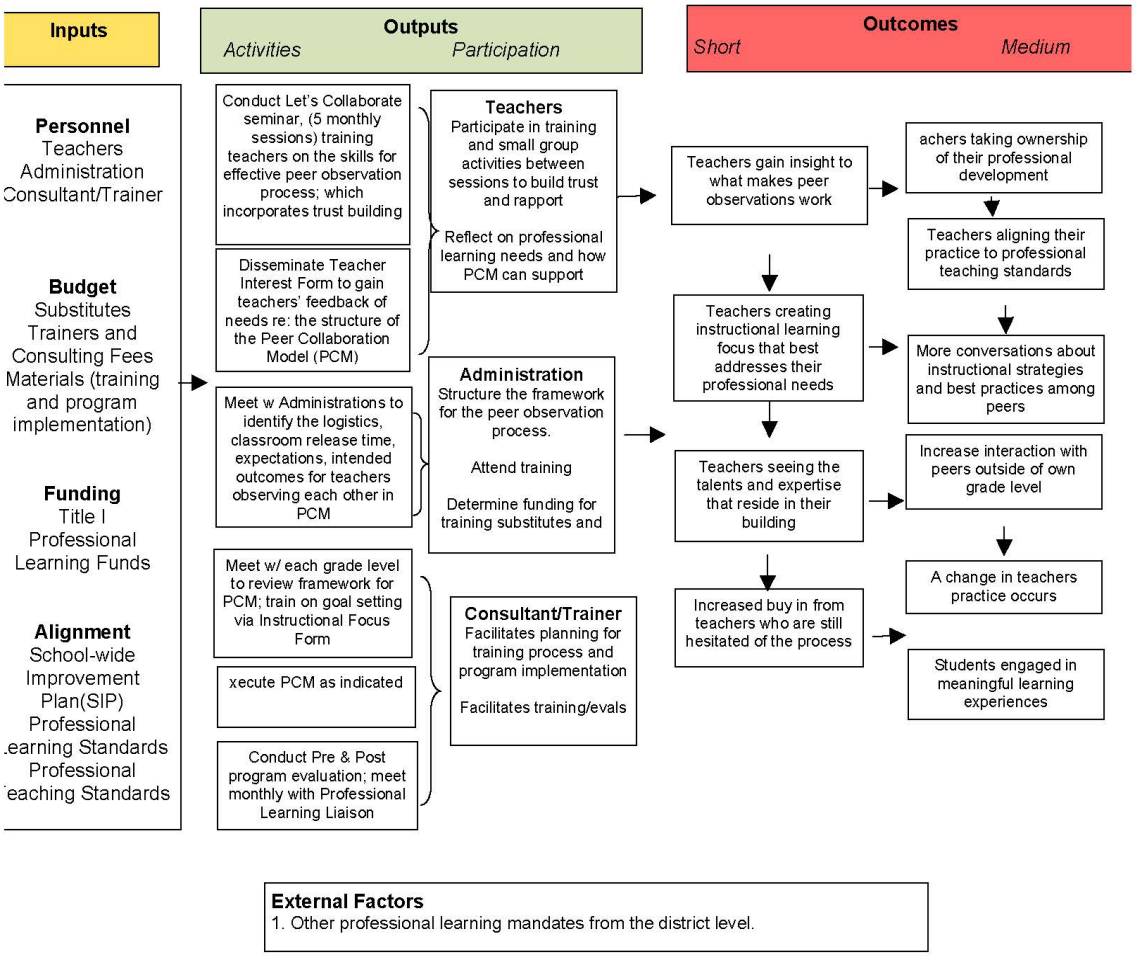
Zeichner, K. (2003). Teacher research as professional development for P-12 educations in the USA. *Educational Action Research, 11*(2), 301-325.

APPENDIX A

LOGIC MODEL

APPENDIX A

Program: **Let's Collaborate (training) & Peer Collaboration Model (process) Logic Model**
Situation: *Teachers tend not to utilize the level of expertise that exist among their colleagues for professional support and development. This is sometimes due to the lack of time, training, and trust - three key components necessary for collaborative learning to occur in schools. Let's Collaborate Seminar provides the peer observation training and Peer Collaboration Model provides the framework for implementation of peer observations process.*



Assumptions

1. Teachers trained on how to build relationships and collaborative skills become better equipped to effectively use peer observations as a tool 'or collaboration and professional development that enhances their practice.
2. Teachers observing their peers with an intended instructional focus & an expectation for implementing new learning improves teacher quality and hence improves student achievement.
3. Supporting the school with structuring the process for utilizing the peer observations ensures the implementation the process as a professional earning tool.

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA IRB APPROVAL

From: Kate Pavich
Sent: Thursday, November 17, 2011 1:04:28 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Laura Bierema
Cc: Sarah Anitria Boswell
Subject: IRB Approval - Bierema/Boswell

PROJECT NUMBER: 2012-10316-0

TITLE OF STUDY: Exploring the Structures Needed to Establish a Learning Organization among Elementary Teachers

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Laura L. Bierema

Dear Dr. Bierema and Ms. Boswell,

The University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your above-titled proposal through the exempt (administrative) review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless (i) the information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (ii) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please remember that any changes to this research proposal can only be initiated after review and approval by the IRB (except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research participant). Any adverse events or unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB immediately. The principal investigator is also responsible for maintaining all applicable protocol records (regardless of media type) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study (i.e., copy of approved protocol, raw data, amendments, correspondence, and other pertinent documents). You are requested to notify the Human Subjects Office if your study is completed or terminated.

Good luck with your study, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Regards,

Kate
Kate Pavich
IRB Coordinator
Human Subjects Office
627A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602-7411
kpavich@uga.edu
Phone: 706-542-5972 Fax: 706-542-3360 http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PLAN OVERVIEW

Research Plan Overview

Item	Action	Participants	Process	Timeframe
1	**Critical Incidents Interviews**	4 Team Members 6 Teachers 3 Administrators	Create a Critical Incident Technique Script aligned with the research questions. Create criteria for purposeful sample Identify 20 teachers to ask to participate. **Teachers**: Identify dates in May and June Schedule teachers Obtain teachers's contact information - gain permission to contact over the summer (no more than 2x) Offer 10 gift certificates for participation Recommend school or more convenient place for location **Administrators:** Identify dates in June Offer 10 gift certificates for participation Obtain administrators contact information - gain permission to contact over the summer	May 15 May 15
2	**Post DLOQ**	Staff	Update DLOQ to include: -Participation in Peer Observation -Performance Measures	May 14
3	**Data Analysis and Interpretation**	Researcher	After each interview, send to transcriptionist, and listen and record any key themes related to the research questions. Compare pre/post DLOQ identify any changes Use Ruona's (2005) Microsoft Data Analysis coding process with transcripts Use Constant Comparative Method - comparing teachers and administrators responses and their responses to DLOQ results Categorize/Organize data - memos, interviews, DLOQ	June 15-July 15
4	**Next Steps**		Write CMS 3 base on the data collected Schedule CMS 3 Orals	July 15-Aug 30 Sept 1-5