A CASE STUDY OF RURAL NORTH MISSOURI TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

OF THE MISSOURI MODEL EVALUATION SYSTEM AND THE

NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS: IMPACT ON PRACTICE

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A Dissertation

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Doctor of Education

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the

dissertation entitled

    A CASE STUDY OF NORTH MISSOURI TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE
    MISSOURI MODEL EVALUATION SYSTEM AND THE NETWORK FOR
    EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: IMPACT ON INSTRUCTOR PRACTICE

presented by Eric M Hoyt

a candidate for the degree doctor of education

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Nissa Ingraham

DEDICATION

   This work is dedicated to all instructional leaders. I hope they always work to

make their school communities a better place for teachers and students to learn, grow and

succeed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my support groups, both personal and professional, for helping me through this learning process. Many people encouraged me to complete this project. Dr. Johannah Baugher and Dr. Nissa Ingraham were instrumental in my growth as a doctoral candidate. Their help and patience are appreciated and were critical to my completion.

The teachers, staff, and community at Northwestern R-I have given me great motivation to be a better educator and leader. Motivation is easy to find when working with such a great group of people. For their support I will be forever grateful.

My family has been instrumental in my motivation for this degree. Their involvement in my life has given me the tools to succeed and be a complete person and professional. I was born in to a great situation and am lucky to be surrounded by such a loving and supportive group. Finally, my wife Mary, has been my rock and guide for most of my life. She's powerful, persistent, and the kindest person I know. She is the one that makes me want to be a better man, husband, father, and professional.

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ABSTRACT

In 1983 the National Commission for Excellence in Education investigated claimed that U.S. schools were failing to adequately educate children. The Commission identified many inconsistencies nationwide in areas of access, teacher standards, learning standards, and accountability. This investigation led to an evolution of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which have had their own unique impacts on the educational system in the United States. Common to each legislation is the need for teacher evaluation and accountability. The process of evaluating teachers has evolved to a norm in the profession, pairing educational leaders and educators in a collaborative environment, collaborating to discuss strategies for growth. Missouri requires teachers to be evaluated to monitor effectiveness using a set of principles created by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and approved by the legislature. Little knowledge in Missouri concerns the implementation of these principles and its growth model, especially among rural school districts. This qualitative study will use interviews and focus groups to gather perceptions from rural practitioners regarding two commonly used evaluation tools in the State of Missouri. Qualitative data will be coded and disseminated to reveal teacher perceptions about the effectiveness of each tool when considering its impact on work in the classroom.

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

In the era of high accountability in education, the issue of teacher evaluation has become a focal point of attention (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001). Accountability for school districts to provide quality education to its patrons is very important, especially as linked to the evaluation of educators by educational leadership (Gibbs, 2018). Student performance, teacher performance, and school accreditation are required to meet new, rigorous standards. Legislation has organized and mandated learning standards and accountability measures for schools at the national and state levels (NCLB, 2001). Schools, including those in Missouri, now must implement these learning standards and must assess teacher performance as a consideration during the accreditation process (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2013a).

Although this situation is demanding, it is not without historical perspective. Public perception in 1981 was quite critical of the U.S. education system (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This perception led to a plethora of questions about the nation's system of education. Moreover, little attention was paid to how U.S. schools were performing in relation to one another. No national standards existed for education or methods to assess student performance. Therefore, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) was created to gather data on the performance of schools in the United States, tasked to gather data on student performance and identify strengths and weaknesses in the U.S. educational system. The Commission

identified major inconsistencies in the areas of student achievement, equal access, teacher performance, and standards for education.

In 2001 major legislation, NCLB, was passed to organize a movement of teacher and student performance in the direction of universal mastery of core academic content. Goals were to set progressively more rigorous student achievement standards in mathematics, communication arts, and science through the year 2014, eventually ending with every student in the United States testing at proficient levels on standardized tests in the three content areas. Monies would be allocated for states that established annual assessments and initiated structures for academic progress (NCLB, 2001).

As the 2014 deadline for universal student proficiency mandated by NCLB neared and states realized scores were stagnating under the federal mandate, ideas began to emerge about waiving the strict demands of NCLB. Some states obtained federal and some applied to adopt new ways to stay in compliance without having to meet the 100% proficiency targets required by law. Missouri applied for the waiver and was granted exemption from NCLB given a certain set of alternate criteria that included a promise to strengthen the evaluation process for teachers and administrators to improve instruction (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2012a).

These monitoring measures varied by state and district, and can be categorized in to two major criteria for tracking data involving student achievement. Administrators and teachers were to be measured by standardized tests that were based on some variation of a nationalized set of educational standards named the Common Core State Standards. A majority of states adopted these standards in some form. States had the opportunity to

slightly modify the standards to fit the particular needs of their systematic or political environment.

For this study, the focus was the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's version of the post NCLB waiver process of teacher evaluation, implemented to satisfy the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver. This multifaceted growth model of teacher evaluation was implemented in the 2014–2015 school year and incorporates a spectrum of criterion spanning from professional development to student-achievement data. All schools in the state were mandated to adopt these criteria, labeled the Missouri Educator Evaluation Principles (MEEP), as a form of teacher and principal evaluation that adheres to seven principles (DESE, 2013b).

Statement of the Problem

Missouri educators have insufficient knowledge of the impact of the MEEP and its effect on instructional practices, especially in rural school districts. Rule 5 CSR 20-400.375, adopted by the Missouri Board of Education in August of 2013, designates every school must have an appropriate educator-evaluation tool in place to formatively monitor teacher practices and their effect on student outcomes (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013). Also, according to this state board action, school leaders must be effectively trained to implement these evaluation systems to ensure administrators are "highly trained and objective, ensuring that ratings are fair, accurate, and reliable" (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013, p. 4). Rule 5 outlines the use of student data collection and observable practices across multiple content and subject areas and multiple observations to gain a more complete picture of educators' abilities. Instructional leaders

must formatively assess these data and provide timely feedback to teachers (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013).

Current research investigates perceptions of the existing evaluation protocols. Katzin (2014) explores teacher perceptions as related to the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE). The study tracks the evaluation method and data is produced to show further understanding in the way teachers us the NEE in the classroom as a tool for growth and discussion with educational leaders. Katzin's (2014) dissertation indicates the NEE builds relationships, encourages educational dialogue and aides in the growth of teachers and leaders, however the study does aggregate any data that shows if these results are the same in the rural settings. Similar research using the MEEP exists and engages the perceptions of teachers on one particular Missouri School district (Tripamer, 2013). This dissertation focuses on the MEEP and uses qualitative and quantitative research to address teacher perceptions for the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES). Tripamer (2013) explains the evolution of the program's implementation in the Fort Zumwalt school district and explores the feedback, both critical and positive, involved in the process. The research shows teachers see opportunity for growth in the MEES, but understand its importance in the educational process (Tripamer, 2013). Furthermore, Katnik (2014) finds the MEES has positive attributes when engaging teachers and leaders in professional discussions specifically focused on growth and classroom improvement. Growth in teacher performance through the evaluation model can be linked to improvement in student achievement (Katnik, 2014).

Missouri Educator-Evaluation Principles

The initiative to adopt more comprehensive teacher-evaluation processes in Missouri is in full implementation across the state as result of MSIP and a State Board of Education action in 2013 (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013). This measure introduces more extensive evaluation principles for administrators and teachers across the state. These MEEP are the framework for an entirely different evaluation system in Missouri elementary and secondary school districts. NCLB legislation set in place a series of progressively rigorous standards to require all school districts move U.S. students to proficiency on state standardized tests by the year 2014 in the areas of mathematics and communication arts (NCLB, 2001). Legislators and the U.S. Department of Education began to realize these standards were unattainable under the current system of implementation, as the deadline drew closer. As a measure to allow states the freedom to adapt their educational departments, the ESEA was passed and a Flexibility Waiver process was instituted (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). This process allowed states to apply for flexibility to the penalties of NCLB in return for complying with new benchmarks for accountability of educational standards, instructional practice, and accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). Missouri chose to address four principles in their attempt to gaining the Flexibility Waiver. Notable for this study was Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b). Aligned with policy rules, DESE implemented peer-reviewed practices along with an extensive pilot project to draft and eventually approve the MEEP. Then later, DESE created the Missouri Model Educator

Evaluation System as a model for teacher evaluation, aligned with the new MEEP, for school districts to use.

Network for Educator Effectiveness

As a compromise to maintain flexibility in the system, DESE allowed schools to develop and use their own models, as long as they aligned with MEEP, were peer reviewed, and were appropriately piloted. The University of Missouri worked on its own model program, NEE, which also meets the criteria for the ESEA Flexibility Waiver. Principle 3 of the Missouri Flexibility Waiver is the focus of this study. Implementing MEEP, and more notably, the MEES or the NEE, Missouri school districts created a challenge for administrator and educators.

However, the lack of knowledge in the level of training and implementation of the MEEP and effectiveness of these standards, as perceived by educators in the rural setting, is the purpose for this study. No current data articulate the implementation of the MEEP in the rural setting. Currently 340 Missouri schools are using the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES) and 952 schools use the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019c). No understanding exists of the level of training completed by rural Missouri administrators and if they are "highly trained and objective, ensuring that ratings are fair, accurate, and reliable" (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013, p. 4). Knowledge is lacking that shows whether teachers believe training and implementation practices of the MEEP are sufficient to show that data from evaluations should drive "interventions and policies that impact student learning in the system" (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013, p. 4).

The lack of knowledge concerning perceptions of the MEEP and its impact on teaching work in rural Missouri schools is the foundation for this study. Although the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has widely implemented these policies in Missouri, no information has emerged of its breadth of implementation, or if teachers perceive the MEEP, in the context of the MEES and NEE, to achieve its goal of evaluating teachers and its impact on their work. A vital part of improving organizational effectiveness is the development of old skills and the learning of new skills (Gill, 2010). Measurement impacts effective improvement in teaching by basing evaluation practices on routine evaluations and discussions about work in the classroom. This study will assess these areas to learn more about MEEP and NEE in Missouri and teachers' perceptions of its impact on their work in an instructional context, in rural north Missouri schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover the perceptions of north Missouri teachers regarding the Missouri Model Evaluation System and the Network for Educator Effectiveness in relation to their work in the classroom. As the new MEEP are implemented, questions arise regarding its impact on educators' instructional practice. This study entails collecting qualitative data on the implementation of the evaluation system. To contrast the two evaluation models, data will accrue to evaluate the impact of the models on the work teachers are doing in the classroom. DESE began this initiative to positively impact the decisions teachers are making in the classroom and increase administrator feedback on instructional practices (DESE, 2012). The question remains to be answered on whether teachers perceive MEEP to be a driving force behind the work

they do in the classroom. Mitchell, Crowson, and Shipps (2011) argued the education

system is a driver of national economic development, and crucial to a successful

economy. Shaping academic policy and the expectation of adaptation and growth are an

essential national concern, and Missouri has focused many valuable resources to

improving professional growth (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013). Policy such as

that brought forth by the MEEP and its efforts to impact teacher behaviors are at the

forefront of educational policy reform.

Research Questions

With a lack of knowledge concerning the impact of policy on practice, knowledge

can be gained in some areas. Schools must implement evaluation tools that comply with

MEEP. Two of the available tools are the Missouri Educator Evaluation System and the

Network for Educator Effectiveness. There is a lack knowledge of perceptions of the

impact on the practice of north Missouri teachers about the Missouri Educator Evaluation

System and the Network for Educator Effectiveness. The guiding overarching question

for this study is, What are teachers' perceptions of the Missouri Educator Evaluation

System and the Network for Educator Effectiveness in rural north Missouri and their

impact on how classroom instructional practice?

Theoretical Framework

Path-Goal Theory

Structure and support are pillars of growing effective educators. House (1971)

finds that an environment which provides clear expectations, involved leadership and a

structured way of supervision builds and powerful atmosphere for efficiency and growth.

Strong leadership is a recurring theme in Path-Goal and is directly related to the success

of the organization and its goals. Several types of leadership are viewed as successful traits. Directive leaders set clear expectations and find clear communication methods to direct subordinates. This leadership is effective in scenarios where tasks are abstract and complex. Achievement oriented leaders set goals for subordinates and create and environment for the goal seekers to be successful. Participative and supportive leaders are directly involved in the work of the organization and spend time and energy within the organization to find effective practices and efficient methods for subordinates (House, 1971). Situational and personnel issues are explained as directly relative to goal achievement. Multiple factors such as experience, atmosphere and schema effect a leader's decision making as relative to the task (House, 1971). Effective leaders, in relation to Path-Goal Theory, implement multiple leadership styles to effectively coach subordinates to be successful influencers of the organization.

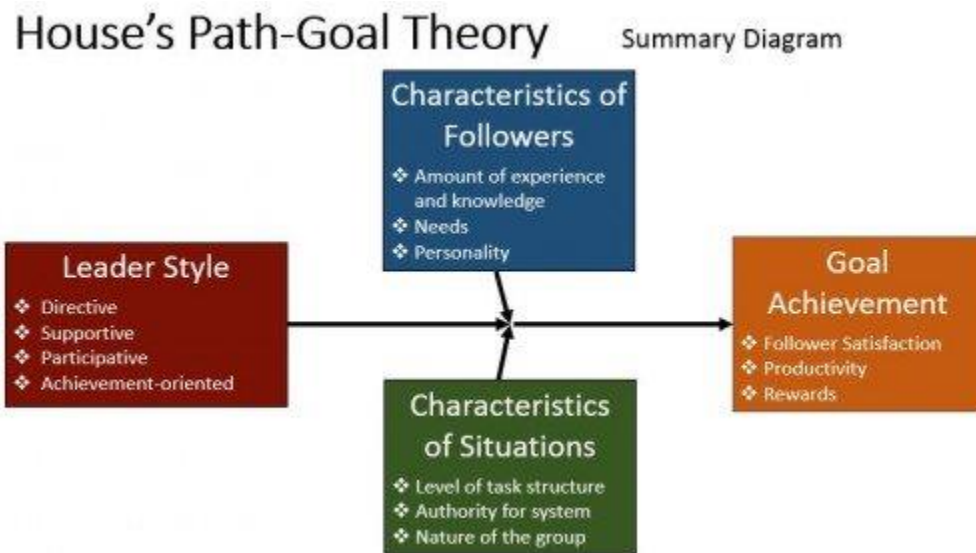

Figure 1. House's Path-Goal Theory
Note. A visual depiction of House's Path-Goal Theory: *House's Path-Goal Theory,* by Oksana Heeger, 2014, retrieved from https://sites.psu.edu/leadership/2014/10/05/the-evolution-of-the-path-goal-theory/

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Missouri educators developed the MEEP to implement appropriate instructional methods in the classroom. To continue to grow and find innovative ways to educate, practitioners must be motivated to improve their craft. Northouse's (2013) work on path–goal theory and transformational leadership are two types of leadership used in rural educational settings that will be explored in this paper. Path–goal can only occur when a leader shows subordinates the purpose of their work. Path–goal leaders spend time researching and articulating the vision of the organization and modeling to subordinates the best practices needed to achieve the vision. Paired with transformational leadership, path–goal leadership gives educators the ability to personally engage in leadership activities in an organization. Leadership in this paradigm offers guidance and structure, but allow subordinates the ability to solve problems when the need arises. Path–goal and transformational leadership intertwine in a rural educational setting to create an environment with directive, intrinsically motivated, and goal-oriented educators who have the ability and freedom to assume leadership roles in the organization (Northouse, 2013). Motivated educators are more likely to grow "if they believe their efforts will result in a certain outcome, and if they believe that the payoffs for doing their work are worthwhile" (North house, 2013, p. 137).

Leadership

Leadership, as defined by Northouse, is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (2013, p. 5). Leadership relies on character traits and leadership approaches, but is not necessarily autocratic (Levi, 2013). Leadership is not linear and well defined, but an abstract and a "process or set of functions that may be performed by many of a team's members" (Levi, 2013, p.

184). Specifically engaging in an educational system context, Bolman and Deal (2008) developed an organizations ability to allow multiple leadership styles in their human-resources frame. The researchers outlined a system in which an individual feels support from leadership who offer critical guidance, but encourages autonomous leadership behaviors through and understanding of a supportive and forward-thinking culture.

Northouse (2013) identified four major leader behaviors in path–goal and discussed four specific behaviors. Directive leadership is the act of creating a structured environment for work to be completed; these leaders set standards and timelines for work to be completed. Supportive leadership is the leader characteristic that expresses the ability to be friendly and approachable; supportive leaders are resources for their staff and have spent time building relationships. Participative leaders are active in the work taking place in the educational environment; these leaders allow for autonomy and subordinate involvement in the decision-making process. Achievement-oriented leaders "challenge subordinates to perform work at the highest level possible" (Northouse, 2013, p. 140). Leaders of this style expect high levels of accomplishment and look for ways to measure continuous improvement.

Along with leadership characteristics, subordinate characteristics are key parts of Northouse's (2013) discussion of path–goal leadership. Subordinates are often successful when they have a sense of control in the task as well as a positive and collaborative relationship with the leader. Subordinates are also successful when they have intrinsic motivation, often with an emotional attachment to the work.

Leadership researchers discussed the effective use of various tactics to best fit certain situations (Northouse, 2013). Effective leaders develop abilities to quickly assess

personnel and task characteristics and make effective leadership decisions. Task

characteristics, specifically teacher evaluations of their work in the classroom, have

impacts on the ability of subordinates to successfully work toward a goal. Integral to the

path–goal process is subordinates' feelings of a central plan to achieve an attainable goal

(Northouse, 2013). Although unsatisfying tasks have a more negative relationship

between structure and subordinate satisfaction (House, 1971), directive leadership styles

can prevail, providing a positive relationship between structured, difficult tasks and

performance levels. A directive leadership style can aid implementers of difficult tasks,

despite tasks being stressful and arduous (House, 1971; Northouse, 2013). By outlining

work assignments and clearly communicating norms and expectations, educators can

successful implement difficult tasks like instructional practice. A holistic understanding

of leadership provides context of the breadth of leadership tenets in schools;

consideration of these aspects is integral in reviewing MEEP as a schoolwide teacher-

and student-improvement tool.

Motivation

A series of human wants and needs drives motivation (Maslow, 1943). The most

basic human needs address physiological demands and safety. All humans must be

healthy and feel safe to begin to consider their more psychological needs. As a human's

physiological need are met, they pursue more complicated emotional needs. For humans

to be motivated in an organization, Maslow's hierarchy says a person must feel a sense of

belonging, feel appreciated, and feel a connection to the common goal. Assuming

physiological needs are met in an educational institution, this paper progresses to explore

path–goal and transformational leadership as factors in the motivation of educators by

engaging teachers in a system where they feel a sense of community, have freedom to work uninhibited, and see the purpose for the work of the educational organization.

Educators' motivation link to the growth of the learner, and if it does not, the required evaluation process would swiftly recognize the lack (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). House (1971) recognized the degrees of effectiveness throughout the depth of research regarding path–goal theory. The effectiveness of path–goal theory and its qualities of providing structure and consistent feedback varies due to several contributing factors, including the skill and motivation of employee groups (House, 1971). House derived that skilled employees with moderate to high levels of motivation enjoy and welcome structure, praise, and feedback as a part of the path–goal approach. However, under skilled and unmotivated employees can resent the approach.

Northouse (2013) wrote about the importance of recognizing subordinate and task-specific characteristics when employing path–goal leadership in the educational environment. Northouse was explicit in saying, "a particular leader behavior is motivating to subordinates is contingent on the subordinates' characteristics and the characteristics of the task" (2013, p. 138). In the educational environment, schools aim to have teachers who are highly trained in their specific field and motivated to improve their work; however, the literature on path–goal leadership recognizes that individual characteristics are vital to the approach. Therefore, Northouse stated that leadership, motivation, and subordinate characteristics are integral; leadership tactics rely on personnel and situations. Through this framework, Northouse highlighted teacher motivation and subsequent administrator leadership characteristics as integral to potential positive change in student performance and achievement, as seen through MEEP.

Design of the Study

Setting

  This qualitative case study will examine the perceptions of north Missouri teachers of the MMES and the NEE and their impact on practice. As part of the DESE ESEA waiver, Missouri proposed an overhaul of its teacher-evaluation process. Through this process DESE derived a system of teacher evaluation, the MEES, based on their MEEP. The MEES is a free-model system provided by DESE, but the ESEA waiver also states that any school can use a system of their own choosing or creation, as long as it was created in accordance with MEEP and appropriately piloted and implemented. The University of Missouri created such a program, the NEE, which is used across the State of Missouri.

  This qualitative study focuses on rural Missouri school districts north of Interstate 70 that use the MEES or NEE. Data about teacher perceptions of the impact of the MMES and the NEE were accrued through interviews and focus groups with teachers from school districts using each of the two aforementioned models, as well as document review. Data was collected in the natural setting for the purposes of interview authenticity in the by collecting data in the environment in which the interviewee experienced the interactions in question (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

  Participants for this bounded case study will be chosen based on their geographical location, the size of school for which they work, and the type of evaluation system they use. Respondents fit the criteria of teaching in a school north of Interstate 70, located in a rural setting, as defined by DESE in the Small, Rural School Achievement

Program and Rural and Low-Income School Program (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b). Participants were purposefully isolated to fit the specific criteria for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019c). Then data was stratified using an evaluation tool to identify educators using the MEES and NEE (Creswell, 2014; Fink, 2013). Once educators were identified with the evaluation tool, the researcher used stratified random sampling to gather participants (Seidman, 2019). Gaining access through the Gatekeepers of each organization was conducted individually and personally (Creswell, 2014). The researcher contacted administrators at schools meeting the criteria for the study and asked permission for access to interview educators during the interview outreach process. Once permission was granted, the researcher asked the administrator to identify the third, ninth, 11th, 15th, and 21st educator appearing on the school website staff directory.

Data Collection

As a protocol to ensure the ethical practice of research and data collection, the researcher sought approval from the university institutional review board (IRB). Data was accrued through interviews and focus groups and document collection (as suggested by Creswell, 2014). The interviewer requested and received permission from the administration of the host schools to maintain a collaborative environment. For the interview and focus-group process, the interviewer chose participants in accordance with stratified random sampling. The interviewer maintained anonymity and query willingness to participate. Ethical considerations include maintaining sensitivity to the culture and norms of the institution, considering the psychological safety of the participants,

remaining free from bias, and gaining proper consent from participants (Creswell, 2014). Participant privacy was considered and every attempt was made to adhere to normal practice in the qualitative interview process. From the time of participation agreement, consent and anonymity were protected. Written consent was obtained and all identifying data was removed from record. With qualitative work, a person familiar with the subject and organization may be able to disseminate the identity of participants and that risk was calculated and every attempt was made to protect the participants (Seidman, 2019).

Effective questioning followed four of the questioning principles as outlined in the writings of Merriam (2009). Questions were carefully scrutinized for openness and engagement of the interviewee specifically referring to the research topic. Experience and behavior questions explore the background and professional practice of the interviewee, shedding light on specific coding possibilities associated to the research (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research and specifically coding required the researcher to gather data relevant to the opinions of the teacher evaluation tool. To appropriately gauge this paradigm, the researcher implemented the use of opinion and value questions to assess the personal beliefs of the research topic (Merriam, 2009). To gather data directly relating to the research question, the interviewer asked feeling questions so to code for perceptions about the evaluation tool (Merriam, 2009). Finally, growth opportunities are necessary for effective research, so the interviewer asked Merriam's (2009) ideal position questions to gather data regarding growth potential of the research topic.

The interviewer will provide transcripts of the interviews to interviewees along with the allowance for further contact to modify or clarify answers through member checking (Creswell, 2014). Teacher's perceptions were transcribed and coded, seeking

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relationships among perceptions with an emphasis on program and its impact on teacher

work. Documents were collected to assist in triangulation of data to ensure

trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014)

To populate focus groups, the interviewer used the aforementioned stratified

random sampling to identify appropriate participants from each response group.

Integrated focus groups including participants from both stratified sample groups provide

qualitative data of the perceptions of both evaluation tools. Open-ended questions that

clearly gather data on the benefits and limitations of both evaluation tools lead to cross-

categorical discussion for coding purposes.

To ensure the interviewer respects the time of participants, interviews were

concise and direct, selecting from the same five open-ended questions, supported by

minimal but meaningful clarifying questions. The interviewer uses open-ended questions

that are crucial to the interview process because of their ability for the interviewee to

"express opinions in their own words" (Fink, 2013, p. 34). The interviewer selected a

minimum of five interviewees from each of the response groups using the MEEP and

NEE to achieve proper saturation of qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). The interviewer

recognizes that interviews can result in sporadic data that may not be precise and

consistent, but the interviewer chose this process because of the strength of the interview

process and the benefits of asking open-ended questions when seeking coding categories

concerning perceptions of teacher work (aligned with Creswell, 2014). Rich descriptions

of the phenomena will be ensured by using quotations in the describing the findings.

Data Analysis

  The interviewer analyzed the data in accordance with appropriate qualitative processes, ensuring the collection and analysis are trustworthy. The process began with the transcription of all interviews and interview notes. The interviewer analyzed and coded transcripts into categories determined from the data collected. Creswell (2014) describes the coding of qualitative data as "organizing data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category" (pp. 198–199). The coding process began as an open and indifferent approach, so to not test and develop a hypothesis, but to look for naturally occurring themes (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2019). From this open and indifferent coding, a more detailed and analytical coding process developed as themes emerged (Merriam, 2009). Coding categories were carefully designed to be responsive, exhaustive, and mutually exclusive so that the emerging themes were directly related to the research questions (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2019). The process of coding is vital in the analysis of the qualitative interview transcripts as well as appropriate documents. Themes emerged as the researcher studied the data, and the researcher refined and sorted those themes as part of an ongoing open and indifferent coding process and looking for rich, meaningful data as well as a saturation of data (as in Creswell, 2014). Attention was paid to make coding themes mutually exclusive, ensuring that each theme was developed to stand alone in its importance to answering the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Specific themes emerge to categorize data by type, most importantly identifying themes that were exhausted for relevance and specifically refer to teacher work and using evaluation information to impact instruction (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

Definition of Key Terms

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): A law signed by L. B.

Johnson in 1965 was an effort to give all U.S. children a free and rigorous education. The

law focused, in large part, on funding schools that serve low-income students, as well as

creating grant opportunities and school-funding programs (ESEA, 1965).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver: Adopted in 2012

under the administration of President B. Obama and U.S. Education Commissioner

Duncan as an update of No Child Left Behind. Every U.S. state was on target for

educational sanctions under the old law. The new ESEA Flexibility Waivers allowed

relief from those sanctions for states that implemented strictly guided plans to increase

student achievement and instructional performance (DESE, 2012)

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): The

governing body for public school districts in the State of Missouri. The administration

consists of a State Board of Education comprising eight people appointed by the Missouri

Governor and confirmed by the Missouri Senate. The State Board of Education appoints

a Commissioner of Education to lead DESE. The department oversees all operations of

Missouri public schools from preschool to secondary school, and sets standards for

postsecondary and adult education (DESE, 2012).

Missouri Educator Evaluation Principles (MEEP): Seven effective educator-

evaluation principles created by DESE to guide the evaluation of educators. Created in

accordance with the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, these principles guide the change required

by the U.S. Department of Education (DESE, 2013b).

Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES)or Missouri Model Evaluation System (MMES): The evaluation method created by DESE and piloted by many Missouri public schools to evaluate educators in alignment with MEEP. The tool aligns to all seven principles and is a free option offered to school leaders and its regional professional development centers by DESE (2013d).

National Commission on Excellence in Education: A national panel tasked in 1981 to assess the state of education in the United States. This 2-year endeavor culminated with a report titled *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) that outlined needs for equal funding and educational opportunities across the United States.

Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE): An educator-evaluation tool co-created by Dr. Marc Doss and Dr. Christi Bergin at the University of Missouri-Columbia College of Education. The tool is in alignment with the seven principles required by the Missouri Flexibility Waiver. The NEE is an appropriate alternative to the Missouri Model Evaluation System, creating a system of evaluation and feedback for administrators and educators (Network for Educator Effectiveness, 2015). https://neeadvantage.com

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A reauthorization of the ESEA. The update occurred in 2002 and was under the direction of President G. W. Bush. Legislators implemented updates to invigorate the national view of education and set new standards for instruction and student achievement (NCLB, 2001).

Significance of Study

Practice

In this study, I aim to gather data regarding the perceptions of north Missouri teachers and their perceptions of the Missouri Model Evaluation System and the NEE and their impact on practice. As previously discussed, the purpose of MEEP is to create a formative, ongoing evaluation process that holds teachers accountable for instructional improvement and student achievement (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013). The state mandates implementation of effective systems of teacher evaluation so schools maintain effective models for evaluation. In this study, I will look at teachers' perceptions of the MEES and NEE and expose, through interview and qualitative data analysis, the perceived impact of each model. Conclusions from this study will provide practitioner data exposing the impacts on leadership tactics and implementation models of the two teacher-evaluation models (Northouse, 2013). Data collection and coding will expose ways each model impacts practitioner perceptions. Both models aim to improve and quantify instructional practices; data will reveal practitioners' perceived success as a result of using each evaluation tool. In this study, I aim to inform each founding group of the teacher impacts and evaluation practices in each model to make the process more successful at the practitioner level. I do not propose to find the best model, but the best of both models, which I will communicate constructively for the benefit of both.

Scholarship

By communicating current literature to academia through theme development, this dissertation will form the foundation of the scholarly implications of this work. This

study will expand knowledge of teachers' perceptions of the two evaluation tools and the models' impact on the work of rural north Missouri teachers.

Summary

This section summarizes the history leading to the current state of education in Missouri. I funneled focus to the current evaluation system in Missouri, brought on by the ESEA Waiver and its criterion. State of Missouri Board of Education policy requires the existence of the MEES and NEE. The direct dependence of U.S. economic well-being rests on a thriving educational system (Mitchell et al., 2011). Theory addresses leadership and teacher evaluation. I will collect qualitative data through participant interviews and focus groups regarding teachers' perceptions of the MEES and NEE concerning their impact on the work teachers are performing in the classroom. Furthermore, I will analyze evaluation artifacts to identify themes related to the perceptions of rural Missouri teachers. I will discern findings through analysis that includes perceptions and their relationships with one another. Finally, I will make recommendations to enhance the ways practitioners can use the findings to benefit their educational organizations.

SECTION TWO

PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

The public school districts in Missouri are administered by the DESE. This organization is governed by a State Board of Education and led by a Commissioner of Education. DESE implements the necessary policies statewide in an effort to adhere to all federal and state legislation (DESE, 2015, 2016a).

Organizational Analysis

Missouri statute requires the formation and maintenance of a state department in charge of elementary and secondary education (State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1974). To govern matters associated with this department, the governor appoints eight members to a State Board of Education with help from the state Senate (State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1967). This board has several duties, the foremost of which is appointing a State Commissioner of Education (State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1963). Once the State Board of Education appoints and approves a Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education oversees the standards and functions of the educational work of the department. Also, the State Board of Education is in charge of financial decisions pertaining to the allocation of funds to school districts around the state. The State Board of Education also reports annually to the legislature on the status of public education in Missouri (State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1967).

DESE is organized in divisions (Bolman & Deal, 2008) in which a larger organization leads many smaller, semi-independent organizations. As a state department, a State Commissioner leads DESE, charged with the leadership of the Chief of Staff,

communications, and governmental affairs, as well as two Deputy Commissioners (DESE, 2015). The two Deputy Commissioners report to the State Commissioner. One Deputy Commissioner is in charge of learning services, and the other is in charge of financial and administrative services. The Deputy Commissioner in charge of learning services leads the Office of Quality Schools, Office of Educator Quality, Office of Special Education, Office of College and Career Readiness, Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services, and Office of Data Systems Management. The Deputy Commissioner leads Financial and Administrative Services and heads the departments of Budget, Administrative and Governance Services, School Food Service, Accounting and Procurement, and Human Resources (DESE, 2015). Smaller organizations have their own unique sets of norms and rules that operate as part of the larger organizations (Blau & Scott, 1962/2011). Each office operates under the supervision of the Board of Education, but can operate in accordance to the cultural demands of their specific work. That "autonomy is a product of discipline" (Peters & Waterman, 1982/2011, p. 438) is the essence of what DESE is trying to accomplish in its organization. The organization has collective norms and goals that must be strictly followed, but each department is free to seek measures to increase performance and efficiency (DESE, 2013a). DESE expects to educate the children of Missouri to be leaders in college-entrance standards and employability (DESE, 2013a). This kind of hierarchical organizational design may be inefficient in allowing autonomous decision-making and encouraging creativity (Jaques, 1990/2011). This organizational structure can be highly efficient if the work performed at each level of the organization is vitally important, each level has clear accountability

measures, and productive and entrepreneurial individuals have key positions at each level

of the hierarchy (Jaques, 1990/2011; see Figure 1).
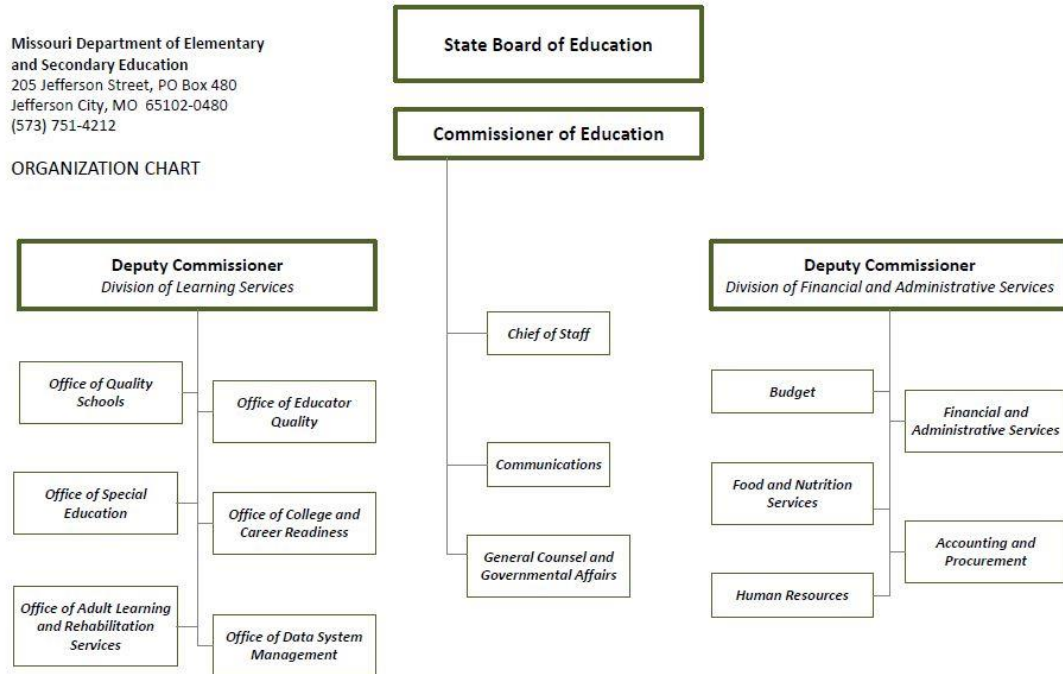
Figure 2. DESE organization chart.
Note. A comprehensive outline of the organizational structure: *Organization Chart,* by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019a, retrieved from http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/DESE_orgchart.pdf

History of the Missouri School-Improvement Plan

Article IX of the Missouri Constitution gives the State Board of Education the

power to hold schools accountable for the quality of instruction and devise criteria to

judge and categorize such rankings (DESE, 2012). Since the 1950s, Missouri has been

systematically ranking accreditation, with sweeping changes enacted in 1985 by a

legislative act that created the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP). This

legislation was a direct reaction to a collaborative document that explored inequities in

the current accreditation process and proposed research-based strategies to more fairly

hold Missouri Schools accountable for instructional practices and student achievement

(Missouri State Board of Education & DESE, 1984). Since the initial act in 1985, the MSIP program has evolved, with input from the State Board of Education, DESE, and an appointed advisory panel to stay current with best practices in education and devise ways to meet the unique needs of schools in Missouri.

The first two cycles of MSIP brought many changes for school districts. Schools were subject to site reviews by field practitioners and DESE personnel to inspect the operation of the district in accordance with the resource, process, and performance goals outlined by MSIP standards (DESE, 2012). Inspectors provided feedback and resources to administrators to support the growth of the district. Additionally, these cycles also saw the first comprehensive requirement for state assessments to be administered in Missouri. Missouri schools were required to focus on areas of standards-based teaching and consistent curriculum. DESE monitored and intervened with struggling school districts (DESE, 2012).

In accordance with RSMo 168.128 and the ESEA Waiver, the third and fourth cycles of MSIP demanded evaluation measures for educators in Missouri (DESE, 2013c). These cycles were focused highly on student performance and teacher accountability. The State Board of Education and DESE continued to develop more comprehensive programs to assess students. These organizations continued to assess Missouri students and inform schools of their successes. With dwindling funds during this period, onsite visits for high-performing schools ceased and MSIP evaluators focused their visits on struggling districts, concentrating their efforts to assess standards and curriculum (DESE, 2012).

MSIP 5 has continued to focus on student achievement and learning, especially the goal of graduating seniors being college and career ready. With teacher accountability

being paramount, DESE sought ways to improve instructional practices in the classroom. Evaluation tools were subject to scrutiny and the State Board of Education and DESE began to study ways to effectively and efficiently monitor teacher performance and student achievement. This effort to increase teacher performance and accountability was a central theme of the fifth MSIP cycle (DESE, 2012).

Leadership Analysis

Over time, government leaders have increased expectations of school leaders to take an increasingly paramount role in the instructional process. Through the requirements of the ESEA Waiver and eventually MEEP, building leaders have a substantial stake in what is occurring in classrooms. Teachers and building-level administration have an observational relationship that removes opinions on teaching practices, instead focusing on the behaviors of teachers and pupils (Medley et al., 1984). Research shows that relationships can be positively impacted through the establishment of expectations, positive feedback, and maintaining consistency in the evaluation process (Gibbs, 2018). In addition, negative perceptions may also emerge during poor feedback and observation anxiety (Gibbs, 2018). Through dialogue, a reflective conversation can occur between two professionals to solve problems and critique the art and science of instructional practice. The intention of MEEP by Missouri leadership is to standardize the evaluation of the work occurring in classrooms and give building leaders a tool kit to support teacher growth (DESE, 2013d).

With the ESEA waiver and new federal standards adding more structured systems of evaluation, educational leaders must increase their role in the work of the educator. Transformational leadership is "the process whereby a person engages with others and

creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (Northouse, 2013, p. 186). The morality of teacher evaluation builds to increase teacher effectiveness and efficiency. Commitment to this concept can be easy for most teachers, at least those who are intrinsically motivated to help children learn, but outliers will always exist among staff members (Salazar, 2007). The key to successful implementation of effective teacher leadership is in the behaviors of the building leader or the evaluating administrator in the building (William et al., 2004). To be successful in implementation, these leaders must be charismatic in their approach to being a role model. Building leaders must provide competent diligence for effective communication, confidence, goal setting, and task relevancy, working to simplify stressful situations (Northouse, 2013).

Implications for Research

Such specific changes in evaluation practices generate substantial attention. Teachers and building leaders have been subject to substantial training and reflection when considering the evaluation process. Evaluation standards are detailed and complex, requiring time to learn and implement. Along with changes in the broad standards, school districts must choose an evaluation tool. Whether districts choose the MEES or NEE, teachers and building leaders must spend substantial time learning the language and processes of the evaluation tool. The State Board of Education has made the intentions of the implementation of MEEP very clear. Their mandate to improve teacher performance through administrative evaluation deserves reflective and evaluative practices. This qualitative study will address teacher perceptions of the impacts of MEEP on the work teachers are performing in the classroom. The focus of the study is to spend time

exploring parts of MEEP that are successful in impacting teacher behavior to positively affect instruction and student achievement.

Summary

For more than half a century, DESE and the State Board of Education have been monitoring schools' instructional practices. However, since the mid-1980s, this practice has become increasingly comprehensive, holding teachers highly accountable for their classroom performance and the performance of their students. In addition, the federal government has adopted legislation to hold schools accountable for their performance. The MSIP has evolved over time to an organized and consistent method of evaluating Missouri schools. Central to this evaluation of teacher performance is the role of the building-level leadership. Through teacher interaction and classroom observation, building leaders can create productive dialogue to positively impact the instructional process. This study will explore the perceived classroom implications of MEEP by comparing the MEES and NEE, two popular evaluation models derived from current principles.

SECTION THREE

SCHOLARLY REVIEW

The Flexibility Waiver orders schools to extensively address instructional practices and student performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). These initiatives are complex, requiring sound motivational and training practices and implementation of best instructional practices. For this literature review, I discuss Path-Goal Theory as an overarching theme and theoretical framework for the process of implementing MEEP.

Path-Goal Theory, as initially explored by House (1971) examines leadership, subordinate and situational conditions and their relationship to organizational success. This theory has multiple applications in organizational structure, but this writing will explore the theory through the lens of educational leadership and its relationship to teacher evaluation and the result of impact on teacher practice.

Leadership methodology is multiple and diverse within Path-Goal. Leadership characteristics are described as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented (House, 1971). Path-Goal leaders create an environment where goals are clear, effective procedures are a norm, and outcome expectations are rewarded. These leaders are also involved in the work and knowledgeable of organizational process and procedure.

Systemic characteristics influence leadership decisions in Path-Goal. Culture and climate of an organization are considerable factors in leadership decision making. Path-Goal leaders are aware of the organizational systems and make decisions that will be productive within the working environment (House, 1971; Northouse, 2013).

Subordinate traits contribute to leadership styles relative to Path-Goal Theory. Education and experience are factors that leaders must consider. Personnel awareness can direct leaders to make decision on training, personnel placement, and

Subordinate topics in support of this theory and equally applicable to this project are teacher evaluation and its relationship with teacher work assessed through accountability measures. I will articulate, synthesize, critique, and summarize extant literature on these topics throughout this paper.

Framework: Leadership

Path–goal theory is an approach to "motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals" (Northouse, 2013, p. 137). This theory relies highly on the relationship of leadership styles and the ways subordinates react in the context of the work setting. Employing supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented styles (Northouse, 2013), leaders must assess the situation and attempt to adapt to the leadership styles they feel are most appropriate for the needs of their subordinates. Path–goal theory is appropriate for implementation of MEEP because of the need to implement the standards across a broad spectrum of school cultures and climates. Motivational needs vary by building, district, demographics, socioeconomic status, and geographic situation. These principles must be implemented in all settings across Missouri. The path–goal approach allows leaders to take an inventory of their current situation and help the team work cohesively in the most appropriate context to develop strategies to collaborate to solve problems (Levi, 2013; Northouse, 2013).

Task characteristics are a very important construct in the implementation of path–goal theory. Tasks that are generally clear and concise, with clear goals and completion,

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are not complex enough to fully use this theory (Northouse, 2013). However, tasks that

are ambiguous, constructed of complex systems, require repetitive tasks over time, and

have difficult obstacles to completion will require intervention of leadership tactics that

must be carefully assessed and planned. Accordingly, leaders must take special

precautions to evaluate and remove obstacles in the educational environment. In path–

goal theory, it is the leader's responsibility to target outcomes and maintain subordinate

motivation. Leaders accomplish this goal through process, focusing on long-term goals

and motivation that strikes at the emotions of subordinates.

One of the greatest strengths of path–goal theory in its relationship with the

implementation of MEEP is its reliance on achievement-oriented leadership.

In settings such as these, leaders who challenge and set high standards for

subordinates raise subordinates' confidence that they have the ability to reach

their goals. In effect, achievement-oriented leadership helps subordinates feel that

their efforts will result in effective performance. (Northouse, 2013, p. 144)

Implementation of MEEP in a complex social setting such as a school is a highly

ambiguous task. Strong organization of focused goals will be a measure that a successful

leader must take seriously. Equally important is the connection subordinates must feel to

the task (Northouse, 2013). Expectations must be high, and when appropriate, parallel the

philosophies of subordinates. This creates a high sense of achievement and satisfaction

from the work process and the small successes that come with ambiguous work.

Accountability

In creating the evaluation model, practitioners and researchers in Missouri put

forth cooperative effort to create an effective way to monitor and impact teacher work. It

was important that the process was collaborative, continuous, and standards based. Growth and improvement are important; continuous data collection on the part of instructors and instructional leaders are foundational to its implementation. The MEEP (Missouri Educator Evaluation Principles) requires the collection of two forms of data to evaluate teacher practice. First, leaders perform formative and teacher assessment that drives feedback on practice. Second, MEEP mandates the use of student data. Frequent assessments to formatively evaluate students is a reliable source of data that can be used to impact instruction (Volante & Beckett, 2011; William, Lee, Harrison, & Black et al. 2004). Adopting clear learning goals, assessing these goals, and adapting instruction accordingly impacts student learning (William et al., 2004).

Holding teachers accountable for achievement of students is a delicate leadership matter. The path–goal approach entails implementing four leadership styles (Northouse, 2013). These styles are fluid, having the flexibility to change, depending on the person or situation. By using a directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented approach, a leader can mold accountability measures that fit the personalities of subordinates and the situation (Northouse, 2013, p. 143). No concrete models hold teachers accountable, but student performance is the most logical measure of instructional effectiveness; school districts should use this measure to hold teachers accountable for performance (Jacob, 2012). Teachers have shown increases in student performance as a result of participation in a rigorous and ongoing evaluation system (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). These impacts link to multiple observations, frequent communication with peers and leadership, and clearly articulated standards for teaching (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation relate to positive change in student achievement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Frequent and detailed feedback and evaluation on teacher practices can have an outstanding impact on teacher performance when using student achievement as a measure (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Motivation must be a central construct when discussing teacher evaluation because of its multifaceted involvement in the process. Houle (as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014) called educators goal-oriented learners because of their desire to learn and grow to work toward the achievement of another goal. This motivation is largely extrinsic, with the growth of students and approval of superiors acting as the outside driving forces. However, one can also argue that this motivation to grow professionally is intrinsic and learning-oriented. Teachers do rely on a strong sense of duty and accountability to students; thus, some teachers do operate as adult learners in Houle's (as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014) learning-oriented state (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012).

The process of evaluating teachers focuses on adult-learning topics. Notably, practitioners in the school setting rely heavily on experiential learning to grow professionally (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Knowing how practices work in a variety of environments is critical to teachers in rural settings. Practitioners must be familiar with the setting, but also engaged enough in the activities that they are able to synthesize them across multiple contexts. Most importantly, reflective practices are critical to experiential learning, offering opportunities to adapt in real time and modify delivery methods that were either successful or failures (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Figure 3 shows the relationship between three important concepts of experiential learning and how they

interact. The area where participation, synthesis and reflection overlap symbolizes an environment where true experiential learning is taking place. Each aspect can stand alone and have benefits, and each can interact with the other, but the overlap of the three areas is where situated cognition occurs (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).
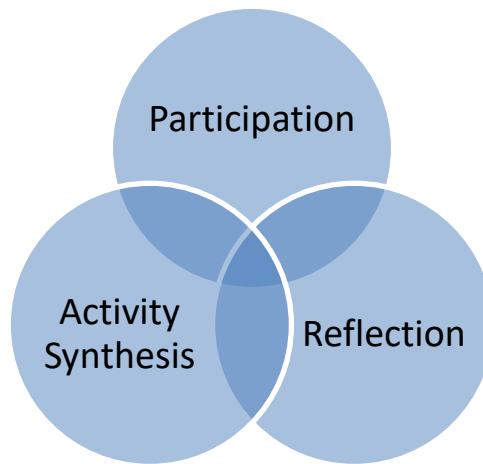

Figure 3. Relationships in experiential learning.
Note. Three concepts overlap to form the abstract idea of situated cognition. *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice,* by S. B Merriam & L. L. Bierema, 2014, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 115.

History

Education, as a formal art, has been around for centuries, but near the turn of the 20th century, it became a source of study for scholars and practitioners. Educators scrutinized and evaluated teaching practices to sort out the most effective methods (Medley et al., 1984). In its infancy, scholarly works in educational practice focused on student–teacher interactions. Vast interest arose on the positive attributes of teachers. This focus evolved to areas of student achievement, then to effective-leadership theory.

The evolution of studies began with inquiries about the best ways to reach students. Studies more deeply explored student engagement and perceptions of teacher practices from the perspective of students (McNergney, Imig, & Pearlman, 2008).

Researchers expended much effort to discern which teacher qualities were perceived as most effective. As these questions were answered, focus shifted more to the study of effective instructional strategies (Medley et al.,1984). Scholars learned about what effective teachers do in the classroom, quickly learning that these behaviors strongly correlated to successful students (McNergney et al., 2008).

Researchers began noticing a strong relationship between teaching and learning, resulting from the behavior of the teacher while interacting with students (McNergney et al., 2008). As a consequence, research attention shifted to the conduct of the educator in the classroom. Through the middle to latter half of the 20th century, much of the literature concentrated on teaching strategies and how to successfully implement them in classrooms.

A Nation at Risk was released in 1983, and then later, with NCLB, the urgency continued to rise of the importance of teacher effectiveness. States began to adopt teacher-evaluation tools such as Missouri's Performance Based Teacher Evaluations in an attempt to monitor and assess the effectiveness of teacher performance in classrooms (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; NCLB, 2001). As the requirements of NCLB became increasingly difficult for states to attain, the U.S. Department of Education offered flexibility waivers to U.S. states in return for promised growth in teacher effectiveness. Missouri chose to focus its waiver on the area of teacher evaluation and developed MEEP as a result (DESE, 2013a).

Teacher evaluation from the viewpoint of educational leaders in a rural setting is a difficult task because teachers must address multiple curriculums and children of multiple ages (Eady & Zepeda, 2007). To effectively evaluate teachers, leaders must be well

versed in sound instructional practices and effective evaluation methods (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Extensive training in best teaching practices and evaluation methods can be difficult because of the intense workload of school principals. This intensity creates a barrier that can be of great importance to the function of the school and the achievement of the students.

Teacher evaluation is a crucial aspect related to the success of a school, and its importance cannot be lost among the extensive duties of a rural educational leader (Jacob, 2012; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Rural instructional leaders must be well versed in the methods of teacher evaluation, effective training techniques in professional development, and best teaching practices. Most important in the small-school climate, the evaluators must consider the cultural context of the process to effectively interact with teachers (Northouse, 2013). Evaluators scrutinize teachers' content-area expertise.

Effective instructional-leadership methods in a rural setting parallel those useful in other educational settings, but have subtle differences. Teacher growth requires frequent and structured observation and interaction (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Often, rural educators must teach multiple grade levels and multiple content areas. These tasks push an instructor to become diverse in practice. These needs were so highly recognized, that the ESEA cited the word "rural" 54 times and adapted NCLB language when referring to the criteria for highly qualified teachers. Rural educators must have a diverse skill set to excel in a setting where content specification is not possible (Brenner, 2016). A principal's ability to coach instructional techniques in an environment including multiple grade levels and content areas is critical (Salazar, 2007). Although the need for these diverse skills can be a barrier, they offers educators the opportunity to work in a

cross-curricular manner to engage learners in core concepts from a variety of viewpoints (Ashton & Duncan, 2012).

Rural Education

Effective instructional leadership methods in a rural setting parallel other educational settings but have subtle differences, specifically in regard to community involvement and transformational leadership (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). Rural schools are largely the central organization in a rural community. In many cases, the public school system is the largest major employer in the community and connects in many ways with almost every family. Involving community stakeholders is a vital role of rural educational leadership. As poverty grows and job opportunities wane, close community ties to public education drive a need for feedback from stakeholders and educators regarding educational content and practice (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). Public education in the rural setting requires systematic communication. Teacher growth requires frequent and structured observation and interaction (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Often, rural educators must teach multiple grade levels and multiple content areas. These tasks push an instructor to become diverse in practice. Obstacles can interfere with the growth and development of subordinates in their journey to seek productivity. Leadership tactics crucial to success in instructional leadership "clearly define goals, clarify paths, remove obstacles, and provide support" (Northouse, 2013, p. 138). Transformational leaders consider the importance of school employees who also are community members and their role in the decision-making process of rural schools (Anderson, 2008). Rural educational leaders must balance the multitude of tasks necessary for the daily operation of the school and its functions. Teachers have a critical role in this process. By delegating tasks and

allowing educators to take a transformational approach, the leader can effectively create a link among stakeholders, teachers, and the school (Anderson, 2008). Transformational leaders articulate the best practices to follow to enhance the success of an education institution.

Teachers must make connections between their experiences in the classroom and the learning that takes place in their professional lives. By linking learning and practice, transformational learning empowers teachers to make long-term changes to instructional techniques (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Through applicable professional development and the corresponding and ongoing communication of its principles (Schein, 1993), teachers' learning can be ongoing and transformative. Instructional leaders require intimate involvement of the development and implementation of these practices, along with frequent and targeted effective communication (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). A leader must make a concerted effort to regularly address goals, showing implementers, in this case teachers, a targeted and clear direction for the organization (Northouse, 2013). These discussions foster deeper understanding and growth.

A principal's ability to coach instructional techniques in an environment including multiple grade levels and content areas is critical (Salazar, 2007). Although this complexity can be a barrier, it offers educators the opportunity to work in a cross-curricular manner to engage learners in core concepts from a variety of viewpoints (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Path–goal leadership has effective and focused task characteristics related to motivation for individual growth. Targeted formative-assessment practices are effective in rural environments (Eady & Zepeda, 2007). Path–goal leaders affect the development of standardized expectations, evaluation protocols,

communication techniques, and feedback as leaders and instructors develop the foundational elements of formative assessment, aligning ideas and protocols in their practice. These methods are continual and ongoing, making evaluation of instructional practices more feasible in environments like rural schools, where instructors teach various content and grade levels. Educational leaders must be properly trained to evaluate teachers to increase student performance, but the clear and targeted strategies to complete this task are vague (Salazar, 2007). Barriers of time, resources, and subpar mentoring exist for rural educators, but obstacles must be overcome to maintain the mission of effective and targeted evaluation (Ashton & Duncan, 2012).

Present Evaluation Systems

Although DESE allows school districts to create unique evaluation tools, the requirement for each to be rigorously peer reviewed and piloted creates a financial burden that is difficult for many districts to bear. Therefore, the wide adoption of a few programs that have met the rigor requirements set by the State Board of Education have become commonplace.

MEES

The MEES, also referred to as the MMES, is an evaluation tool created with funding and support from DESE and practicing teachers from across the state. The process focuses on the growth of educators in targeted areas that can be clearly defined and quantified. Through the MEES process, educators and building leaders identify target areas, gather baseline data, set goals, and monitor growth through a series of professional conversations, observations, and reflections (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. MEES process flowchart.
Note. The process of growth is central to the theme of the MEES. Its focus is identification of key indicators and the constant monitoring of these standards for growth by the educator and building leader. From *Teacher Evaluation Protocol,* by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016b retrieved from http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/01-TeacherEvaluationProtocol.pdf

NEE

The NEE is a teacher observation tool created by the University of Missouri Education Department. This tool aligns with MEEP and meets all requirements set forth by the State Board of Education. This tool uses four key components to evaluate teachers and their impact on the instructional process. Through one professional-development plan, several short classroom observations, a unit observation, and student survey data, the building leader and each educator monitors their instructional impact Wind, Tsai, Grajeda, Bergin (2018).

School Accountability

Measures of educational accountability by government officials and educators date back to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). The Commission published *A Nation at Risk,* in which it analyzed the state of the education system in the United States and drew many conclusions that resulted in policy change. Most notably, the report called for government officials and educators at all levels to be

held more accountable for fiscal stability, instructional practices, and achievement of students (Kelly & Orris, 2011; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Federal, state, and local governments, through legislation and fiscal constraints, hold schools accountable for educating students. Legislators at the national level appropriate money to federal programs as does the U.S. Department of Education, which oversees a portion of the many programs that affect local school districts. Most fiscal burden falls on state and local governments. State legislators also appropriate a substantial amount of money for school districts to be controlled by local governments and school boards (Kelly & Orris, 2011). Governments use taxpayer money as a measure of accountability for school districts. School districts must use government-allocated monies to support appropriate programs. Government monitor these budgets and spending norms to ensure the distribution of funds (Kelly & Orris, 2011; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). These federal laws are the backbone of equality for schools in the United States, ensuring certain programs for the socioeconomically disadvantaged, handicapped, and other underrepresented groups to ensure distributions are fair and equitable (Kelly & Orris, 2011).

With the adoption of NCLB in 2001, accountability measures for the instructional practice of teachers and achievement of schools was largely emphasized at the local level (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Kelly & Orris, 2011). With a focus on learning standards and academic achievement, teachers were, for the first time, held accountable for student achievement in mathematics and communication arts (NCLB, 2001); educators and administrators experienced much concern. Schools that had been continuously low performing were being held to the same achievement benchmarks as those that had been

high achieving. Educational researchers began to work on ways schools could meet these standards for achievement. Teachers feel stress and fatigue from greater work demands and accountability measures (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Punitive and incentive policies that monitor student achievement are functional, but qualitative data revealed that motivation did not emerge from fear of punishment and anticipation of reward. Teacher motivation is rooted in their "professional status and the individual goals they had for students" (Finnigan & Gross, 2007, p. 624).

External accountability measures are significant in the leadership decisions of school administrators, but internal accountability and the importance placed on personal relationships and making good decisions for local patrons holds strong (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012). Leadership works to maintain a collaborative environment, focusing on student needs in the face of higher accountability measures. For example, "principals were very concerned with the general welfare of their students, that their charges were safe, treated justly, and having a positive experience in school" (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012, p. 399).

Educators use achievement data and formative assessment tools as accountability measures that facilitate change (Hamilton, Schwartz, Stecher, & Steele, 2013). Trends for data-driven decision-making is rising and an increasing number of school leaders are using these tactics to hold teachers accountable for instructional practice and student achievement (Hamilton et al., 2013). School personnel are more widely accepting assessment tools. However, school leaders accept increased accountability with the constraint that these decisions are made at the local level, where specific cultural norms can be considered (Hamilton et al., 2013).

Instructional Practices

Educators learning about instructional practices could benefit from training in teacher evaluations with a goal to buoy organization standards (Northouse, 2013). Servant leadership greatly enhances teachers' ability to excel in the classroom with the ultimate and ethical goal to "put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities" (Northouse, 2013, p. 219). Concepts such as empathy, listening, awareness, and foresight are principles that define servant leadership (Northouse, 2013).

John Hattie and Robert Marzano, leaders in educational research and specifically the field of assessment and teacher practice, draw some overlapping similarities in the field of educational assessment. Some key factors that emerge from assessment research include a few overarching themes. These themes include clear communication of the topic, clear feedback, saturation of instruction, application of material, group interaction, constant practice, and self-efficacy (FCPS, 2020). Administrators using the MEES and the NEE "look for" the implementation of these strategies during the teacher evaluation process. Furthermore, during the feedback phase of the evaluation, these topics are sources of professional conversation between the instructor and instructional leader.

Formative assessment are key to the success of students, often used by strong instructional practitioners (Kumar, 2013; Volante & Beckett, 2011; William et al., 2004). Frequent assessment techniques to formatively evaluate students are a reliable source of data that can be used to impact instruction (Volante & Beckett, 2011; William et al., 2004). Using techniques that are more constructive than rote have long-term benefits for students' retention of knowledge (William et al., 2004). Formative assessments also

positively impact student motivation. When paired with constructive learning, formative assessment allows for ongoing feedback and relevant pacing, largely controlled by the student (Kumar, 2013). One concern in the use of formative assessment in the era of standards-based learning is the amount of time available; formative assessments are time consuming in the context of so many instructional standards. Teachers feel they have too little time adequately and fairly address all the standards (Volante & Beckett, 2011).

Summary

In this review of literature, I discussed existing literature relating to the topics of teacher evaluation and accountability through the lens of path–goal theory and how it applies to the implementation of a new set of educator-evaluation principles in the State of Missouri (MEEP). To reiterate, proponents of path–goal theory describe ways motivate and lead people in a common direction to accomplish a certain set of goals. The process of implementing new evaluation standards is a arduous and ambiguous task, requiring much abstract and complex work that has no final culmination. Leaders who can successfully mount such a task must have several qualities: supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership styles (Northouse, 2013).

Government educational agencies require schools to be accountable for the achievement of their students; the patrons of school districts also are accountable to prepare children for the rigors of college and the professional world (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; NCLB, 2001). The task is prodigious. Educators are being held accountable to prepare students for a plethora of careers, many of which have not before existed. How do teachers and educational leaders span such a chasm of possible content areas and show students how to affectively work within the norms of society?

First, educators must begin with a motivation to initiate change. The motivation to help and work with students to provide a brighter future is strong among school leaders and teachers (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012; Kelly & Orris, 2011). Educators' extrinsic motivation is so great that researchers have failed to articulate the number of educators who do not feel this intrinsic motivation to "do good" and aid an upcoming generation. Although researchers acknowledge that such educators exist (Finnigan & Gross, 2007) the issue is largely ignored. Perhaps such educators exist because of current trends in education, such as reform of the teacher-evaluation process.

The skill and motivation of a teacher must be a strong contributor to student success with a focus on developing quality teaching practices and removing inadequate teachers from the workforce through new and revamped teacher-evaluation processes. Teachers who are willing to engage as adult learners and grow in their instructional practice show traits of experiential learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). These adult learners engage in an appropriate setting where the process of learning is encouraged and ongoing. Learning in these educational settings is complex and continuous. Adult learners in a rural environment (Salazar, 2007) must be able to synthesize the methodology from professional-development training, a study of government standards, interactions with colleagues and students, and appropriate professional literature, while applying that knowledge to various content and age levels. Last, the chapter described experiential learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014) in the context of path–goal theory (Northouse, 2013) in that practitioners must be involved in a system that is persistently reflective. Reflection can be multifaceted and occur during teaching or afterwards, with a goal and purpose to develop the craft of the educator, tirelessly striving for improvement.

Motivation, accountability, and reflective practice hinge on the ability of the teacher to be sound in the delivery method of instruction. The United States employs a set of standards for educating students that teachers must follow, monitored by school leaders. However, teaching to these standards in a way that promotes mastery and appropriate pacing for all students is essential. Formative assessment is a powerful way to deliver such a demand (Volante & Beckett, 2011; Williams et al., 2004). Formative assessment asks teachers to employ some elements of path–goal theory, deemed crucial to servant leadership (Northouse, 2013). Educators must be flexible to teach students, putting their needs first to ensure success in mastery of the learning goals. Frequent assessment and the adjustment of lesson delivery in the best interest of the needs of students are at the forefront of this initiative, and ultimately have proven to be successful (Kumar, 2013; Volante & Beckett, 2011).

Path–goal theory and servant leadership work in integrated fashion to provide a roadmap for the motivation, struggles, and attributes educators and educational leaders must practice to meet the demands of today's society. Education legislation and reform requires schools to adequately prepare students for college and career readiness, providing an ambiguous set of standards to follow, flexible to allow for local control. However, flexibility can be frustrating, so tactics like sound evaluation and instructional methodology, paired with working with motivated educators, will ultimately be beneficial for educational institutions.

SECTION FOUR

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution

Who: Attendees to the annual conference for the Missouri Association of Rural Education (MARE). The annual conference consists of members from all walks of the educational community, including teachers, teacher leaders, administrators, counselors, and school board members.

When: Date to be announced upon completion of the practitioner study. Proposal for the presentation to be submitted in the fall of 2022 for consideration at the 2023 MARE conference.

Presentation

The presentation consists of a PowerPoint presentation complete with notes and an abstract. The target audience will be primarily teacher leaders and administrators, focusing on the connection of the evaluation process and instructional-leadership practices.

Rationale for this Contribution

MARE is a comprehensive organization that focuses on the education of rural Missouri students. MARE's emphasis for policy and practice center on providing rural Missouri Preschool through senior high schools with the resources to provide a quality education for students. The relevance of presenting at the statewide conference for this organization stems from my desire to discover instructional-leadership practices that are useful in the rural classroom. By expanding on rural teacher perceptions of both the

MMES and NEE, rural administrators will learn strategies to implement as they return to

their building and perform teacher leadership activities, such as educator evaluations.

https://www.moare.com/vnews/display.v/SEC/Current%20Events%7CConference

Slide Show

A CASE STUDY OF RURAL NORTH MISSOURI TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE
MISSOURI MODEL EVALUATION SYSTEM AND THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR
EFFECTIVENESS: IMPACT ON PRACTICE

Presented By:
ERIC M. HOYT
Dr. Nissa Ingraham, Dissertation Supervisor
2021

Missouri Association of Rural Educators
State Conference
2021

Slide:

Background of the Study

- The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) was created to gather data on the performance of schools in the United States. The Commission was tasked to gather data on student performance and identify strengths and weaknesses in the U.S. educational system.
- With NCLB in 2001, teacher evaluation has become a focal point of attention (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001).
- Missouri schools must assess teacher performance as a consideration during the accreditation process (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2013 a).

Notes:

The topic of teacher evaluation became relevant at the national level in 1983 with the National Commission on Excellence in Education. By analyzing weaknesses and strengths in the American education system, scholars found that a formal way of monitoring teacher performance was needed. In 2001, President Bush signed the NCLB legislation, deepening the call for increased standardized testing scores, educational standards, and teacher evaluation. Later, the Every Student Succeeds Act called for even stricter teacher evaluation protocols. Missouri applied for a waiver of accreditation to comply, and in 2018 United States Secretary of Education Becky Devos approved Missouri's waiver. Part of that waiver was the MEEP, which are still currently used in Missouri.

Slide:

Problem of Practice

- Rule 5 CSR 20-400.375, adopted by the Missouri Board of Education in August of 2013, designates every school must have an appropriate educator-evaluation tool in place to formatively monitor teacher practices and their effect on student outcomes (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013).
- Leaders are required to use student data and observable data from multiple observations and content fields to gather a report of teacher performance (Missouri State Board Agenda Item, 2013).

Notes:

These measures, adopted by the Missouri Board of Education, require instructional leaders to formatively monitor teacher practices and use observable and student data to make decisions about educator effectiveness. These goals aligned with the ESSA flexibility waiver and were important principles with Missouri's compliance with the legislation (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017).

Slide:

Notes:

Missouri's flexibility waiver for the ESEA changed the educator evaluation

system in Missouri. Principle 3 specifically called for the development of specific

educator evaluation standards (MEEP). The Missouri DESE created their own evaluation

system, called the Missouri Educator Evaluation System. The flexibility waiver allows

for other evaluation systems to be created and implemented as long as they follow the

MEEP.

Slide:

Network for Educator Effectiveness

- The University of Missouri worked on its own model program, The Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE), which also meets the criteria for the ESEA Flexibility Waiver.
- NEE is approved by DESE and aligned with the MEEP.

Notes:

Co-created by Dr. Marc Doss and Dr. Christi Bergin at the University of Missouri-Columbia College of Education. The tool is in alignment with the seven principles required by the Missouri Flexibility Waiver. The NEE is an appropriate alternative to the Missouri Educator Evaluation Standards, creating a system of evaluation and feedback for administrators and educators (Network for Educator Effectiveness, 2015).

Slide:

Overarching Research Question

- What are teachers' perceptions of the Missouri Model Evaluation System and the Network for Educator Effectiveness in rural north Missouri and their impact on teacher work?

Notes:

As an instructional leader I was often intrigued about the MEEP's implementation progress. My study used interviews and written responses to learn about teachers' perceptions of two of the popular evaluation models in rural North Missouri.

Slide:

Notes:

Coaching an athletic team and coaching proficient educators are similar in nature. In athletics, there are rules and systems for the game. In education, there are educational standards. Athletic coaches must apply the players' skills to effectively execute the game's systems to be effective. In education, instructional leaders must develop instructional skills among the teachers to produce the most effective delivery of the educational standards. House (1971) described effective leaders as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented. Northouse (2013) explained that path-goal leaders are intimately aware of their working environment and can perform leadership to be effective.

Slide:

Literature Review

- Accountability
  - Frequent assessments to formatively evaluate students is a reliable source of data that can be used to impact instruction (Volante & Beckett, 2011; William, Lee, Harrison, & Black et al. 2004).
  - Student performance is the most logical measure of instructional effectiveness; school districts should use this measure to hold teachers accountable for performance (Jacob, 2012).
  - Multiple observations and frequent professional communication with peers and leadership impact student performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

Notes:

As in both athletic coaching and instructional leadership, frequent performance observation is instrumental in accountability measures. Coaches must observe performance in practice and on the game field, whereas effective instructional leaders must see the instruction in the classroom on multiple occasions, assess student performance data, and effectively communicate to support effective teachers.

Slide:

Literature Review

- Teacher Evaluation
  - Teacher evaluation relate to positive change in student achievement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).
  - Practitioners in the school setting rely heavily on experiential learning to grow professionally (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).
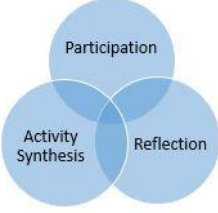
Notes:

Research suggests that teacher evaluation can successfully impact students' performance in the classroom. Furthermore, we know that much of the professional growth in the school setting takes place through experiential learning. It is a key factor of instructional leadership to be diligent with observation and formative assessment.

Slide:

Literature Review

- Teacher Evaluation
  - Where participation, synthesis and reflection overlap symbolizes an environment where true experiential learning is taking place. Each aspect can stand alone and have benefits, and each can interact with the other, but the overlap of the three areas is where situated cognition occurs (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Participation

Activity Synthesis

Reflection

Notes:

The graphic on this slide displays how teacher evaluation works in the school setting. Merriam and Bierema (2014) spoke of the importance of participation, activity synthesis, and reflection in the learning environment for situated cognition to be present. Teachers can grow by being active in their role of preparing and executing appropriate lessons, which is known as activity synthesis. Participation gives real-world experience while implementing and having the human interaction of teaching. Reflection is the portion where the instructional leader becomes involved by assessing and discussing the classroom performance (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). By constant repetition in these areas, teachers can experience growth in implementing the instructional strategies and teaching standards.

Slide:

Notes:

Rural school settings are unique because of their eclectic nature. Rural schools offer many of the same courses and activities as their larger urban and suburban counterparts, but the variety of jobs falls on fewer teachers. In addition to having many different duties within the school setting, many teachers have duties outside of the school. Rural educators must be able to master many content areas and extracurricular responsibilities. This can prove to be difficult; however, through the evaluation process, the teaching standards remain consistent. This is a unique ability rural instructional leaders and teachers must possess. Much like coaching a complicated sport with many different positions, applying the same basic fundamentals to the coaching strategies, instructional leaders can assess fewer instructional standards, but apply them to a broad array of content standards.

Slide:

Research Design-

- Setting- Rural Missouri school districts north of Interstate 70 that use the MEES or NEE
  - Responses came from seven school districts in north central Missouri
- Participants
  - 15 respondents
  - Educators teaching in a REAP eligible school.
  - Stratified Random Sampling
- Data Collection
  - Interviews
  - Written Responses
  - Focus Group
  - Document Analysis
  - COVID was a factor in data collection
- Data Analysis- Coded by theme

Notes:

This study was confined to rural Missouri school districts that are geographically located north of Interstate 70. To qualify, schools must meet the rural standards of the rural education achievement program (REAP). Participants were chosen by stratified random sampling and data were collected through online interviews and written responses. Data were then coded by theme to look for constant occurrences within responses.

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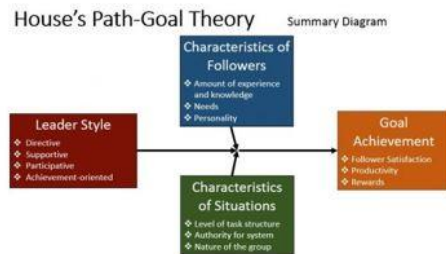
Notes:

The basis of the teacher evaluation model in Missouri can be explained with House's (1971) path-goal theory. By providing a standards-based model, involved and interactive leadership, and consistent formative assessment, schools can build a culture of professional learning and growth.

Slide:

Setting

- Rural Missouri school districts north of Interstate 70 that use the MEES or NEE
- Responding schools were from a smaller demographic area than originally planned
  - North central Missouri, north of Highway 24, and between Highways 63 and 65
- Seven schools participated
- Four NEE schools
- Three MEES schools

Notes:

The setting for the study was in rural north Missouri. Schools who used the

MEES or NEE were identified from a list gathered on the DESE website. Seven total

schools participated in the study. Participating school districts varied in enrollment from

144 students to 1,105 students.

Slide:

Participants

- Participants-
  - Educators teaching in a REAP eligible school.
  - Stratified Random Sampling of 19 participants
    - Eight interviewed via Zoom
    - Seven written responses collected
    - Four participated in a focus group

Notes:

Participants were all employed in REAP-eligible schools and selected by random stratified sampling. Staff lists used for recruitment were gathered from district websites. Eight respondents were interviewed via Zoom and seven submitted written responses. A focus group discussion was held involving four participants.

Slide:

Data Collection

- Eight ZOOM Interviews
- Seven Written Responses
- Focus Group
    - Four participants
- Document Analysis
    - School website review, Symbolic Frame analysis of school climate through the Mission and Vision Statement
- COVID was a factor in data collection
    - Zoom
    - Used email to collect written responses

Notes:

A total of eight interviews were conducted using the Zoom platform. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participant. Participant consent was verified prior to the interview. The recording was done by saving an audio file of the Zoom call. Expectations of anonymity were explained and confirmed with all participants. All names were anonymized. Seven written responses were collected via email recruitment. A Google form with the interview questions was sent via email upon receipt of the Participant's consent. Written responses were kept anonymous. A focus group involving four participants was also conducted for coding purposes. The focus group conversation was digitally recorded and transcribed. Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame was used for document analysis. Trends of communication, collaboration, and student performance were found.

Slide:

Data Analysis

- Data Analysis
- Open Coding
  - Coded by theme
  - Themes emerged from written responses, interviews, focus group, and document analysis.

Notes:

Responses were read and open coded for general themes. As themes emerged, they were titled for consistency and marked appropriated. A focus group was also conducted with four teachers, two of whom were a part of the NEE tool and two were from the MEES. Document analysis was performed on school websites. School mission and vision statements were analyzed for the themes of collaboration, communication, and focus on student performance. Themes that remained consistent throughout the responses were themed as consistent data. Data saturation was achieved once response redundancey was achieved. Data triangulation involved the focus group participation, interview responses, and district data analysis.

Slide:

Theoretical Framework

- Leadership
  - Path–goal can only occur when a leader shows subordinates the purpose of their work.
  - Path–goal leaders spend time researching and articulating the vision of the organization and modeling to subordinates the best practices needed to achieve the vision.
  - Leadership relies on character traits and leadership approaches, but is not necessarily autocratic (Levi, 2013).
  - Directive Leadership, Supportive Leadership, Participative Leadership, Achievement Oriented Leadership (Northouse, 2013)

Notes:

Looking at leadership through the lens of teacher evaluation, this theoretical framework used path-goal theory to explain leadership traits. Leadership must be responsive and directive. The purpose of professional growth must be celebrated as an important means to get to the ultimate goal of student growth. These leaders are effective by being present in the classroom and school environment. The process of frequent and formative teacher evaluation must be a norm in the school environment (McNergney, Imig & Pearlman, 2008).

Slide:

Theoretical Framework

- Motivation
  - Human wants and needs drive motivation (Maslow, 1943).
  - Maslow's hierarchy says a person must feel a sense of belonging, feel appreciated, and feel a connection to the common goal.
  - Path–Goal Theory and its qualities of providing structure and consistent feedback varies due to several contributing factors, including the skill and motivation of employee groups (House, 1971).
  - Northouse highlighted teacher motivation and subsequent administrator leadership characteristics as integral to potential positive change in student performance and achievement, as seen through MEEP.

Notes:

The environment must be conducive to student growth to produce highly motivated teachers. Teachers must feel important and a sense of community involvement. Rural schools, by nature, have a strong community bond, as explained earlier by their eclectic nature. Teachers feel connected to the school and their tasks when leaders provide consistent means of feedback and communication focusing on teacher growth. Effective instructional leadership and teacher motivation can be related to professional growth (Anderson, 2008).

Slide:

Results

- Four main themes emerged to answer the research question: What are teachers' perceptions of the Missouri Educator Evaluation System and the Network for Educator Effectiveness in rural north Missouri and their impact on teacher work?

  - Professional Discussions
  - Evaluation Process
  - Impact on Practice
  - Feedback on Cyclical Development

Notes:

    As data were coded, four main themes emerged consistently throughout the respondents in both evaluation models. As part of their evaluation systems, teachers consistently responded in the areas of professional discussions, evaluation process, impact on practice, and practitioner perceptions.

Slide:

Common Themes for Teacher Perceptions of NEE and MEES and their Impact on the Teachers' Work.
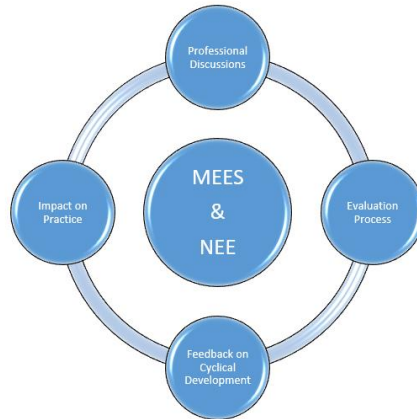
Notes:

Four common themes emerged as consistent throughout the interviews, written responses, and focus group: professional discussions, impact on practice, evaluation process, and practitioner perceptions. An overwhelming amount of data collected from participants were consistent with these themes. Data were collected until response redundancy was achieved in the interview process. A focus group was also used to create data triangulation, along with district document analysis.

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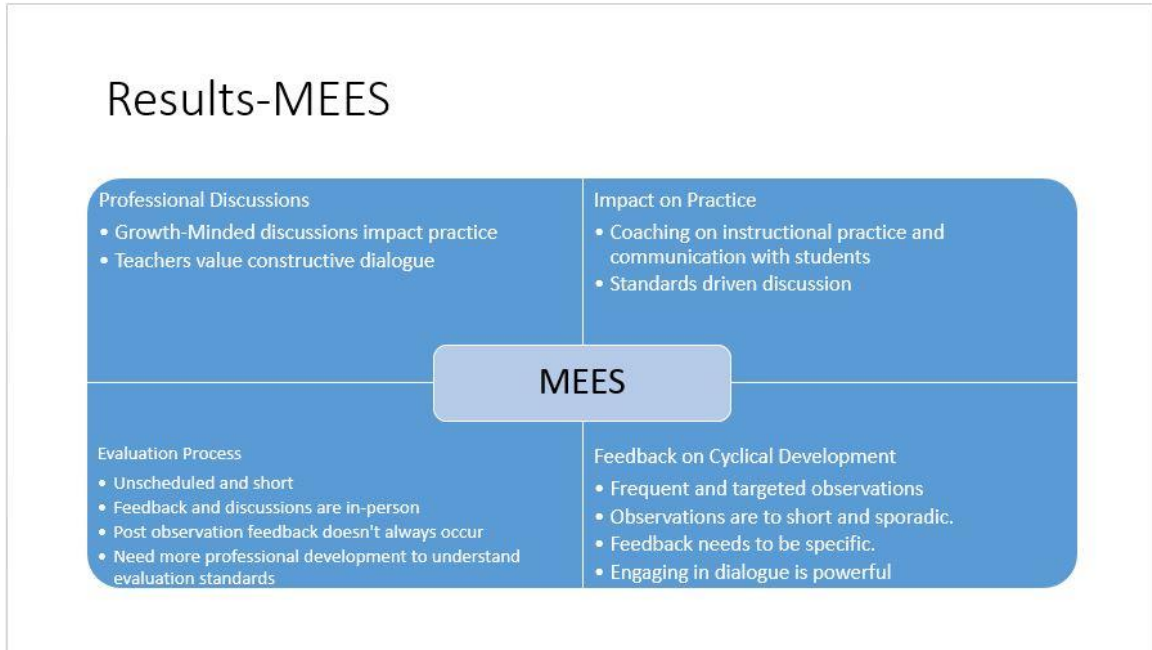
Notes:

Specific results were coded for each of the two evaluation models once the data were coded for consistent themes. For the MEES, teachers responded that professional discussions were driven by a growth-minded model. Teachers repeatedly expressed their value on constructive dialogue regarding their performance (Anderson, 2008). Teachers thought that coaching and instructional communication, as well as standards-driven discussion, had the most impact on their practice. Themes from the evaluation process were consistently reported as unscheduled and short evaluations, in-person feedback (sometimes inconsistent), and lacking in training on the MEES standards. Practitioners revealed their perceptions of the MEES were that they appreciated the frequent observations, but they were too short and sporadic. They desire specific feedback and enjoy being engaged in dialogue about their classroom practice.

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Slide:
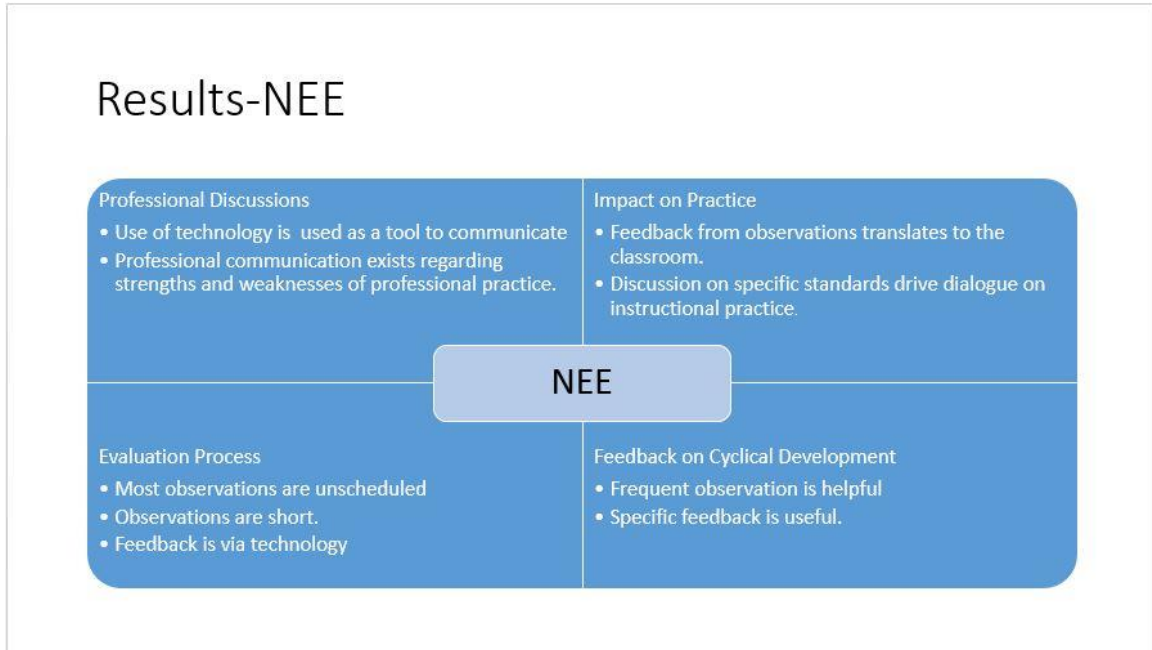
Notes:

For results of the NEE, I identified two or three constant themes from coding the
data. For professional discussions, the respondents often said that NEE used technology
as a means to communicate. They also reported frequent professional communication.
When discussing the evaluation process, NEE teachers responded that visits were
unscheduled and short and feedback was offered via technology. When discussing its
impact on practice, NEE teachers found feedback specific to learning standards as a
useful tool that impacts practice. Lastly, NEE teachers perceived frequent, specific
evaluations as helpful.

Slide:

Table 1

Themes About MEES Relating to Instructional Practice

Theme	Frequency in Coding/Interviews
Professional Discussions	7/8
Evaluation Process	8/8
Impact on Practice	6/8
Feedback on Cyclical Development	5/8

Notes:

Results from coding the MEES participant interviews and written responses are listed in Tables 1. All data were stratified by the MEES and NEE. Data are listed in numerical form in relation to the frequency they appeared in the coding of the interviews and written responses. There were eight interviews included in this review.

Slide:

Table 2

Themes About NEE Relating to Instructional Practice

Theme	Frequency in Coding/Interviews
Professional Discussions	7/7
Evaluation Process	6/7
Impact on Practice	5/7
Feedback on Cyclical Development	7/7

Notes:

Results from coding the NEE participant interviews and written responses are listed in Tables 2. All data were stratified by the MEES and NEE. Data are listed in numerical form in relation to the frequency they appeared in the coding of the interviews and written responses. There were seven interviews included in this review.

Slide:

Notes:

NEE responses found instructors use technology as a part of the process of professional collaboration. Bambrick-Santoyo (2013) articulate the importance of targeted and effective communication as a part of professional growth. The data show the online platform as a preface to the face-to-face discussion between instructor and instructional leader. As shown through the responses above, teachers specifically identified personal conversations but also made an effort to quickly view the evaluation with the online platform. The data show the combination of online and fact-to-face communication to be favorable.

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Slide:

Results-MEES

- Theme 1-Professional Discussions
  - Growth minded discussions impact practice
    - *"I think it's useful, especially at the end of the year. You can see where you've evolved from the previous year's evaluation to the next year's end of year evaluation."* Craig
  - Teachers value constructive dialogue
    - *"I think when you can get an objective opinion about your classroom instruction it's extremely helpful and makes you feel supported as an educator."* Karen

Notes:

Teachers who are evaluated according to the MEES responded favorably to discussions and strategies to improve practice. They found constructive feedback useful toward practice, especially when it was driven by standards. House (1971) uses Path-Goal theory to explain the benefits of targeted and constructive feedback. Instructional leadership can benefit from evaluating with a standards-based model, and consistent formative assessment (House, 1971).

Slide:

Results-NEE

- Theme 2-Evaluation Process
  - Most observations are unscheduled
  - Observations are short, usually less than 20 minutes.
  - Evaluators don't often see the whole lesson
    - *"My current administrator likes to just pop in every once in awhile, just for five minutes."* *Shelly*

Notes:

For the evaluation process, themes showed the observations are usually short and unscheduled and administrators do not see the entire lesson. By linking learning and practice, transformational learning empowers teachers to make long-term changes to instructional techniques (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Through applicable professional development and the corresponding and ongoing communication of its principles (Schein, 1993), teachers' learning can be ongoing and transformative. Instructional leaders require intimate involvement of the development and implementation of these practices, along with frequent and targeted effective communication (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

Slide:

Results-MEES

- Theme 2-Evaluation Process
    - Most observations are unscheduled and short in duration.
        - *They'll usually send an email saying we'll be popping in at some point during the week." Craig*
    - Feedback is offered in-person by way of discussions with leadership.
        - *"We get the feedback pretty much at least the same day or the next day, because then we can relate back." Focus Group*
    - Post observation feedback doesn't always happen.
        - *"It wasn't effective, even though I was observed, I didn't get the discussion piece or the feedback until much later." Focus Group*

Notes:

Themes from the MEES educators displayed data that explained how this model was implemented by administrators. Observations are short in length and feedback is offered in direct conversation with the observer. Discussions are effective when they happen. Some respondents reported neglect in postobservation feedback. Research shows that relationships can be positively impacted through the establishment of expectations, positive feedback, and maintaining consistency in the evaluation process (Gibbs, 2018). In addition, negative perceptions may also emerge during poor feedback and observation anxiety (Gibbs, 2018).

Slide:

Results-NEE

- Theme 3- Impact on Practice
  - Feedback from observations translates to the classroom.
    - *Once I get observed, I take in any suggestions made and I think of ways I can try to move my score up to the next level. I usually set a goal to be at a 5 or a 6 every time I get observed. I think of strategies I can use that can showcase a specific standard even better for the next time. I try to practice these strategies everyday so that I am prepared and so that with practice, it will come naturally when I am teaching. Kate*

  - Discussions on specific standards drive dialogue on instructional practice.
    - *My leader presented the strength, growth, and strength feedback strategy in my first observation feedback meeting. She began with a strength, mentioned a growth and incorporated some strategies that she though would be good to incorporate into my classroom, and then another strength. At the end of the meeting she was sure to ask if I had any questions, celebrations for myself in the observation, or any concerns that I had." Tia*

Notes:

Teacher evaluation is a crucial aspect related to the success of a school, and its importance cannot be lost among the extensive duties of a rural educational leader (Jacob, 2012; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Rural instructional leaders must be well versed in the methods of teacher evaluation, effective training techniques in professional development, and best teaching practices. Most important in the small-school climate, the evaluators must consider the cultural context of the process to effectively interact with teachers (Northouse, 2013). NEE teachers found the observation feedback beneficial, specifically when it was directly correlated to the learning standards. The teachers enjoyed hearing ideas for growth from the administrators.

Slide:

Results-MEES

- Theme 3- Impact on Practice
  - Coaching on instructional practice and communication with students
    - *Our principal watches how well the student's are engaged in the lesson, the preparedness of the teacher, and the overall delivery of the lesson." Lynlie*
  - Standards driven discussion
    - *"It can also help with the school's cohesiveness. If everyone is held to the same expectations and standards everyone should we working hard to meet those goals."*
    - *"I think more PD days could be used to find common areas that could improve our instruction" Mitch*

Notes:

A principal's ability to coach instructional techniques in an environment including multiple grade levels and content areas is critical (Salazar, 2007). Although this complexity can be a barrier, it offers educators the opportunity to work in a cross-curricular manner to engage learners in core concepts from a variety of viewpoints (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Practitioners would enjoy more coaching on the Missouri Educator Evaluation Principles (MEEP), as well as more coaching on best practices. These discussions could lead to a more cohesive and consistent approach among the school's staff regarding delivering instruction.

Slide:

Results-NEE

- Theme 4-Feedback on Cyclical Development
    - Frequent observation is helpful.
        - *"I know teachers don't like more evaluations, but if we really want to use as an evaluation tool of how I am teaching the material, then maybe more and just come in and check more often." Shelly*
    - Specific feedback is useful for teachers.
        - *"I know our administration chooses five standards to focus on when they come and observe us. I believe they choose five standards that they think impact student learning the most, but also guarantee that the teachers are doing their job correctly and effectively." Kate*
    - The online feedback form is utilized.
        - *"She'll come up and evaluate you based on the scale they have. It's all got tables and everything in there and then she puts the score in to the NEE program." Cindy*

Notes:

NEE teachers found frequent and targeted feedback to be the most helpful. The respondents frequently cited observations as helpful and a good motivation for professional collaboration. Furthermore, specific feedback that links the standards to their behavior was most helpful. Teachers found conversations very helpful when the instructional leader compared their classroom behavior directly to the MEES.

Slide:

Results-MEES

- Theme 4-Feedback on Cyclical Development
  - Frequent and targeted observations
    - *"She comes in my classroom anytime our kids are doing something special, or just drops in for evaluations." Mays*
  - Observations are to short and sporadic.
    - *"You just have to be prepared at any time to be observed." Focus Group*
  - Specificity of Feedback
    - *"There needs to be a conversation as soon as possible directly following the evaluation." Lena*
  - Engaging in dialogue is powerful
    - *"It would be great if they could talk with the students and interact with them during their time to see how well they are understanding the concepts being taught and if they are actively engaged in what is going on." Karen*

Notes:

Practitioners perceive short, sporadic, and standard-specific feedback to be the most beneficial for impacting their practice in the classroom. Prompt and standard-specific conversations empower educators to change their practice.

Slide:

Notes:

Similarities can be drawn from the evaluation process and coaching a sports team. Conclusions were drawn from data that suggest it is very important for everyone to understand the rules. Just as important for a quarterback to understand the game of football, it is equally important for a teacher to understand the MEEP or instructional standards. This understanding is the foundation of what the leadership or coach would expect to be the desired behavior. Coaches get to observe performance on the practice and game fields. They gather multiple data sets to have meaningful discussions with the players. The same immersion in data should be present in the relationship between instructional leader and teacher. Lastly, just like in the coaching world, the instructional leadership should work to develop clear and constructive dialogue with teachers to support growth. Instructional leaders must be communicate clearly and appropriately based on the desired behavior. Instructional coaching is best delivered in a standards-

based manner (Anderson, 2008). Discussing strategy and best practices can be just as

beneficial on the game field as it is in the classroom.

Slide:

Making Meaning through Metaphors

- Evaluation Process
  - Proper training on the rules
  - Evaluate the entire performance
  - Celebrate small wins
  - Receive constructive feedback

Notes:

Athletes desire a coach who can provide proper training of skills and techniques in their specific sport. Teachers also value instructional leaders who have strong backgrounds and skill sets when teaching instructional strategies. Teachers, like athletes, prefer when their entire performance is considered when receiving constructive criticism. Celebrating small success and building on positive events are effective means of communication.

Slide:

Making Meaning through Metaphors

- Impact on Practice
    - Proper and professional coaching
    - Timely dialogue

Notes:

Athletes tend to respond to good communicators. Teachers share this attribute.

When translating feedback from the evaluation data to the classroom, teachers strive for

specific feedback relating to their performance. Athletes want to know exactly what they

have performed poorly so they can immediately correct the problem on the next play.

Teachers strive to receive timely and direct performance feedback so they may adjust

their classroom instruction to improve their performance as soon as possible.

Slide:

Making Meaning through Metaphors

- Feedback on Cyclical Development
  - Communicate with those in the classroom
  - Awareness of personality types

Notes:

Instructional leaders must learn to effectively communicate with multiple

personality types. Coaches must learn how players react to criticism and feedback.

Educators must do the same to grow teachers. Perceptions of the effectiveness

instructional leaders have on classroom practice is highly impacted by their ability to use

constructive feedback to lead teachers.

Slide:

Notes:

Sample size is one of the most powerful limitations of this study. I conducted only eight interviews and received seven written responses, which decreased the chances of a diversity of responses. However, I did feel like I met a saturation of data. I did not see a significant variation in answers. It could be possible that more respondents would lead to the same answers in more quantity. I also learned that the evaluation tool's implementation largely relied on the administration and their efforts to appropriately implement the evaluation model.

Slide:

Implications for Practice

- NEE has a useful digital application that provides feedback.
- Focusing on specific standard during the evaluation process is effective.
- Most discussions between teachers and leaders involve instructional strategy and communication.
- More frequent observations are perceived as effective by teachers.
- Teachers use feedback that is more targeted and specific.
- Teachers have limited knowledge of the MEEP. More extensive and frequent training is needed.

Notes:

When comparing the two models, the NEE has favorable feedback for its utilization of technology, especially in the form of feedback. Participants from both models preferred targeted and timely feedback that was standards based. More frequent observations are perceived as beneficial, but seven of the 15 teachers preferred scheduled observations. I also discovered that over half (eight) of the 15 respondents had little or no training on the MEEP. Questions emerge about teachers' depth of knowledge regarding the evaluation process. Consistent professional development to train teachers about the MEEP would be beneficial to deepen understanding and gain knowledge about the instructional standards (MEEP).

SECTION FIVE

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Target Journal and Rationale

The target journal most appropriate for this study is *The Rural Educator.* This journal is the official peer-reviewed journal for the National Rural Education Association (*The Rural Educator*, 2011). This journal is a very appropriate source for educators in a rural setting because of its focus on federal and state legislative issues, school finance in the rural setting, rural policy issues, and issues pertaining to the rural population (*The Rural Educator*, 2011).

Outline of Proposed Contents

The Rural Educator requests submissions to be submitted in American Psychological Association (2001) fifth-edition format and not to exceed 25 pages of Times New Roman 12-point font text, including references. Separate files comprise all appendices and a separate key word document will be used for searching. The publication asks that pertinent contact information be included on the cover sheet, but excluded from the manuscript (*The Rural Educator*, 2011). The article will have the following sections.

Abstract

In 1983 the National Commission for Excellence in Education investigated claims that U.S. schools were failing to adequately educate children. The Commission identified many inconsistencies nationwide in areas of access, teacher standards, learning standards, and accountability. This investigation led to an evolution of legislation such as the NCLB Act (2001) and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), which have had their own unique impacts on the educational system in the United States. Common to each legislation is the

need for teacher evaluation and accountability. The process of evaluating teachers has evolved to a norm in the profession, pairing educational leaders and educators in a collaborative environment, collaborating to discuss strategies for growth. Missouri requires teachers to be evaluated to monitor effectiveness using a set of principles created by the Missouri DESE and approved by the legislature. Little knowledge in Missouri concerns the implementation of these principles and its growth model, especially among rural school districts. This qualitative study will use interviews and focus groups to gather perceptions from rural practitioners regarding two commonly used evaluation tools in the State of Missouri. Qualitative data will be coded and disseminated to reveal teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of each tool when considering its impact on work in the classroom.

Introduction to the Study

In the era of high accountability in education, the issue of teacher evaluation has become a focal point of attention (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; NCLB, 2001). Accountability for school districts to provide quality education to its patrons is very important, especially as linked to the evaluation of educators by educational leadership (Gibbs, 2018). Student performance, teacher performance, and school accreditation are required to meet new, rigorous standards. Legislation has organized and mandated learning standards and accountability measures for schools at the national and state levels (NCLB, 2001). Schools, including those in Missouri, now must implement these learning standards and assess teacher performance as a consideration during the accreditation process (Missouri DESE, 2013a).

Although this situation is demanding, it is not without historical perspective. Public perception in 1981 was quite critical of the U.S. education system (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This perception led to a plethora of questions about the nation's education system. Moreover, little attention was paid to how U.S. schools were performing in relation to one another. No national content standards existed. In addition, no standardized methods existed to assess student performance. Therefore, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) was created to gather data on the performance of schools in the United States, tasked to gather data on student performance and identify strengths and weaknesses in the U.S. educational system. The Commission identified major inconsistencies in the areas of student achievement, equal access, teacher performance, and standards for education (National Commission on Excellence in Education,1983).

In 2001 major legislation was passed to organize a movement of teacher and student performance in the direction of universal mastery of core academic content (NCLB, 2001). Goals were to set progressively more rigorous student achievement standards in mathematics, communication arts, and science through the year 2014, eventually ending with every student in the United States testing at proficient levels on standardized tests in the three content areas. Monies would be allocated for states that established annual assessments and initiated structures for academic progress (NCLB, 2001).

Ideas began to emerge about waiving the strict demands of NCLB as the 2014 deadline for universal student proficiency neared and states realized scores were stagnating under the federal mandate. Some states obtained federal and some applied to

adopt new ways to stay in compliance without having to meet the 100% proficiency targets required by law. Missouri applied for the waiver and received exemption from NCLB given a certain set of alternate criteria that included a promise to strengthen the evaluation process for teachers and administrators to improve instruction (Missouri DESE, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2012a).

These monitoring measures varied by state and district and can be categorized into two major criteria for tracking data involving student achievement. Administrators and teachers were to be measured by standardized tests that were based on some variation of a nationalized set of educational standards named the Common Core State Standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). Most states adopted these standards in some form. States had the opportunity to slightly modify the standards to fit the particular needs of their systematic or political environment (Missouri DESE, 2013b).

For this study, the focus was the Missouri DESE's version of the post-NCLB waiver process of teacher evaluation, implemented to satisfy the requirements of the ESEA's flexibility waiver. This multifaceted growth model of teacher evaluation was implemented in the 2014–2015 school year and incorporates a spectrum of criterion spanning from professional development to student-achievement data. All schools in the state were mandated to adopt these criteria, labeled the MEEP, as a form of teacher and principal evaluation that adheres to seven principles (Missouri DESE, 2013b).

Literature Review

For this literature review, I discuss path-goal theory as an overarching theme and theoretical framework for the process of implementing MEEP. Path-goal theory, as initially explored by House (1971), examines leadership, subordinate and situational

conditions, and their relationship to organizational success. This theory has multiple applications in organizational structure, but this review explores the theory through the lens of educational leadership, its relationship to teacher evaluation, and its impact on teacher practice.

Leadership methodology is multiple and diverse within path-goal theory. Leadership characteristics are described as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented (House, 1971). Path-goal leaders create an environment where goals are clear, effective procedures are a norm, and outcome expectations are rewarded. These leaders are also involved in the work and knowledgeable of organizational processes and procedures.

Systemic characteristics influence leadership decisions in path-goal theory. An organization's culture and climate are considerable factors in leadership decision making. Path-goal leaders are aware of the organizational systems and make decisions that will be productive within the working environment (House, 1971; Northouse, 2013).

Subordinate traits, such as experience, personality type, and prior experience, contribute to leadership styles relative to path-goal theory. Leaders must consider educational and experiential factors. Personnel awareness can direct leaders to make decisions on training, personnel placement, and diverse recruitment needs (Salazar, 2007).

Subordinate topics in support of this theory and equally applicable to this project are teacher evaluation and its relationship with teacher work assessed through accountability measures (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). I articulate, synthesize, critique, and summarize extant literature on these topics throughout this paper.

Leadership

Path-goal theory is an approach to "motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals" (Northouse, 2013, p. 137). This theory relies highly on the relationship of leadership styles and the ways subordinates react in the context of the work setting (Levi, 1993). Employing supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented styles (Northouse, 2013), leaders must assess the situation and attempt to adapt to the leadership styles they feel are most appropriate for the needs of their subordinates. Path-goal theory is appropriate for MEEP implementation because of the need to implement the standards across a broad spectrum of school cultures and climates (Northouse, 2013; Schein, 1993).

Task characteristics are a very important construct in the implementation of path-goal theory. Tasks that are generally clear and concise, with clear goals and completion, are not complex enough to fully use this theory (Northouse, 2013). One of the greatest strengths of path-goal theory in its relationship with MEEP implementation is its reliance on achievement-oriented leadership.

> In settings such as these, leaders who challenge and set high standards for subordinates raise subordinates' confidence that they have the ability to reach their goals. In effect, achievement-oriented leadership helps subordinates feel that their efforts will result in effective performance. (Northouse, 2013, p. 144)

Strong organization of focused goals will be a measure that a successful leader must take seriously. Equally important is the connection subordinates must feel to the task (Northouse, 2013). Expectations must be high, and when appropriate, parallel the philosophies of subordinates (Maslow, 1943). This creates a high sense of achievement

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and satisfaction from the work process and small successes that come with ambiguous work.

Accountability

In creating the evaluation model, practitioners and researchers in Missouri put forth cooperative effort to create an effective way to monitor and impact teachers' work. It was important that the process was collaborative, continuous, and standards based. Frequent assessments to formatively evaluate students are a reliable source of data that can be used to impact instruction (Volante & Beckett, 2011; Gibbs, 2018). Adopting clear learning goals, assessing these goals, and adapting instruction accordingly impacts student learning (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

Holding teachers accountable for students' achievement is a delicate leadership matter. The path-goal approach entails implementing four leadership styles (Northouse, 2013). These styles are fluid, having the flexibility to change, depending on the person or situation. By using a directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented approach, a leader can mold accountability measures that fit the personalities of subordinates and the situation (Northouse, 2013, p. 143). No concrete models hold teachers accountable, but student performance is the most logical measure of instructional effectiveness; school districts should use this measure to hold teachers accountable for performance (Jacob, 2012). Teachers have shown increases in student performance as a result of participation in a rigorous and ongoing evaluation system (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). These impacts link to multiple observations, frequent communication with peers and leadership, and clearly articulated standards for teaching (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation relates to positive change in student achievement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Frequent and detailed feedback and evaluation on teacher practices can have an outstanding impact on teacher performance when using student achievement as a measure (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Motivation must be a central construct when discussing teacher evaluation because of its multifaceted involvement in the process. Houle (as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014) called educators goal-oriented learners because of their desire to learn and grow to work toward the achievement of another goal. This motivation is largely extrinsic, with the growth of students and approval of superiors acting as the outside driving forces. However, one can also argue this motivation to grow professionally is intrinsic and learning oriented. Teachers do rely on a strong sense of duty and accountability to students; thus, some teachers do operate as adult learners in Houle's (as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014) learning-oriented state (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012).

The process of evaluating teachers focuses on adult-learning topics. Notably, practitioners in the school setting rely heavily on experiential learning to grow professionally (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Knowing how practices work in a variety of environments is critical to teachers in rural settings. Practitioners must be familiar with the setting, but also engaged enough in the activities that they are able to synthesize them across multiple contexts. Most importantly, reflective practices are critical to experiential learning, offering opportunities to adapt in real time and modify delivery methods that were either successful or failures (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Figure 3 shows the relationship between three important concepts of experiential learning and how they

interact. The area where participation, synthesis, and reflection overlap symbolizes an environment where true experiential learning takes place. Each aspect can stand alone and have benefits, and each can interact with the other, but the overlap of the three areas is where situated cognition occurs (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).
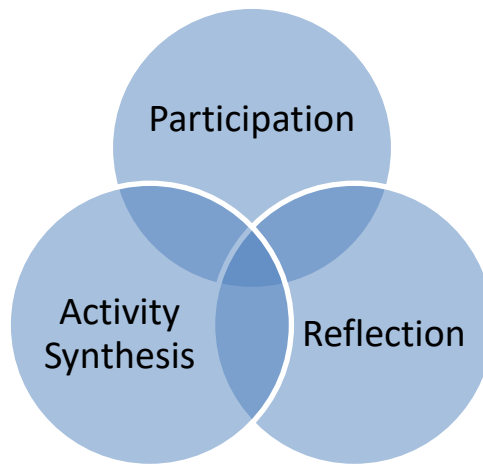
Figure 3. Relationships in experiential learning.
Note. Three concepts overlap to form the abstract idea of situated cognition. *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice,* by S. B Merriam & L. L. Bierema, 2014, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 115.

Rural Education

Effective instructional leadership methods in a rural setting parallel other educational settings and have subtle differences, specifically in regard to community involvement and transformational leadership (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). Rural schools are largely the central organization in a rural community. In many cases, the public school system is the largest major employer in the community and connects in many ways with almost every family. Involving community stakeholders is a vital role of rural educational leadership. As poverty grows and job opportunities wane, close community ties to public education drive a need for feedback from stakeholders and educators regarding educational content and practice (Harmon & Schafft, 2009). Public education

in the rural setting requires systematic communication. Teacher growth requires frequent and structured observation and interaction (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). Often, rural educators must teach multiple grade levels and content areas. These tasks push an instructor to become diverse in practice. Obstacles can interfere with the growth and development of subordinates in their journey to seek productivity. Leadership tactics crucial to success in instructional leadership "clearly define goals, clarify paths, remove obstacles, and provide support" (Northouse, 2013, p. 138). Transformational leaders consider the importance of school employees who also are community members and their role in the decision-making process of rural schools (Anderson, 2008). Rural educational leaders must balance the multitude of tasks necessary for the school's daily operation and its functions. Teachers have a critical role in this process. By delegating tasks and allowing educators to take a transformational approach, the leader can effectively create a link among stakeholders, teachers, and the school (Anderson, 2008). Transformational leaders articulate the best practices to follow to enhance the success of an educational institution.

Teachers must make connections between their experiences in the classroom and the learning that takes place in their professional lives. By linking learning and practice, transformational learning empowers teachers to make long-term changes to instructional techniques (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Through applicable professional development and the corresponding and ongoing communication of its principles (Schein, 1993), teachers' learning can be ongoing and transformative. Instructional leaders require intimate involvement of the development and implementation of these practices, along with frequent and targeted effective communication (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). A leader

must make a concerted effort to regularly address goals, showing implementers—in this case, teachers—a targeted and clear direction for the organization (Northouse, 2013). These discussions foster deeper understanding and growth.

A principal's ability to coach instructional techniques in an environment including multiple grade levels and content areas is critical (Salazar, 2007). Although this complexity can be a barrier, it offers educators the opportunity to work in a cross-curricular manner to engage learners in core concepts from a variety of viewpoints (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Path-goal leadership has effective and focused task characteristics related to motivation for individual growth. Targeted formative-assessment practices are effective in rural environments (Eady & Zepeda, 2007). Path-goal leaders affect the development of standardized expectations, evaluation protocols, communication techniques, and feedback as leaders and instructors develop the foundational elements of formative assessment, aligning ideas and protocols in their practice. These methods are continual and ongoing, making evaluation of instructional practices more feasible in environments like rural schools, where instructors teach various content and grade levels. Educational leaders must be properly trained to evaluate teachers to increase student performance, but the clear and targeted strategies to complete this task are vague (Salazar, 2007). Barriers of time, resources, and subpar mentoring exist for rural educators, but obstacles must be overcome to maintain the mission of effective and targeted evaluation (Ashton & Duncan, 2012).

School Accountability

Measures of educational accountability by government officials and educators date back to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). The

Commission published *A Nation at Risk,* in which it analyzed the state of the education

system in the United States and drew many conclusions that resulted in policy change.

Most notably, the report called for government officials and educators at all levels to be

held more accountable for fiscal stability, instructional practices, and students'

achievement (Kelly & Orris, 2011; National Commission on Excellence in Education,

1983).

Federal, state, and local governments, through legislation and fiscal constraints,

hold schools accountable for educating students. Legislators at the national level

appropriate money to federal programs, as does the U.S. Department of Education, which

oversees a portion of the many programs that affect local school districts. Most fiscal

burdens fall on state and local governments. State legislators also appropriate a

substantial amount of money for school districts to be controlled by local governments

and school boards (Kelly & Orris, 2011). Governments use taxpayer money as a measure

of accountability for school districts. School districts must use government-allocated

monies to support appropriate programs. Governments monitor these budgets and

spending norms to ensure the distribution of funds (Kelly & Orris, 2011; National

Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). These federal laws are the backbone of

equality for schools in the United States, ensuring certain programs for the

socioeconomically disadvantaged, handicapped, and other underrepresented groups are

fair and equitable (Kelly & Orris, 2011).

With the adoption of NCLB in 2001, accountability measures for teachers'

instructional practice and schools' achievement were largely emphasized at the local

level (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Kelly & Orris, 2011). With a focus on learning standards

and academic achievement, teachers were, for the first time, held accountable for student achievement in mathematics and communication arts (NCLB, 2001); educators and administrators experienced much concern. Schools that had been continuously low performing were being held to the same achievement benchmarks as those that had been high achieving. Educational researchers began to work on ways schools could meet these standards for achievement. Teachers feel stress and fatigue from greater work demands and accountability measures (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Punitive and incentive policies that monitor student achievement are functional, but qualitative data revealed that motivation did not emerge from fear of punishment and anticipation of reward. Teacher motivation is rooted in their "professional status and the individual goals they had for students" (Finnigan & Gross, 2007, p. 624).

External accountability measures are significant in the leadership decisions of school administrators, but internal accountability and the importance placed on personal relationships and making good decisions for local patrons holds strong (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012). Leadership works to maintain a collaborative environment, focusing on student needs in the face of higher accountability measures. For example, "principals were very concerned with the general welfare of their students, that their charges were safe, treated justly, and having a positive experience in school" (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2012, p. 399).

Educators use achievement data and formative assessment tools as accountability measures that facilitate change (Hamilton et al., 2013). Trends for data-driven decision-making are rising and an increasing number of school leaders are using these tactics to hold teachers accountable for instructional practice and student achievement (Hamilton et

al., 2013). School personnel are more widely accepting assessment tools. However, school leaders accept increased accountability with the constraint that these decisions are made at the local level, where specific cultural norms can be considered (Hamilton et al., 2013).

Instructional Practices

Educators learning about instructional practices could benefit from training in teacher evaluations with a goal to buoy organization standards (Northouse, 2013). Servant leadership greatly enhances teachers' abilities to excel in the classroom with the ultimate and ethical goal to "put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities" (Northouse, 2013, p. 219). Concepts such as empathy, listening, awareness, and foresight are principles that define servant leadership (Northouse, 2013).

John Hattie and Robert Marzano, leaders in educational research, specifically the field of assessment and teacher practice, draw some overlapping similarities in the field of educational assessment. Some key factors that emerge from assessment research include a few overarching themes. These themes include clear communication of the topic, clear feedback, saturation of instruction, application of material, group interaction, constant practice, and self-efficacy (FCPS, 2020).

Formative assessment is key to the success of students, often used by strong instructional practitioners (Kumar, 2013; Volante & Beckett, 2011; William et al., 2004). Frequent assessment techniques to formatively evaluate students are a reliable source of data that can be used to impact instruction (Volante & Beckett, 2011; William et al., 2004). Using techniques that are more constructive than rote have long-term benefits for

students' knowledge retention (William et al., 2004). Formative assessments also positively impact student motivation. When paired with constructive learning, formative assessment allows for ongoing feedback and relevant pacing, largely controlled by the student (Kumar, 2013). One concern in the use of formative assessment in the era of standards-based learning is the amount of time available; formative assessments are time consuming in the context of so many instructional standards. Teachers feel they do not have enough time to adequately and fairly address all standards (Volante & Beckett, 2011).

Design of the Study

Research Questions

With a lack of knowledge concerning the impact of policy on practice, knowledge can be gained in some areas. Schools must implement evaluation tools that comply with MEEP but lack knowledge of perceptions of the impact on the practice of north Missouri teachers about the MMES and NEE. The guiding overarching question for this study was, "What are teachers' perceptions of the MMES and NEE in rural north Missouri and their impact on teacher work?"

Setting

This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of north Missouri teachers of the MMES and NEE and their impact on practice. As part of the DESE ESEA waiver, Missouri proposed an overhaul of its teacher-evaluation process. Through this process, DESE derived a system of teacher evaluation, the MEES, based on their MEEP. The MEES is a free-model system provided by DESE, but the ESEA waiver also states that any school can use a system of their own choosing or creation as long as it was created in

accordance with MEEP and appropriately piloted and implemented. The University of Missouri created such a program, the NEE, which is used across the state of Missouri.

This qualitative study focused on rural Missouri school districts north of Interstate 70 that use the MEES or NEE. Data about teacher perceptions of the impact of the MMES and NEE were accrued through interviews and focus groups with teachers from school districts using each of the two aforementioned models, as well as a document review. For the purposes of interview authenticity, data were collected in the environment in which the interviewee experienced the interactions in question (Creswell, 2014). Data were accrued through interviews, focus groups, and document collection (as suggested by Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research and specifically coding required the researcher to gather data relevant to the opinions of the teacher evaluation tool. To appropriately gauge this paradigm, the researcher implemented the use of opinion and value questions to assess the personal beliefs of the research topic (Merriam, 2009). To gather data directly relating to the research question, the interviewer asked feeling questions to code for perceptions about the evaluation tool (Merriam, 2009). Finally, growth opportunities are necessary for effective research, so the interviewer asked Merriam's (2009) ideal position questions to gather data regarding growth potential of the research topic. Teachers' perceptions were transcribed and coded, seeking relationships among perceptions with an emphasis on the program and its impact on teacher work. Documents were collected to assist in data triangulation to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014).

Data Analysis

The interviewer analyzed the data in accordance with appropriate qualitative processes, ensuring the collection and analysis are trustworthy. The process began with

the transcription of all interviews and interview notes. The interviewer analyzed and coded transcripts into categories determined from the data collected. The coding process began as an open and indifferent approach to not test and develop a hypothesis, but to look for naturally occurring themes (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2019). From this open and indifferent coding, a more detailed and analytical coding process developed as themes emerged (Merriam, 2009). Coding categories were carefully designed to be responsive, exhaustive, and mutually exclusive so that the emerging themes were directly related to the research questions (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2019). Themes emerged as the researcher studied the data, and the researcher refined and sorted those themes as part of an ongoing open and indifferent coding process and looking for rich, meaningful data as well as a saturation of data (as in Creswell, 2014). Attention was paid to make coding themes mutually exclusive, ensuring that each theme was developed to stand alone in its importance to answering the research questions (Merriam, 2009).

Participants

Participants for this bounded case study were chosen based on their geographical location, the size of school for which they work, and the type of evaluation system they use. Respondents fit the criteria of teaching in a school north of Interstate 70, located in a rural setting, as defined by DESE in the Small, Rural School Achievement Program and Rural and Low-Income School Program (Missouri DESE, 2019b). Participants were purposefully isolated to fit the specific criteria for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Missouri DESE, 2019c).

Findings

The interview, focus group, and document analysis revealed several themes that relate to the research questions (see Figure 1). Through the interview process and focus group the researcher was able to identify educators' perceptions surrounding the evaluations processes and their classroom instructional practice. The documents analyzed were mission, vision, and goal statements found on the school district's websites. These statements, through Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame, were used as existent data to develop the themes in this research.

Table 1

Themes About MEES Relating to Instructional Practice

Theme	Frequency in Coding/Interviews
Professional Discussions	7/8
Evaluation Process	8/8
Impact on Practice	6/8
Feedback on Cyclical Development	5/8

Table 2

Themes About NEE Relating to Instructional Practice

Theme	Frequency in Coding/Interviews
Professional Discussions	7/7
Evaluation Process	6/7
Impact on Practice	5/7
Feedback on Cyclical Development	7/7

Theme 1: Professional Discussions

Theme 1 involves the professional discussions that take place as a result of the evaluation process (see Figures 2 & 3). Practitioners from both evaluation models talked about the evaluation process and its characteristics for fostering professional discussion from building leadership. Figure 3 shows teachers using NEE appreciate the digital platform that evaluation model provides. "It's easy to just click a couple of things and then see where you need to work on or what you are doing well in. So that's nice," said Cindy. Many comments were directed toward the frequency and depth of the discussions between teachers and school leaders. Productive conversations require an instructional leader to give constructive feedback focusing on specific behaviors (Levi, 2014). Ideas emerged that showed a need for more targeted discussions that would be beneficial to their work in the classroom. Tia shared,

> I loved being able to see all of my scores throughout the year in one place to see
> the growth that I had during the year from the scores that were provided by my

instructional leader. Receiving feedback on these standards really helped with

identifying the strategies I use in my classroom and what I needed to continue

doing as well what I needed to improve on.

Standards-based discussions were well received, with minor dissention, mostly resulting

from a lack of frequency of classroom visits. Fourteen of the 15 participants reported

receiving postobservation feedback (See Tables 1 & 2). The one outlier received

feedback much too late to be beneficial. One participant did report to have received

negative feedback that was difficult to use for growth. The focus group was positive

when discussing feedback. Their discussion was appreciative of the opportunity to

discuss classroom practice with the instructional leader. Existing research from Levi

(2014) shows psychological safety is an important quality for effective communication

among team members. Districts work to develop a feeling of comfortable

communication between instructional leaders and instructors. This theme of

collaboration resonated in a district mission statement, with one communicating they will

be a "caring and professional staff will provide a rigorous and relevant education to

ensure every student has the opportunity to become a responsible, resilient, career-ready

citizens." This mission statement symbolizes the characteristics of teamwork and

communication as they work to prepare successful and value students (Bolman & Deal,

2008).

Theme 2: Evaluation Process

The second theme that emerged was central to the processes of the evaluation

models. For both models, the evaluations were largely unscheduled. "My current

administrator likes to just pop in every once in a while, just for five minutes," shared

Shelly. Table 2 shows seven participants from the NEE, six discussed their evaluations

were at random. The MEES participants all mentioned this trend (See Table 1). The focus

group discussion revealed almost every evaluation opportunity was unscheduled and

short in duration. Teachers are unaware of when each visit will occur and do not seem to

mind the surprise. However, discord was recorded involving the duration and quality of

visits. Teachers noted the visits are often short and sporadic, resulting in a lack of data

when discussing feedback generated from the evaluation visit. Teachers who were

involved in NEE enjoyed the digital platform of feedback, but still wanted

postobservation interaction with the building leader. "I think when you can get an

objective opinion about your classroom instruction it's extremely helpful and makes you

feel supported as an educator" reflected Karen. Participants in MEES valued the

postobservation meeting, but noted that those meetings were not always timely, and some

never occurred at all (see Figure 2). The researcher also found data that reflected a

misconception of the fundamentals of the evaluation process. Of the fifteen interviews,

eleven never mentioned the MEEP. This expresses a lack of understanding in the

standards that are the foundation of the evaluation process. Setting clear goals and

standards are integral to building a successful organization (Northouse, 2013). Path-Goal

leadership, as discussed by Northouse (2013) teaches us to train subordinates thoroughly

on the expectations of the leadership. The data shows a lack of understanding of the

MEEP and its relationship to the evaluation process. Although these data emerged from

interviews and focus groups, they were not reflected in the documents.

Theme 3: Impact on Practice

The third theme explored how the practitioners used the process of evaluation as a tool to impact their instructional practice. Figures 2 and 3 display teachers from both evaluation methods enjoyed the postobservation discussions, but more targeted, standards-based discussion would be useful. Of the seven participants from the NEE, five discussed this trend (See Table 2). The MEES participants also mentioned this theme, with six of the eight communicating this sentiment (See Table 1). The discussion also was present in the focus group discussion. The focus group commented,

> It (instructional standards) can give you your topics that you need to work on. There's things that I know I need to work on, but whenever it's brought to my attention or it's something that I don't realize I'm doing or I'm missing, it's nice too.

The researcher observed conversations focused on the instructional strategies that were observed during the lesson. Tia shared,

> My leader presented the strength, growth, and strength feedback strategy in my first observation feedback meeting. She began with a strength, mentioned a growth and incorporated some strategies that she though would be good to incorporate into my classroom, and then another strength. At the end of the meeting she was sure to ask if I had any questions, celebrations for myself in the observation, or any concerns that I had.

One school's mission includes the following statement:

> Each educational task must be solely planned so it will help the child grow mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and socially. We believe there are

individual differences in children and that adequate provisions must be made for a

wide variety of activities that will develop the many different talents of boys and

girls.

In the context of Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame, this mission aligns to the

importance of implementing various instructional strategies for a variety of content areas.

This document is especially important because it uses very specific language in its

mission statement. This is a foundational element in the ESEA flexibility waiver (U.S.

Department of Education, 2012a), which Gibbs (2018) expanded on by presenting ideas

on positively impacting relationships and student performance by establishing clear

expectations, positive feedback, and consistency.

Teachers from both evaluation models would find the process more beneficial if

the observations were more frequent and targeted a specific standard or unit of study.

Nine participants divulged that sporadic and infrequent observations diluted the

observer's ability to see an accurate understanding of the teacher's skills. The ability to

communicate clearly about professional practice is vital to creating a culture of learning

(Gill, 2010). A vital part of improving organizational effectiveness is the development of

old skills and the learning of new skills, and Gill's (2010) learning culture is foundational

to this theme as it directly relates to the effective communication between instructional

leaders and practitioners.

Theme 4: Feedback on Cyclical Development

Theme 4 measures the constructive feedback from teachers directly relating to

their observation model (see Figures 3 & 4). Both sets enjoy the interaction with their

building leader, but desire more frequent and targeted observations. "I know teachers

don't like more evaluations, but if we really want to use as an evaluation tool of how I am teaching the material, then maybe more and just come in and check more often" reflected Shelly. This data shows the practitioner desire for situated cognition (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). Clear and constructive feedback from instructional leaders gives practitioners the opportunity to adjust behavior in the classroom and apply the feedback in a real world context, therefore further deepening their understanding of the desired practice (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). Six participants would prefer the observations be scheduled so the evaluator could see the most important part of a lesson, or at very least, the part that specifically engages the learners in the desired standard. Too much time was wasted observing portions of lessons that were not directly related to the standards. Teachers also enjoy multiple forms of communication, and in this instance, that includes digital and conversational feedback. Of the seven NEE participants, all of them spoke of this point. Five of the eight MEES interviewees and the focus group also made this statement (See Tables 1 & 2). Document analysis also revealed one school specifically mentions communication strategy by saying their mission is to, "offer educational opportunities which allow our students to master basic skills, communicate effectively, and become productive, knowledgeable, and ethically responsible citizens." This relationship between the teacher's model of professional learning and instructional strategies implemented in classroom practice are consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame.

Lastly, the researcher recognized a lack of knowledge and training of the MEEP during interviews. "I think more PD days could be used to find common areas that could improve our instruction," said Mitch. The practitioners were aware of the evaluation

principles but had very limited knowledge of their details. Strong instructional leadership that enables competent communication, confidence, goal-setting, and task relevancy is beneficial in creating training protocols that benefit consistent delivery of instructional standards (Northouse, 2013).
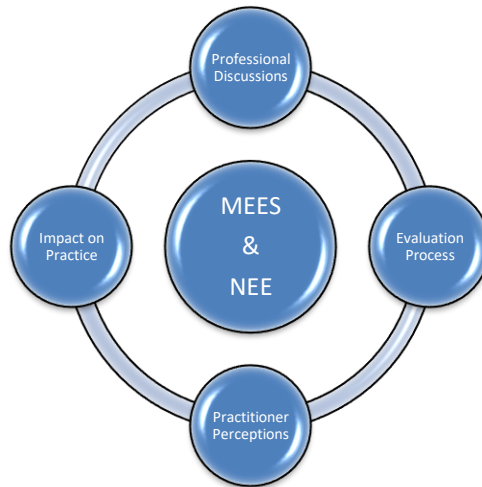

Figure 5. Common themes from the MEES and NEE.
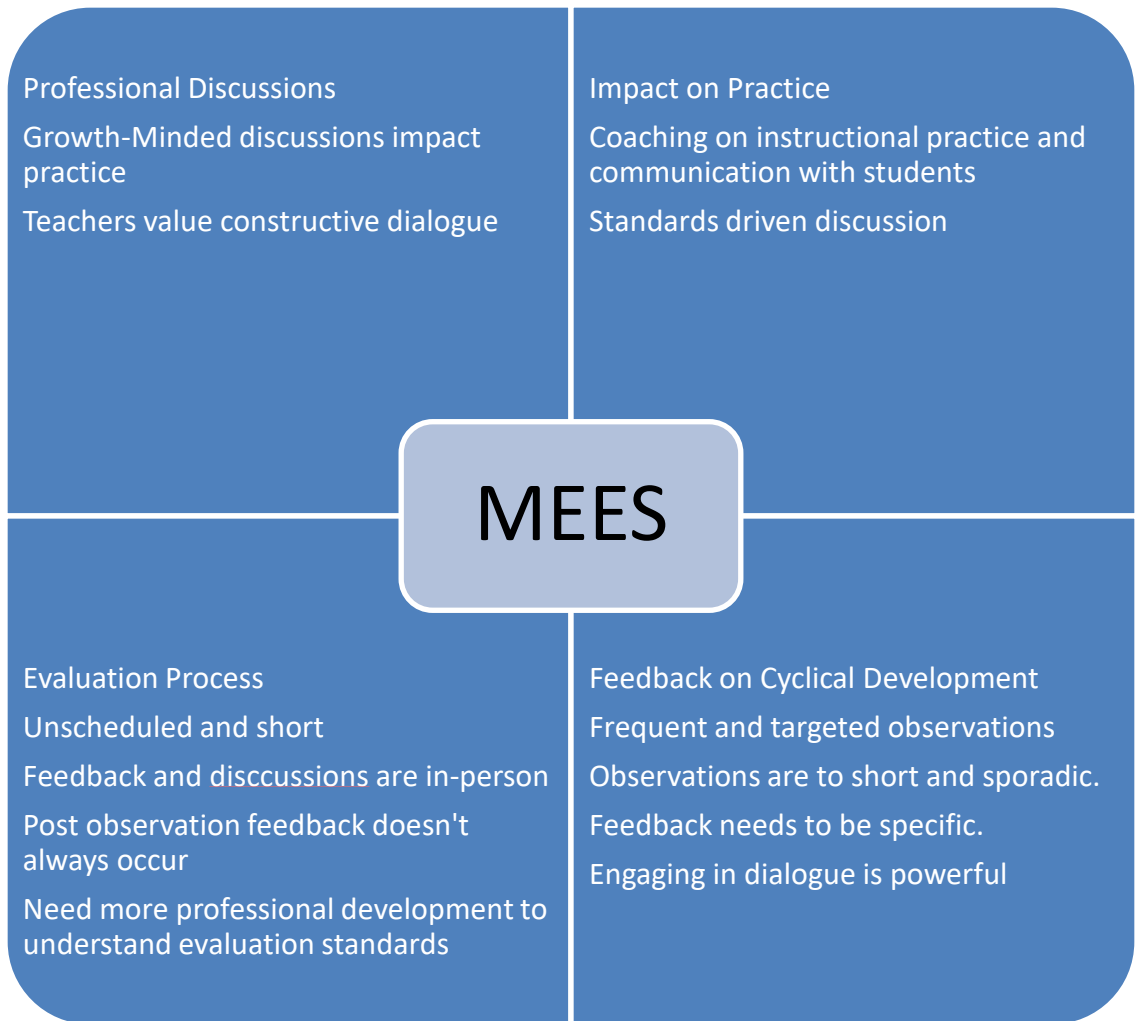
Figure 6. Themes and descriptions from MEES.
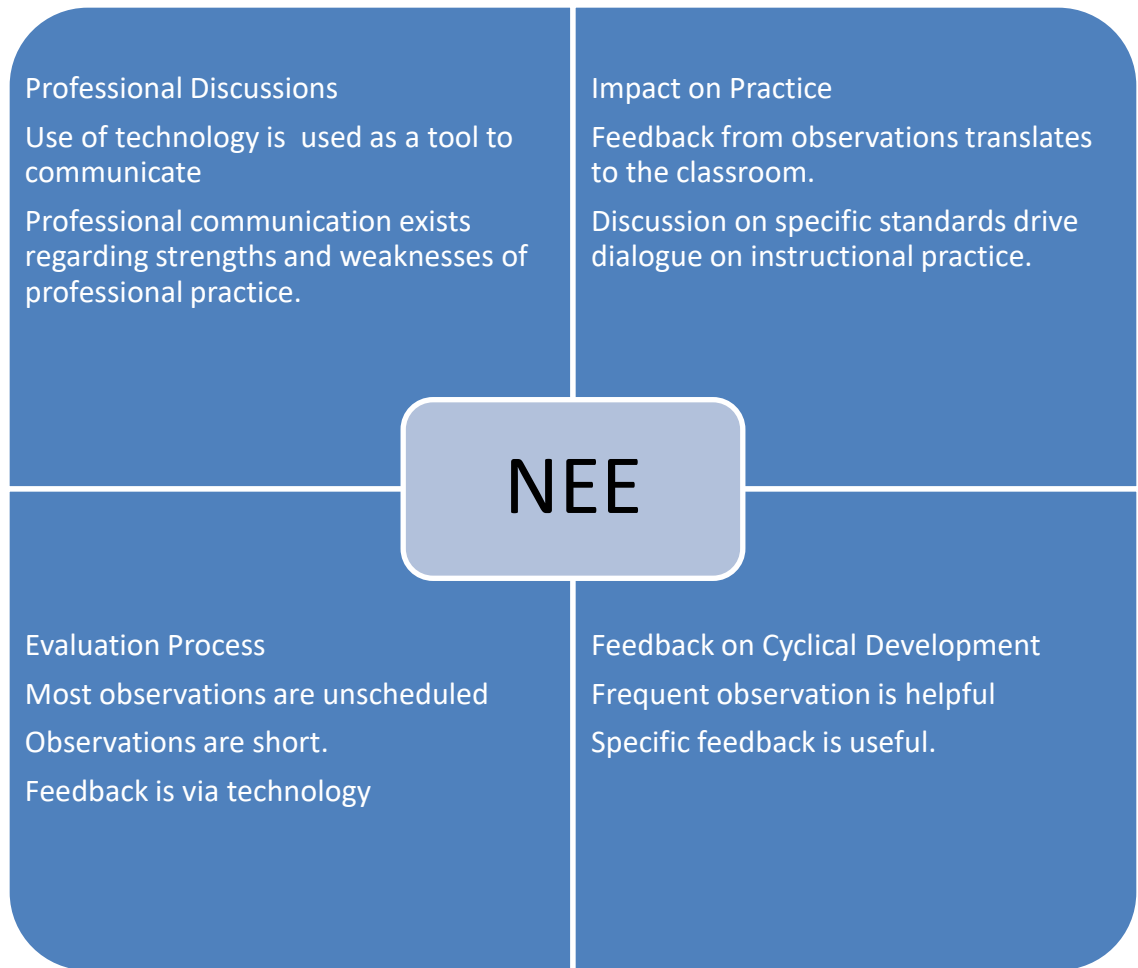
Figure 7. Themes and descriptions from NEE.

Making Meaning Through Metaphors

Similarities can be drawn from the evaluation process and coaching a sports team. Through comparisons of this research and the metaphor of coaching a sports team, connections can be made to real-world applications.

Coaching and Communicating: Professional Discussions

Conclusions were drawn from data that suggest it is very important for everyone to understand the rules. By understanding pertinent concepts and effectively communicating, growth can be achieved (Schein, 1993). Just as important for a quarterback to understand the game of football, it is equally important for a teacher to

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understand the MEEP, or instructional standards. This understanding provides the foundation for how the leadership or coach would coach the desired behavior. Coaches get to observe performance on the practice and game fields. They gather multiple data sets to have meaningful discussions with the players. The same immersion in data should be present in the relationship between an instructional leader and a teacher. Lastly, just like in the coaching world, the instructional leadership should work to develop clear and constructive dialogue with teachers to support growth. Discussing strategy and best practices can be just as beneficial on the game field as it is in the classroom.

Rules and Technique: The Evaluation Process

Athletes desire a coach who can provide proper training of skills and techniques in their specific sport. Teachers also value an instructional leader who has a strong background and skill set when teaching instructional strategies. Teachers, like athletes, enjoy their entire performance to be taken into consideration when receiving constructive criticism. Bambrick-Santoyo (2013) stated that teacher evaluation directly correlates to a positive change in student outcomes. Evaluation and feedback are effective in the classroom and on the playing field. Celebrating small successes and building on positive events are effective means of communication.

Coaching with Purpose: Impact on Practice

Athletes tend to respond to good communicators. Teachers share this attribute. When translating feedback from the evaluation data to the classroom, teachers strive for specific feedback relating to their performance. William et al. (2004) described the importance of adopting clear objectives and adapting instruction accordingly as an effective means for success. Athletes want to know exactly what they have performed

poorly so they can immediately correct the problem on the next play. Teachers strive to receive timely and direct performance feedback so they may adjust the classroom instruction to improve their performance as soon as possible.

Learn The Audience: Feedback for Cyclical Development

Instructional leaders must learn to effectively communicate in an organized fashion (Taylor & Tyler, 2012) with multiple personality types. Coaches must learn how players react to criticism and feedback. Educators must do the same to grow teachers. Levi (2013) wrote that teams must work cohesively in a very organized fashion by collaborating to solve problems. Perceptions of the effectiveness instructional leaders have on classroom practice is highly impacted by their ability to use constructive feedback to lead teachers.

Limitations

This study was performed in a rural area. Gathering data was difficult due to proximity. The data were gathered using technology as an integral tool to communicate. Sample size is one of the most powerful limitations of this study. The interviewer conducted only eight interviews and received seven written responses, which decreased the chances of a diversity of responses. Upon coding the date, the researcher believed there was a saturation of data. Responses were consistent and similar. It is possible that more respondents would reveal the same answers in more quantity. The researcher learned the evaluation tool's implementation relied largely on the administration. Negative responses were consistent with respondents who felt the administration was not giving their full effort to the evaluation model.

Contributions to Practice

Conclusions

These data show several trends of the two evaluation models and teacher perceptions. Instructional leadership must be well trained and diligent when implementing the evaluation models. Consistency is appreciated and helps build a cohesive and collaborative learning culture where effective communication drives reflective and growth minded practice (Gill, 2010). This especially includes being constructive and timely with feedback from classroom observations. Instructional leaders should be mindful that practitioners respect and desire constructive feedback when delivered in a timely, professional, and consistent form. This conclusion is supported by Levi's (2013) findings that creating a psychologically safe environment that offers constructive feedback about specific behaviors is important for growth. The use of technology in the evaluation process is popular, especially when it positively impacts the communication process. It is also very important for leaders to address the instructional standards regularly. This research found inconsistency among the teachers' understanding of the MEEP. Foundational to the process of teacher evaluation, Northouse's (2013) Path Goal theory explains that setting clear and concrete expectations is vital to the growth of an organization. Teachers must have extensive and ongoing training on the instructional standards, specifically the MEEP. Further research could reveal more data regarding teachers' understanding of the MEEP, the applicable training they receive on the MEEP, and how they use these instructional principles in the classroom.

SECTION SIX

LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

Introduction

Leadership as a facilitator of learning is the most important part of my job. As an

instructional leader, I see myself in direct responsibility of the learning culture of a

building. To put this in context, I feel directly responsible for several categories directly

related to the learning of all age groups and demographics within my school. As

displayed in the graphic below, it is a leader's responsibility to be aware of and involved

in learning at the broadest level.

From this perspective, I can see three main areas where learning, and more

namely learning leadership, can take place. Overseeing instructional best practices keeps

me fresh in the pedagogy of teaching. It is crucial for me to be competent for the

purposes of evaluation and teacher training. Additionally, I must be well versed in the

methods of adult learning. These tactics enable me to effectively work with adults in the

context of a learning environment, especially in the ever-changing world of education.

Lastly, I am mindful of our learning culture and its growth as an organization. It benefits

the school if its leaders are forward thinking and have a mindset of continued

professional development and learning.

This graphic emerged after many thoughtful reflection sessions over the course of

the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (ELPA) program. As I created this

organizational document I began thinking about our readings and discussions on

transformative learning because through the creation of this Venn diagram, I have truly

made meaning of my own experiences within my professional field (Merriam & Bierema,

2014). I have always been aware of the three themes in this graphic, but by working with adult learning theory I have begun to accept and understand how they interact. My eye always tends to draw to the center of the diagram, where the three themes converge. I am interested in the relationships between these three broad themes, and as I reflect on their interdependence, I begin to see how affective a leader can be if they increase their expertise in each field independently, but also perpetually reflect on their relationships. However transformative this experience has been for me, I still feel it is in its infancy of understanding. I will spend years examining the relationships articulated in Figure 5, hopefully experiencing continual growth in understanding leadership and its tactics along the way.

Figure 8. Adult learning: A building leader's perspective

Dissertation and Adult Learning

The dissertation process has developed my professional knowledge regarding the complexities of adult learning. By finding relevant existing research, I have learned about learning and leadership styles that are applicable to the school setting. The research shows that adults like involved leaders who are both knowledgeable and directly involved in the implementation of the organization's goals.

By collecting and analyzing research data, I have learned adults like to have direct access to leadership and frequent conversations regarding the adult's performances, especially when directly related to the evaluation process. My interviews and written responses showed a strong desire to choose the evaluated content. This has been an interesting development for me. Current practice, and specifically the two models I chose to study, rely heavily on unscheduled evaluation events. Although the intent is to be sporadic in evaluation, teachers feel this practice can show an unfair and impractical snapshot of the events in the classroom. By being random, short, and frequent, the observation tool strives to achieve a comprehensive picture of the classroom environment. However, teachers tend to feel this practice creates an unfair picture of the true content and pedagogy present in their lessons. The coursework and dissertation process of the ELPA program have taught me to collect multiple forms of data; but most importantly, to use deductive reasoning to funnel information into useable and relevant forms. To observe is an important first step, but reflection and inference drive decision making.

How Have I Grown as a Learner and Leader?

Remaining consistent with the transformative learner theme, I often find myself growing through experiences (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Looking back to the beginning of the program, adaptability was my highest ranked theme within the StrengthsQuest inventory. While reading works on transformative learning, I continually made connections in my educational leadership experiences as far back as my undergraduate work. Class work during the ELPA program was engaging and interesting, but I am a social person who thrives on interaction. Aligning with my strengths in adaptability, when I started engaging in practicum, student teaching, and field work, I was able to connect theory and methodology to practice, which connected all the pieces in my mind. Merriam and Bierema (2014) mentioned that transformative learning can be incidental and informal. I relate to this style of learning within my own context. As a building leader my day is often unscripted. By applying policy to social interaction and unexpected, often complicated situations, I can analyze multiple perspectives and learn in a context that grows my knowledge of the organization and its relationships with the patrons. More specifically, the dissertation process showed me how beneficial data gathering and reflective practices can be when implementing such important programs such as teacher evaluation. My dissertation showed me that teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process are critical. The process was viewed as one with a growth mindset. The teachers crave the opportunity for appropriate and applicable feedback. I think this is rooted in their desire to be observed when they feel they are doing the most impactful work in the classroom.

Who am I as a Change Agent Where Adults Learn?

Workplace transformative learning is reflective and complicated (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Ego must be discarded so critical assessment of current practices can be safely assimilated within the organization's culture. It is my hope that I allow the freedom to adapt to situations and work autonomously to solve problems. Engaging in Gill's (2010) practices of individual and small group learning, our leadership trusts stakeholders to make decisions. We accept the possibility of failure, but always keep a reflective and growth-minded path (Mankins & Steele, 2006/2013). My nature is to be cohesive, hopefully giving my teachers the freedom to make autonomous decisions, take risks, be reflective, and grow. The evaluation process is imperative in this instance. Through my research, I have learned that teachers want to be fairly evaluated. Taking time to be knowledgeable on best practices and present in important moments in their classrooms facilitates this growth mindset.

I have worked hard to create an organizational culture where people communicate and feel safe to work together. Sharing a common interest in the educational experience of our students sets the groundwork for our communicative culture, but more importantly, we strive to be interconnected in our practices to produce an instructional product that is cohesive in nature (Gill, 2010). As in Gill's (2010) work, we have shared competence, a shared domain, and regular opportunities to communicate, which is an intentional practice for the learning and collaborative culture of our organization. As cited in Merriam and Bierema (2014) "effective critical thinkers and actors monitor and correct themselves as well as their group when appropriate" (p. 227). We hope to be thoughtful, reflective, and growth-minded agents of change.

Summary

It is my goal to be forward thinking and reflective in a practical environment while focusing on growth that is directly related to stakeholders, practitioners, and the organization. Through the work of transformative learning, I strive to make real-world connections in my environment in relation to the three themes displayed in Figure 5. My goals are simply to expose myself and those in my organization to as many appropriate experiences as possible, encourage them to take risks, be reflective, and grow their craft in these three areas. It is my hope that this culture of learning will enable our organization to be innovative and adaptable while providing meaningful and useful feedback to support our goals for professional growth.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Letter

Date

Dear Participant:

Thank you for participating in the study of educator perceptions. This study, "A CASE STUDY OF NORTH MISSOURI TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE MISSOURI MODEL EVALUATION SYSTEM AND THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS: IMPACT ON PRACTICE" is being conducted as a research project in a doctoral program as part of my Qualitative Research semester. The study will be used to provide me insight into the methods of qualitative research and could provide your organization with insight into the topic of study.

As a study participant, you will be asked to respond to questions related to educator evaluation tools. The time allowed for the completion of the interview questions is not expected to take longer than twenty minutes. Please read below to understand how your input will be used in the study and how your rights as a participant will be protected.

1. Participation in this study is *completely voluntary*. You may withdraw from participation at any time, including the middle of the interview, or after it is completed. If you decide at a later time you do not wish your input to be included in the study, you may withdraw. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (660) 734-0640, or by email, ehoyt@northwestern.k12.mo.us. You may also contact my professors (Drs. Nissa Ingraham and Tim Wall- nissai@nwmissouri.edu and timwall@nwmissouri.edu) with any concerns.

2. Should you decide to participate, your identity, as well as your input, will remain anonymous. Your interview will be assigned a random pseudonym, and when referred to in the study, you will be identified as either a participant in the research study or by the pseudonym. If you are still interested in participating in this research project you will be required to sign a consent letter before the project begins.

Thank you,

Eric M. Hoyt
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

Participant Consent Form

     I, _____, have read the guidelines on the proposed study and agree to participate in the qualitative study conducted by Eric Hoyt. Furthermore, I understand that:

1. The Individual Interview data will only be used for the purpose of the class study and NOT for any publications.

2. My participation is *completely voluntary*, and I may *withdraw at anytime* during the study.

3. My identity will be protected throughout the process of the study and a pseudonym will be used when reporting findings.

4. I will be given the opportunity to review transcriptions.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Administrative Awareness Letter

Date

Dear Administrator,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri and am currently working on my studies, in regards to Qualitative Research. This letter of awareness is to inform you that I may be contacting one or more teachers in your district to request their participation in my study. This study, "A CASE STUDY OF NORTH MISSOURI TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE MISSOURI MODEL EVALUATION SYSTEM AND THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS: IMPACT ON PRACTICE" will be used to provide explicit knowledge about educator evaluation.

As a study participant, your teachers/administrators will be asked to respond to questions related to educator evaluation. The time allowed for the completion of the interview/focus questions is not expected to take longer than twenty minutes. The interview/focus group will be conducted by means of a face-to-face interview.

If you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact me. My phone number is: (660) 734-0640 and my email is: ehoyt@northwestern.k12.mo.us. In addition, if you have more questions which you would like to pose to my professors, their names and contact information are the following: Dr. Nissa Ingraham: 660-541-2333; nissai@nwmissouri.edu; Dr. Tim Wall: 660-562-1239; timwall@nwmissouri.edu.

Thank you for allowing me to conduct my research within your organization.

Sincerely,

Eric M. Hoyt
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date:

Interviewee:

Position:

Evaluation Tool: MEES or NEE (Circle One)

1. Question and Response: Describe your perceptions of the use of your schools' teacher evaluation tool as an instrument to discuss classroom practice.

2. Question and Response: Describe the process for evaluation and feedback that is provided by your instructional leader when using your district's teacher-evaluation tool.

3. Question and Response: Compare and contrast, in terms of impact on instructional practice, how feedback from your instructional leader relates to the Missouri Educator Evaluation Principles.

4. Question and Response: Describe how you use feedback from your district's evaluation tool to impact instructional practice.

5. Question and Response: Moving forward, what suggestions would you offer to make the teacher-evaluation tool more effective as a means to impact instructional practices?

VITA

Eric Hoyt is an educator who has spent most of his sixteen years working in small rural districts in North Central Missouri. Growing up in a small community has engaged Eric in the importance in offering quality educational opportunities to rural students. The challenges of rural education are unique and Eric has dedicated his career to serving as an educator in this capacity. Eric spent eight years as a rural PK-12 Principal and currently serves as a Superintendent in the same district.