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EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATIONALLY-SPONSORED ONLINE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR ADJUNCT FACULTY: THE INTERSECTION OF THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

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KARLA J. MARSHALL
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EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATIONALLY-SPONSORED ONLINE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR ADJUNCT FACULTY: THE INTERSECTION OF THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

_____
Dr. William Frick, Chair

_____
Dr. Xun Ge

_____
Dr. Irene Karpiak

_____
Dr. Jeff Maiden

_____
Dr. Courtney Vaughn

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ABSTRACT

The use of part-time and adjunct faculty continues to grow within the United States, as they offer current experiences for students while offering flexible and low-cost options to post-secondary educational organizations. Adjunct instructors can represent as much as half of instructional staff in some post-secondary organizations. Along with the benefits of employing adjunct faculty are challenges, specifically in providing professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty that are flexible and accessible to their schedules, as well as activities and opportunities that provide the encouragement and motivation for faculty to participate. Therefore, there continues to be a need to research programs and venues for adjunct instructors that balance their need for professional growth with their need for flexibility in venue and delivery.

This insider action research study describes the three-year journey of one Career and Technology School toward the implementation and enactment of an online purported professional learning community (PLC), BISConnect, designed for the purpose of providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors. For this study, technology was the venue used to address the constraints that can prohibit adjunct faculty in participating in professional constructivist learning in the form of professional development and the promotion of social capital, thus reinforcing the applicability of social constructivism as the preferred learning theory framing this study. Results were derived and analyzed from the cumulative qualitative and quantitative data gathered through two survey questionnaires (n=38 and n=34), website usage reports, a focus group comprised of nine adjunct faculty members,

adjunct instructor professional development reports, and journal observations made by the researcher.

This study resulted in three primary findings. The first finding was that there was not the ability to form a collaborative, online community for adjunct faculty as defined by the accepted definition of PLC. Although the online PLC environment was created to support the perceived needs and recommendations of the adjunct faculty gathered through Survey Questionnaire #1, there was limited community involvement by adjunct faculty. The participating adjunct instructors indicated through data and actions that they did not have the time for or identify the importance of participating in a PLC.

The second finding was that, although an online PLC was not developed, the online venue of BISConnect provided adjunct faculty the access to and encouragement for involvement in professional development and instructional support activities. The technology-based format of BISConnect afforded the adjunct faculty with direct and immediate access to professional development opportunities, just-in-time instructional support for student or curricula issues, operational information, and other assistance needed by the instructors both inside and outside their classrooms. Data collected showed a significant increase in adjunct instructors participating in professional development activities as well as total number of hours of professional development with the implementation of BISConnect.

The last finding indicates an organizational benefit from the implementation and enactment of BISConnect through the growth of an organizational learning culture. Data collected through this study indicated that there was an increase in organizational

value and emphasis on professional development and instructional support over the three-year period. The increase in organizational importance was then translated into more opportunities and activities available for adjunct faculty. The adjunct faculty participants reported that this change resulted in their feeling more connected to the organization.

Although this study was not able to confirm or disconfirm the effectiveness of using the online venue for PLC for adjunct faculty, it did result in data that supported the determination that an online venue is effective in providing professional development opportunities and instructional support.

THE IMPETUS

It was like watching an accident happen in front of you. I immediately got a sick feeling as I realized what was happening – but there was no way to stop it. I had heard about this, but this was the first time I would actually witness it. And I learned a very important lesson that day…

So what went wrong? As a (new) training coordinator, finding adjunct instructors was one of my responsibilities. The courses we offered were diverse and, as in this case, required an instructor with not only knowledge of the subject, but field experience. The instructor I found was certainly a subject-matter-expert (SME) in this topic and had many years experience in the workplace using this skill. He was articulate, well educated, and appeared excited to teach the class, even though he had no teaching experience. I was proud of myself for a good "find!"

As with all new adjunct instructors, I was monitoring his first class just to provide support, feedback, and encouragement. The first hour went well as he introduced the subject. I leaned back in my chair which I had strategically placed in the back of the room – close enough to observe but far enough to be semi-transparent to the students. I felt confident that he would be a good addition to our adjunct instructor pool. He appeared confident and prepared for his lesson. It was evident he knew his subject. He knew it very well. That night is when I learned my lesson: having an instructor who is a SME does not guarantee that he or she will be effective in teaching others that subject.

After covering the basics of the subject, the instructor presented the class with their first assignment – one which appeared complicated for the first class. I leaned

forward, sensing the anxiety of the students as they began to ask questions. It was evident (at least to me) that the students were not ready to implement the skill at the level the assignment required. It was a difficult subject, and the students were struggling to comprehend what they were being asked to do. The instructor, visibly upset that the students were not "getting it," answered the first few questions in a short manner. When the questions were re-asked by students who still did not understand, the instructor's demeanor went from frustration to panic. It became very clear that the instructor knew the subject, but did not know how to ***teach*** *the subject. At this point, I injected myself into the class, suggesting a break.*

During the break, I worked with the instructor to develop an emergency plan to salvage that evening's class and then suggested we meet before the next class to talk about instructional methods that might help. The class ended early – shortly after the break. Before leaving the classroom that evening, the instructor resigned.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The use of adjunct faculty within post-secondary educational organizations account for almost half of the total instructional staff employed (Wallin, 2004). Adjunct faculty is defined by the National Education Association (NEA) Standing Committee on Higher Education (1988) as, "instructors who have less than a full-time teaching load and are usually compensated at a rate below that of regular full-time faculty" (p. 1). The 2004 National Study of Post-secondary Faculty Report found that 44 percent of instructors in post-secondary educational organizations were employed part-time in the fall of 2003. This number increased slightly from the 42 percent reported in the same report for the fall of 1992 (Leslie, 1998). In community colleges, this figure was even higher, with an average of 58 percent of staff being classified as part-time or adjunct (Anthony & Valadez, 2001).

There are distinct benefits realized by educational organizations that use adjunct faculty, also referred to as adjunct instructors. Literature supports three major benefits for using adjunct instructors. The first is a financial benefit. As indicated by the NEA (1988) definition of adjunct faculty, these instructors frequently receive less compensation than full-time instructors. In addition, the majority of adjunct instructors do not have paid benefits such as insurance, paid leave, or retirement (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). With the increasing financial strain felt by most educational organizations, reducing the sizeable costs associated with full-time staff is becoming an enticing option in simple economic terms. It should be noted, however, that financial benefit is not limited solely to the educational organizations. Students derive benefits from this

lower-cost option of using adjunct instructors through expanded course offerings without the higher tuition costs that would be associated with an exclusive full-time instructional faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Tirelli, 1997; Wallin, 2005). In particular, publicly supported educational institutions have the added responsibility to be fiscally accountable to the taxpayers while offering affordable education for students. To add full-time staff to teach all courses offered would significantly increase the payroll. This would not only be an added financial burden, it would also result in a considerable increase in tuition expenses for the courses.

The second benefit identified for using adjunct instructors is to increase the currency and breadth of course offerings. Many adjunct instructors are working within the field of the subject matter being taught. This real-world expertise allows post-secondary educational organizations to offer current, pertinent curricula by those working in the field (Bagwell & Elioff, 1981) and a greater variety of course offerings (Fulton, 2000; Phillippe, 2000; Wallin, 2004). Bagwell and Elioff (1981) described the importance of this benefit by writing,

> As working professionals they (adjunct instructors) can be expected to be abreast of the state of the art in their fields, and be well versed in the realities of actual employment. They are a direct link to the community's economic and social structures. (p. 13)

The third benefit identified to support the use of adjunct instructors is to sustain agility within the educational organization. With the uncertain enrollment trends in post-secondary education, adjunct instructors allow the organization to make timely decisions regarding course delivery (Bagwell & Elioff, 1981; Eliason, 1980; Wallin,

2004). By using adjunct instructors, educational organizations have the ability to quickly add new courses and programs to its offerings on a "pilot" basis, or to discontinue courses just as expeditiously when they are found to be no longer needed. This flexibility allows course offerings to remain fresh and effective in meeting emergent training as well as current educational needs.

It is evident that there are several benefits for educational organizations to use adjunct instructors; however, there are also potential problems. These latent challenges can be serious and, many times, can be the impedance to successful educational experiences for the students as well as the teaching experience for the instructor. There are two significant challenges when employing adjunct instructors. The first challenge is the instructional experience, education, and/or the background of adjunct instructors. The benefits of using adjunct instructors to bring real-world experience into the classroom are many times accompanied by the uncertainty of their teaching abilities. Many adjunct instructors are hired based on their background and expertise in a particular subject area; however, most do not have a background or experience in teaching. Because of this, they have a varied or unknown level of instructional skills (Kurzet, 1997; Wallin, 2004). Without the proper training or preparation as an instructor, the natural inclination is for the adjunct instructors to teach as they were taught (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This could viably lead to ineffective instruction or frustration for the instructor encountering the challenges associated with teaching the content of their expertise, which might eventually cause their resignation. Both outcomes ultimately affect the quality of instruction and the educational experience of the students.

The second challenge lies within the responsibilities assigned to adjunct instructors. There are many instructional functions required of an instructor within a post-secondary educational organization beyond teaching. These functions include, but are not limited to, designing a course, developing the curriculum and/or lesson plans, and assessing the students to assure effective transfer of knowledge (Paulson, 2002). In many organizations, these functions may be assigned not only to full-time instructional staff, but also to adjunct instructors. Most adjunct instructors do not have the same experience, education or professional development opportunities as full-time instructors. The Modern Language Association (MLA) completed a survey in 1999 of non-tenured, part-time instructors in English and foreign language departments. This survey showed that even within private research universities, the employment requirements for the adjunct instructors were less rigorous than for full-time instructional staff. Although a doctoral degree was required for full-time faculty, the results showed that 29.8% of adjunct instructors held a master's degree and 10.7% held less than a master's degree (Papp, 2002).

In some educational settings, adjunct instructors who are subject matter experts are asked to develop or assist with the development of instructional material and lessons plans for the course as well as provide instruction and assess student learning. As Paulson (2002) suggests, this can set the stage for potential problems, especially when the adjunct instructor does not have experience, education, and/or training in instructional methods and theories. If educational organizations require a specific level of teaching skills, education, or experience for full-time instructor, the absence of the

skills, education, and/or experience with adjunct instructor could viably affect the quality of the instruction (Papp, 2002; Paulson, 2002; Wallin, 2004).

Eliminating the use of adjunct instructors is not the solution for these challenges because of the many benefits derived from employing this population. However, developing a strategy to effectively support the professional development of adjunct instructors is critical to optimizing the benefits while minimizing the potential challenges. There is an increasing awareness of the benefits of professional development for adjunct instructors for the instructor as well as the students and the organization (Wallin, 2004). However, the provision of professional development activities for adjunct instructors is not an easy endeavor due to their part-time schedule and the circumstances that accompany this status.

Leslie and Gappa (2002) reinforce that few adjunct instructors want to become professional teachers or instructors and describe the three major categories of adjuncts that teach part-time. The first category includes the adjunct instructors that are subject matter experts, but have full-time careers outside of teaching. The second category consists of adjunct instructors who have several part-time or adjunct positions at different locations (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). The final category is comprised of individuals who do not want to work full-time and have priorities other than teaching. In each category, the adjunct instructors have the desire and dedication to teach, but may have commitments and priorities that limit their availability to and/or interest in participating in professional development events that might be offered at their institutions of employment (Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Rifkin, 2000; Wallin 2004). Compounding this lack of interest and/or availability to participate is the question of

compensation. Full-time instructors normally participate in professional development activities during their paid, scheduled workday. The same cannot be said of adjunct or part-time instructors. Adjunct instructors are normally expected to participate in professional development activities with little or no compensation for their time (Gappa & Leslie, 1997; Wallin, 2004).

Providing adjunct instructors with relevant, job-related professional development courses or activities would facilitate the professional growth that is needed for the improvement of teaching practice and meeting important organizational expectations associated with teaching (Wallin, 2004). However, if adjuncts cannot or will not participate, the problems discussed previously will still be present. What is needed for educational organizations that employ adjunct instructors is a collaborative, job-embedded approach to professional development that provides the flexible access for these instructors while providing the desired benefits and/or features that would provide encouragement or motivation to participate. Educational literature addressing PK-12 schooling issues has promoted the idea of teacher learning communities that address professional development that includes encouraging teachers through the use of on-going instructor collaboration which creates a culture that, "protects against 'flavor of the month' fads and shifting priorities by keeping the school, department, and grade focused on agreed upon expectation and practices" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006, p.8). Research has shown that this type of collaborative professional development is a critical factor in creating a culture of professional learning that supports both teacher learning and student success (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin,

1995; Fullan, 1991; Little, 1990; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001 Schmoker, 1999).

Commonly referenced as a professional learning community (PLC), these communities have been successful in building social capital beyond classrooms and even school campuses (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995) and can be effective in addressing the specific learning needs of adults working within schools and the problems of practice inherent in the work of teaching (DuFour, 2004; Easton, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Schmoker, 1999; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002;). A PLC is not an activity or program; instead, it is a systematic approach for engaging instructors and staff in professional development and instructional support that has the power to create collaborative problem solving and inclusiveness that combats the isolation and lack of support often felt by teachers (Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002).

Within their Standards for Staff Development, the National Staff Development Council (2001) has recognized that a PLC is a strategy that schools can use for organizational and individual professional development improvement with the primary purpose of increasing student learning. The concept of PLC is credited to Peter Senge (1990), an organizational theorist who described the concept of a learning organization (Hord, 2003). There is no defined formula for implementing a PLC within a school or any other kind of organization; instead, there are several theorists who provide characteristics that can be considered as a guide or framework for understanding the components of a PLC. Hord (2003) outlines five characteristics of a PLC that include shared leadership, common vision, collective learning, common practice, and provisions for support and maintenance of the PLC. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas

(2006) add trust, school-wide membership, and partnerships beyond the school as three additional characteristics to those identified by Hord (2003). Talbert & McLaughlin (2002) defines five dimensions of a PLC that encourages and supports a learning community that does not stifle creativity as one that includes collegial relations, professional rewards, professional identity and commitment, instructional practice, and a solid foundation for course assignment. DuFour (2004) delineates three "big ideas" that are found within a PLC: learning focused, collaborative environment, and results oriented. Although there are theorists who offer multiple characteristics of a PLC, Fullan (2006) provides the fundamental basis for determining if a PLC is an appropriate and worthwhile process or function within a school organization:

> I am, in effect, arguing we must keep our eye on the more basic purpose to which PLCs are presumably a solution. The basic purpose, in my view, is to change the culture of school systems, not to produce a series of atomistic schools, however collaborative they may be internally. (p. 11)

For a PLC to be deemed as effective, it should be judged on the ability to create cultures of professional learning throughout the system (Fullan, 2006).

The literature (both theoretical and empirical) regarding PLCs is almost exclusively focused on implementation within comprehensive, PK-12 educational organizations. However, the success of PLCs described through case studies in PK-12 schools indicates that the organizational practice has potential for supporting the professional development and learning for adjunct instructors (Cohn & McCune, 2007; Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins, & Towner, 2004; Wells & Feun, 2007; Wood, 2007). In addition, the literature includes examples of how technology can be used to

facilitate a PLC, which would address the issue of time and opportunity constraints faced by adjunct faculty (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; Lieberman, 2000; MacIsaac, 2000). By utilizing advanced technology, a PLC could be conceptualized as existing in a virtual space ("cloud") by being delivered in an online format. One study that was of specific interest within this literature was an online course offered through a university-based certification program designed to simulate an online learning community. Over time, the interactions of the participants changed from limited sharing of individual experiences to an in-depth dialogue regarding best practices in teaching (Guldberg & Pilkington, 2006). The literature and research support the idea that an online PLC could be a viable solution for promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors.

With the increasing use and need for adjunct instructors within post-secondary educational organizations, for whatever reasons, the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support for part-time instructors is becoming more critical. The inconsistency or absence of professional development for the adjunct instructors could have a dire effect on the quality of instruction and education students receive, which could also affect the professional reputation of post-secondary educational organizations (Scigliano, 1978). What educational organizations struggle with in this regard, however, is identifying appropriate venues or approaches to provide accessible professional development and collective learning experiences for adjunct faculty that address the time, opportunity, and motivation obstacles they face (Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Rifkin, 2000).

The Research Problem

There is scholarship that identifies the need for professional development for adjunct instructors (Kurzet, 1997; Papp, 2002; Paulson, 2002; Wallin, 2004). There is also scholarship that describes the benefits derived from the implementation of PLCs within PK-12 educational organizations, including the use of technology integration to support PLCs (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; DuFour, 2004; Easton, 2008; Fullan, 2006; Hord, 2003; Lieberman, 2000; MacIsaac, 2000). What is lacking is research that links the implementation and enactment of a PLC, specifically in an online platform, with the need for professional learning and development of adjunct instructors. Is an online platform a feasible approach to promote and engender a functional community of professionals who collaborate over problems of practice? Does an administratively-constructed virtual platform violate the very notion of teacher practitioner-driven efforts for school betterment and renewal? The problem this study will address is whether or not an online PLC executed within a post-secondary educational organization can be successful in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct faculty.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of an administratively-driven organizational improvement initiative that involves the implementation and enactment of an online PLC for adjunct instructors within a post-secondary educational organization. The purpose for such an initiative was for the promotion and provision of direct instructional support, professional development, professional community building, and the development of social capital among adjunct instructors. This study is

posited within one post-secondary educational organization, Moore Norman Technology Center Business and Industry Services (MNTC-BIS) which employs adjunct instructors to teach 95% of its courses. The MNTC-BIS online PLC is referred to within this study as BISConnect. The outcome of this study, with its exploratory focus on emergent organizational and social processes, could provide important information for other educational organizations considering the option of an online professional learning community for their adjunct faculty. Additionally, the findings of this study can speak to the viability of organizationally framed professional learning in virtual contexts and inform existing theory about how teachers and administrators best learn in school contexts in order to develop and improve upon their practice.

The Concept and Operation of BISConnect

Although there is a host of research on the use of technology with learning communities (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; Frick, 2012; Lieberman, 2000; MacIsaac, 2000), no research was found regarding PLCs developed specifically for adjunct faculty. It was necessary, therefore, to glean information from other sources including PK-12 PLC theories, higher education faculty learning communities (FLC) theories, organizational learning theories, online learning, and online professional communities in order to design a hybrid virtual PLC model to accommodate the needs of adjunct instructors. Although the virtual PLC is referenced as BISConnect, the actual website provides only the administratively-hosted venue in which the PLC is purportedly to be enacted through its use by adjunct faculty. A foundational PLC framework defined by MNTC-BIS provides the structure of BISConnect. The design, implementation, and enactment of the framework will be described in Chapter Five.

It is important to re-emphasize that the focus of this study is not to evaluate the effectiveness of professional learning communities in theory, as there is much scholarship dedicated toward that purpose (DuFour, Eacker, & DuFour, 2005; Hinman, 2006; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Jaquith et al., 2010; Louise & Marks, 1998; Schmoker, 2004; The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2007; The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; The National Science Teachers Association, 2006; The National Staff Development Council, 2007). Instead, the focus is on the use of technology to create and develop a PLC in which adjunct instructors will want to participate, which in turn will benefit their professional development. Consequently, the findings of this study could modify, extend and attenuate the existing theoretical vantage on professional learning in schools and the collaborative dimensions of community work necessary to develop social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Resnick, 2010) and bring about enhanced professional dispositions and practices related to the improvement of teaching and learning.

The use of an online platform to situate the PLC required consideration of virtual internet activity and professional community compatibility. Building community is one of the important components of a PLC (DuFour, 2003; DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Therefore, an important consideration for using an online venue was the ability of technology to support and maintain this community. The growth and success of online communities provided an insight into the tools within technology that encourage community, such as forum and chat rooms (Anderson, 2004a). In a study conducted by Tu et al. (2008) on the ability of using technology to build a professional online community, they found that technology "has potential to

improve and enhance social interaction and to generate valuable collective intelligence" (p. 340).

A second consideration was the capability of technology to provide on-going learning opportunities (Hord, 2009). Technology has been used for several years to access many types of learning options, such as distance education, workplace learning, educational software and games, and even participation in virtual high schools (Collins & Halverson, 2009). The flexibility technology provides to professional development can encourage a higher level of participation by teachers (del Valle & Duffy, 2006). In addition to an increase in participation, technology can also provide access to professional development as it is needed (Easton, 2008). By strengthening access and promoting participation, technology, and its advancement can benefit in providing professional development in a range of platforms and venues.

The integration of technology within education is revolutionizing the way we frame learning (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Additionally, this technology-based learning is expanding the benefits of collaborative learning (Tu, Blocher, & Ntoruru, 2008). Tu et al. (2008) reinforced this transformation by writing, "it is the time for researchers to ascend from individual intelligence to collective intelligence that emphasizes 'knowledge-centered' professional communities, supported by learner-centered and learner-driven instructional strategies" (p. 341). The culmination of research regarding the benefits of technology for collaboration and effective learning indicates that a viable venue for PLC development through technology is possible (Collins & Halverson, 2009).

Research Questions

It is not the intent of this study to confirm or disconfirm the efficacy of an online PLC to provide or promote professional development or instructional support. Instead, this study offers an interpretive analysis, based upon careful data-informed description, of a three-year journey in developing, implementing, and enacting an online PLC for adjunct faculty. Research questions, therefore, are built upon an interpretive inquiry. Four research questions were formulated to help guide the study.

The first research question is framed around the research problem which is to gain an understanding of an improvement initiative which involves the implementation and enactment of an online PLC within a post-secondary educational organization for the purpose of promoting the professional development and instructional support for adjunct faculty. The question is:

1. How well does the online, interactive venue support, or not support, the development of a viable PLC for the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support?

The next two questions provide an insight into the organizational metamorphosis of implementing and enacting an online PLC. These questions are:

2. What challenges were identified by MNTC-BIS in the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC?
3. What strategies and changes occurred with MNTC-BIS that were directly related to the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC over time?

The fourth research question represented the view from the adjunct faculty instructors' perspective. Fullan (2006) provided a recommendation that the evaluation of a PLC should be based on its ability to construct a culture that values professional development. Based on Fullan's (2006) definition of success for a PLC, this research question was framed to assess the adjunct instructors' response to and perception of BISConnect in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support. The last research question is:

4. What were the organizational and professional cultural changes in which professional development and instructional support were valued by staff and adjunct instructors?

Assumptions of the Study

There are two data assumptions which are made within this study:

- The baseline data for MNTC Adjunct Instructor Website accurately reflect the characteristics and views of respondents
- The adjunct instructors who participated in survey questionnaires and the focus group provided honest and forthright information

Significance of the Study

Adjunct instructors will continue to be a valuable resource for post-secondary educational organizations; however, with the use of adjunct instructors comes the dilemma of using part-time instructors that may not have the background or education in teaching and deep understanding about human cognition, which underscores the need for professional development and instructional support (Leslie, 1998: Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Although post-secondary educational organizations recognize this need, there

are several challenges in providing professional development opportunities for adjunct instructors. One of the primary challenges faced by post-secondary educational organizations is the time and opportunity constraints adjunct instructors may face in attending scheduled professional development sessions, as many have other careers or responsibilities that limit their availability (Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Walling, 2005). Another challenge is the organization's ability to provide compensation or stipends for adjunct faculty to attend professional development events. The interest level or motivation of adjunct instructors in attending professional development events may also provide a challenge (Marits, 1996; Tirelli, 1997; Wallin, 2005), especially if asked to attend without remuneration. Additionally, professional development events rarely, if ever, accomplish what a community of practice can (Desimone, Smith, & Ueno, 2006).

There is scholarship that describes the positive impact of professional development on the instructional skills of instructors and teachers (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Easton, 2008; Fullan, 2006). Yet, there is limited scholarship on the identification of professional development strategies designed for adjunct faculty that address the challenges previously identified, thus increasing their participation. The importance of this study is that it will provide an interpretive examination of one online PLC used to promote and provide professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors, intentionally designed and deployed, to address the challenges enumerated above.

Limitations of the Study

There are eight limitations acknowledged within this study.

1. This study was confined to adjunct instructors employed in one career and technology school. The results may or may not be transferrable to organizational contexts and adjunct instructors employed in other post-secondary settings.
2. Survey questionnaires and the focus group were completed by adjunct instructors who volunteered to participate in the study rather than a matched-case random sample of the population within a pre- post-experimental study design.
3. BISConnect usage reports are not case-matched data at the individual level.
4. Data collected do not take into account the personal motivation or desire of the adjunct instructors who participated in professional development activities.
5. The results used from the surveys and focus group were subjective, as they reflect the participants' point of view.
6. Not all of the participants who volunteered to complete the survey questionnaires answered every question.
7. The questions included within the survey questionnaires were designed and determined by the administration which prevented some specific, inquiry-driven data to be collected.
8. Additional qualitative data derived from the reflective thought-work of the administrator tasked with the development and promotion of BISConnect are open to a range of interpretations.

The scope of this study is limited to the implementation and enactment of a virtual PLC to promote and provide professional development and instructional support; therefore, this study will not assess or evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development offered and delivered through BISConnect or the consequent student performance outcomes as a result of professional development and instructional support.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used within this study. The corresponding definitions are given to assist the reader:

Adjunct Faculty: A part-time instructor that has an approved Statement of Understanding (employment contract) to provide instruction during the current fiscal year or semester, also referenced within this dissertation as adjunct instructors.

BISConnect: An online PLC designed for MNTC-BIS for staff and instructors, including adjunct instructors, which serve as a portal for organizational information, professional development, collaboration, and instructional support.

Instructional Support: Those activities, services, information, or assistance provided to instructional staff that are designed to increase their effectiveness in the classroom.

Learning Organization: An organization that encourages people to work together to increase their ability to create meaningful results (Hall & Hord, 2006; Senge, 2006).

Professional Learning Community (PLC): A community of educators with a focus on learning in addition to teaching, sustained collaboration among peers, and personal accountability for the purpose of increasing student success (DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998;). Constituting a collective form of teacher leadership practice, a PLC is,

by definition, a teacher/instructor-driven professional activity situated within larger learning organization contexts (Senge, 1990).

Professional Development: Those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve their teaching practice, and as a consequence, the learning of students (Guskey, 2000, p. 16).

Staff: Full-time employees of Moore Norman Technology Center who have the responsibility of supervising adjunct instructors.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation report is organized into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction to the study including the statement of the problem, the purpose, assumptions of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms, and an overview of the dissertation. The second chapter contains a comprehensive literature review that was used to identify the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of this study. Chapter Three details the research design, including the insider action research design, and the methods used. Chapter Four outlines the data review and analysis as well as interpretive analysis of the data findings from the study. Chapter Five provides a narrative depiction of the formation of BISConnect as well as lessons learned by the insider researcher presented from the role of the administrator. The final chapter includes the summary along with a discussion of the research questions, conclusions, reflections, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the theoretical and empirical literature that has been identified as being relevant to the purpose of this study, which was to provide an interpretive analysis of the implementation and enactment of a virtual PLC designed to increase the accessibility of professional development and instructional support for adjunct faculty while simultaneously, and purportedly, supporting a community of practice. Therefore, the major literature categories central to this study include: (a) professional development, (b) professional learning communities, and (c) organizational learning to support professional learning communities. The conclusion of the literature review will include a synthesis of the scholarship and its relevance to this study.

Professional Development

Professional development has been identified as one of the most important factors in improving schools and increasing student performance (Desimone, 2009). With the increasing emphasis on educational reform, providing professional development to all instructional staff – including adjunct instructors – has become even more critical (Wallin, 2004). This literature review investigates professional development scholarship, both theoretical and empirical, beginning with the adult learning theory selected for this study. As there is limited literature describing professional development for adjunct instructors, the literature review of professional development has been broadened to also include PK-12 and higher education. This review will also include literature on non-institutional online professional development that has applicability to the venue, which will be explored within this study to address

the accessibility and flexibility needs of professional development for adjunct instructors within a specific educational organizational setting.

Social Constructivism

Professional development leading to effective teaching strategies and classroom practices has been identified as one of the primary factors in achieving educational reform (National Council on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; National Research Council, 1996). Understanding adult learning theory when planning for, designing, and enacting professional development is essential in order to ensure an optimal learning experience. Merriam and Brockett (2007) reinforced this by writing, "…educators who wish to work successfully with adult learners need to understand who adult learners are and how they learn" (p. 158). Many emerging models of professional development are based on a constructivist approach to learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). The social constructivist learning theory supports the concept of a collaborative learning process vital to the creation of a PLC and, therefore, was identified for use within this study.

Vygotsky's learning theory, which "emphasized the cultural and social context influencing learning" (Hung, 2001, p. 282), is called social constructivism. Lave & Wenger (1991) frame the social aspects of social constructivism in which learning is embedded in real-world situations where learners can work together as a community of practitioners in order to identify solutions. Vygotsky (1978) reinforced that an individual can learn more when engaging in "collective activity" (p. 88) than when left to learn in isolation. Rogoff (1994) described the impact of constructivism situated within a learning community by writing, "learning occurs as people participate in

shared endeavors with others, with all playing active but often asymmetrical roles in sociocultural activity" (p. 209). The benefits of social constructivism go beyond just the social aspect. The interaction between learners that is embedded in social constructivism contributes to cognitive development. Smith (2003) explained the potential impact of social constructivism by writing, "[s]ocial conversation provides the learner with a context and stimulus for thought construction and learning; thus, the group contributes to learners' understanding beyond what they could achieve individually" (p. 76).

Not only does social constructivism provide the reinforcement for a collaborative learning environment, but it has also been identified as a learning theory aligned with instruction delivered through technology. Jonassen et al. (1995) reinforced this by indicating, "[a] constructivist approach to knowledge construction and learning, we believe, can be well supported in distance education settings through a variety of technologies" (pg. 14). Computer technology offers cognitive tools that support the learners in interpreting and constructing knowledge individually or in a social or collaborative environment (Jonassen et al., 1995). For this study, technology was the venue used to address the constraints that can prohibit adjunct faculty in participating in professional constructivist learning in the form of professional development and the promotion of social capital, thus reinforcing the applicability of social constructivism as the preferred learning theory framing this study.

Professional Development for Higher Education

Adjunct or part-time instructors are almost exclusively employed within the post-secondary educational environment. Although this study is situated in a career and

technology education system that is not classified as higher education, the scholarship on professional development used within higher education has direct relevance because the majority of research addressing professional development for adjunct faculty is posited within a higher educational setting. Therefore, the literature review will begin with this type of professional development.

Professional development within higher education, most frequently termed *faculty development*, is an important variable in the quality of education that students experience. Although faculty development within higher education for full-time faculty is commonly addressed, the professional development needs of adjunct instructors many times go unmet (Wallin, 2005). In a statewide survey conducted at Florida community colleges, researchers asked adjunct instructors to rate the perceived value of professional development that was provided for faculty and found that adjunct instructors rated professional development activities as more valuable than their full-time counterparts did (Wallin, 2005).

Both full-time and adjunct instructors have similar developmental needs. One similarity in the needs of full-time and adjunct instructors is the scope of the professional development. Professors within higher education generally start their teaching position with education and experience in their field of expertise but little if any education or training in instructional delivery or facilitation (Gardiner, 2000). Like their full-time counterparts, most adjunct instructors have a background in the subject matter they teach with the largest category of adjunct instructors working in the field in which they teach, but they have limited or no instructional delivery skills or training (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). The lack of instructional training or skills leads to teaching

through lecture, which is the primary teaching methods used by college professors in America (Gardiner, 2000). Both full-time and part-time instructors purportedly need targeted professional development focused on instructional techniques (Wallin, 2004).

One of the most significant similarities between postsecondary and career/technical contexts is addressing the professional development needs of the instructors who primarily works in an environment that creates a feeling of disconnect from peers (Eib & Miller, 2006; Smith & Smith, 1993). This isolation can create a barrier to collaboration with and learning from other professors. Eib and Miller (2006) explained, "simply working in the proximity of others does not ensure a motivating environment that enhances professional collegiality" (p. 1). This isolation can be addressed through professional development that incorporates collaboration, or in other words, encourages and promotes social capital among a faculty. Dodge and Kendall (2004) described the benefit of this type of professional development by writing, "[f]aculty collaboration nearly always stimulates growth. Participating in a LC (learning community) overcomes the traditional isolation that many instructors feel" (p. 153).

Faculty Learning Communities

Faculty learning communities (FLC) are used within higher education to address the collaborative professional development needs of faculty. Cox (2004) defined an FLC as "an interdisciplinary group of about twelve or fewer faculty who meets regularly for an extended period of time with the focus of enhancing the teaching and learning process by working to increase its members' acquisition of new skills" (p. 133). Capital, in the form of technical teaching skills and pedagogical content

knowledge, is dispersed and acquired by a group of faculty intentionally communicating and problem solving about the professional issues of teaching and learning they are engaged with. Successful FLCs include many factors such as a mission or purpose, topics to discuss for the FLC, meetings and activities, and scholarly processes (sometimes driven by conversation protocols), all designed to build a sense of collaboration and to challenge and empower participants (Cox, 2004). These FLCs can be cohort-based or topic based (Schlitz et al., 2009).

Some FLCs include an incentive to encourage participation. An example of this is the topic-based FLC developed at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania in the Department of Instructional Technology (Schlitz et al., 2009). The purpose of this FLC was to support and encourage faculty to develop web-based rubrics. Training to accomplish this objective had not been successful in motivating faculty to develop and implement these rubrics. However, a faculty member championed a movement within the University to continue with the rubrics project through a FLC. She was able to negotiate motivation for participants through mini-grants to faculty members who were willing to complete an application process and commit to training and working collaboratively within the FLC. This effort resulted in a FLC that included six academic programs and eight faculty members (Schlitz et al., 2009). The FLC proved to be not only successful in accomplishing the initial objective, but also continued to work to expand the scope. Schlitz et al. (2009) described this success:

> Further, individuals were empowered to define new goals and objectives for the group as rubrics were implemented, evaluated, and revised and as serious discussions emerged about the relevance of the group's work not only within

> individual classrooms, but also on a broader, university-wide scale. As a result of the sense of community, the climate of openness and respect, and the group's growing commitment to assessment as well as to pedagogy, the collaboration continued beyond the initial requirements stipulated by the mini-grant. (p. 135)

Although the mini-grant incentive was the used as the motivational stimulus to encourage faculty members to participate in the FLC, intrinsic motivation kept them engaged. Of particular note is the fact that the FLC was not initiated and framed by administration, but was a product of faculty initiative to garner professional capital through constructivist learning practices.

One FLC program implemented within a college in western Canada was designed to address this issue of professor isolation in higher education (Eib & Miller, 2006). The program incorporated face-to-face training and meeting sessions as well as online options and focused on instructional enhancement. Spanning one academic year, the program encouraged collegial collaboration and incorporated authentic learning activities. At the end of the program, the participants rated the program as highly successful; however, the terminable nature of the program could not sustain long-term collaboration among professors. Eib & Miller (2006) reported, "[t]he feeling of excitement and community that was so palpable in the hours, days, and weeks following the Institute is no longer so acute. The community is not as connected and working together toward the same purpose" (p. 10). This underscores the reality that the problem of teacher isolation cannot be addressed by a temporary or 'event' professional development program that has a defined ending. Instead, it requires an on-going

commitment to approach collaborative professional development as an organizational value.

Professional Development for PK-12

Within the field of professional development, there is a plethora of scholarship from the PK-12 educational system. Therefore, this study benefited from the review of PK-12 professional development literature. As with professional development within higher education, the literature review from PK-12 education resulted in both commonalities and differences in professional development for the two different teacher populations.

One of the primary commonalities between professional development for PK-12 and adjunct faculty is the concept of the importance of collaborative learning. In Easton's (2008) list of the "Twelve Qualities of Powerful Professional Learning" (p. 3), she included the idea that teachers' learning from other teachers is important to support effective professional learning. The National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) standards on staff development (2001) concur and include collaboration as one of the important process standard for professional development. The concept of professional development targeted solely toward the improvement of the individual teacher does not support the educational reform efforts that are needed to make a difference in students' learning (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Hord & Sommers, 2008).

Collaborative teacher learning is more than just a theoretical concept; empirical studies support the advantages as well. In a national study that included a sample of 1,207 teachers to determine the most effective characteristics or features of professional development, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) reported, "our results

provide support for previous speculation about the importance of collective participation and the coherence of professional development activities" (p. 936). Desimone (2009) reinforced this finding in an article that analyzes the empirical research to identify the primary characteristics of effective professional development. She argued that "there is enough empirical evidence to suggest that there is in fact a consensus on a core set of features" (Desimone, 2009, p. 183). One of these five features includes teacher participation (Desimone, 2009).

The definition of professional development that incorporates collaborative learning is stretched beyond the traditionally-viewed workshop or seminar. This new learning takes on the form of team teacher mentoring and regularly-scheduled meetings in which teachers participate in problem solving and meaning discussions about student learning and the art of teaching (Easton, 2008; Martin, Shafer, & Kragler, 2009; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Robbins, 2008). Regular meetings in which teaches can learn from each other while developing a relationship that fosters trust and support (Martin et al., 2009) also addresses another problematic issue shared by PK-12 teachers and adjunct faculty: isolation in the classroom.

The position of teaching by its nature is primary done in isolation. With both PK-12 teachers and adjunct faculty, their primary residence when at work is within the classroom, segregating them from their peers. Hord (1997) identified teacher isolation as one of the critical factors to be addressed through professional development. This lack of interaction with other teachers and staff can lead to disengagement with the organization of which they are a part (Lieberman, 1995). Schmoker (2005) described the situation in which this isolation can become a norm for teachers, resulting in apathy

due to a lack of accountability. "[t]his isolation reflected a profound indifference to instruction and gave teachers tacit, near-total autonomy – permission to teach as well or as poorly as they wished" (Schmoker, 2005, p. 139). The need to eliminate isolation in the classroom is as critical for student achievement as it is for teacher growth.

Professional development that includes teacher collaboration can be effective in addressing this issue; however, simply giving teachers the opportunity to work together will not lead to the resolution of isolation. DuFour (2004) addressed this by writing, "[d]espite compelling evidence indicating that working collaboratively represents best practice, teachers in many schools continue to work in isolation. Even in schools that endorse the idea of collaboration, the staff's willingness to collaborate often stops at the classroom door" (p. 8). It takes more than occasional meetings and group activities to address this issue; instead, it requires an environment that provides that stimulus for teachers to engage in ongoing discussion and interactions about the art of teaching and student learning (DuFour, 2003).

Requiring an environment that provides a stimulus hints at powerful organizational cultural issues. One might question who is responsible for such culture building and maintenance in organizations. Clearly an administration and its hopefully distributed, collective leadership orientation (Spallane & Diamond, 2007) is responsible at some level, especially when seeking to engage part-time employees. The very notion of a professional leaning community assumes that those who make up the community provide the motivation and professional will to collectively learn together. This might be a problematic assumption for adjunct instructors for many reasons already enumerated earlier. Easton (2008) explained an aspect of this paradox by identifying

that "professional learning is most effective when it is part of a clear and consistent vision of learning that is shared schoolwide" (p. 12). An example of school culture that embraces a collaborative learning environment is the professional learning community, or PLC.

The most significant contribution of PK-12 professional development literature to this study is the PLC model. The PK-12 educational system has embraced this professional development process since the 1990's (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 1991; Little, 1990; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001 Schmoker, 1999; Wood, 2007). Schools have shared lessons learned through implementation, and studies are published that outline and support the benefits of PLC (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; DuFour, 2003, 2004; Hord, 2004; Huffman, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2007; Wells & Feun, 2007; Wood, 2007). Although PLCs have been implemented within various schools and there are many anecdotal reports regarding the benefits, there are few quantitatively-inspired empirical studies that report on the significance and strength of relationship with important identified outcomes.

The benefits of a learning environment, such as PLC, leads to another shared characteristic of professional development: focused commitment from educational leaders to support professional learning (Hord, 2004; Lambert, 1998; Lambert et al., 2002; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004; Wood, 2007; Zepeda, 1999). Effective educational leaders provide the encouragement, the direction, and the resources to encourage ongoing teacher and staff development (Easton, 2008). Educational leaders must also establish and communicate a shared vision for their

school, actively demonstrate their commitment to the process of continuous learning, and recognize the efforts of teachers and staff as they embrace the change (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Just as this is an important part of professional development in the PK-12 setting, it is equally important for adjunct instructors to experience this encouragement and reinforcement of a learning environment. From the literature it appears that a professional learning community at its most advanced functioning is driven and supported by teachers themselves and manifests itself as an organizational cultural phenomenon of distributed leadership. Likewise, there is a clear indication that professional learning in collaborative, problem solving processes and settings does not occur unless framed and supported by administrative leadership (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hord, 2003; Lieberman, 2000; Little, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Schmoker, 2004; Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004; Wood, 2007).

In contrast to the commonalities, there are also differences between the professional development needs of PK-12 teachers and adjunct instructors. One of the key differences in professional development for PK-12 teachers is the inclusion of subject-matter content focus for professional learning (Desimone, 2009). Desimone et al. (2006) stated, "sustained, content-focus professional development has emerged as perhaps the most important type of in-service teacher education" (p. 182). In a study conducted by Smith, Desimone, and Ueno (2005), results indicated "that participation (of teachers) in content-related professional development… is positively associated with increased use of reform teaching strategies" (p. 101). Many adjunct instructors work in their instructional field concurrently as they are teaching. This allows them to bring current content expertise from the field into their classroom (Maldonado & Riman,

2009). Professional development to increase content competency is rarely needed. Instead, the need for the adjunct instructors is in the development of instructional skills.

Another key difference between professional development for PK-12 teachers and adjunct staff is the motivation for participation. Certified teachers within the PK-12 system have state-required mandates for professional development (Desimone et al., 2006). Schools also build in professional development days within the teaching schedule to assure teacher have not only the opportunity, but also the time to participate. The PK-12 literature reviewed has an assumed participation factor that cannot be taken as a fact with adjunct instructors. The motivation for adjunct instructors, in contrast, is primarily the personal desire for improvement. This motivational factor can be a significant difference, especially when student learning is at stake.

As indicated in this discussion, PK-12 professional development literature has relevance to this study with limitations. In moving forward with this study, it was beneficial to glean information from this literature review while remaining cognizant of the potential incompatibilities in some areas. As previously stated, the primary benefit of PK-12 professional development literature on this study is the use of PLCs, which will be discussed later in the literature review.

Professional Development for Adjunct Faculty

There is an increasing awareness that professional development is as important for adjunct instructors as it is for their full-time faculty counterparts (Maldonado & Riman, 2009; Wallin, 2005; Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). Roueche, Roueche, and Milliron (1995) conducted a study of American community colleges that were identified as using best practice strategies for adjunct faculty. One of the common factors they identified

within these colleges was their use of ongoing programs that provided professional development for their adjunct instructors.

One of the difficulties in researching professional development for adjunct instructors is that many programs developed for this population were short-lived due to factors such as resource constraints. One example of this is 4faculty.org, which is an online website designed to provide professional development opportunities to faculty, including adjunct or part-time faculty (Wallin, 2005). Development and funded by a cohort of eleven California community colleges, 4faculty.org was launched in 2001 and included multiple modules that provide professional development online for both new and experienced adjunct instructors. By 2009, 4faculty.org no longer received the financial support needed to continue (Wallin, 2005). Although the website can still be accessed, the home page has a disclaimer that notifies those who access the website that it is no longer supported or updated due to a lack of funding.

Another example of an adjunct program that met with demise is the Online Faculty Teaching Excellence Network (OFTEN) program that was created to provide professional development for the part-time instructors at Santa Fe Community College. Funded by a grant, the OFTEN program had three primary goals: (a) to provide instructional development for the part-time instructors to increase their effectiveness in the classroom, (b) to create a venue to increase the involvement and sense of connectedness of the adjunct instructors with the college, and (c) to encourage part-time instructors to incorporate technology in their courses (Wagoner, 2005). Although the OFTEN program was available for only three years due to funding, the adjunct

instructors at Santa Fe Community College created their own website and are actively participating with the college (Wagoner, 2005).

One professional development program designed for adjunct instructors that did survive through organizational support is the Scenarios OnLine program of Valencia Community College (Lyons, 2007). Through Scenarios OnLine, adjunct instructors have access to a series of online workshops, which are organized in a module format and emphasize professional development to improve instructional skills. What Scenarios OnLine does not include, however, is the connectivity to the college, including the instructional support and institutional mission that adjunct faculty need to feel like a part of the organization (Lyons, 2007), which leads to a fourth potential problem.

The focus of most professional development programs designed for adjunct instructors is on technical skill development and pedagogical knowledge. What these programs lack many times, however, is the institutional information and support that provides adjunct instructors with an understanding of the organizational context in which they work (Drake, 1984). Without this, adjuncts can feel disconnected from the organization and do not have the reference in which to support the institution's mission and goals (Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995). In a nationwide study that surveyed both community college administrators and part-time instructors, Drake (1984) found that participants agreed that a professional development program designed for adjunct instructors should include institutional information including goals, philosophy, and a statement of commitment from the president or chief academic officer.

One example of a comprehensive, inclusive program for adjunct instructors' development that includes both instructional development as well as a link to the educational organization was developed and delivered by Indian River Community College (IRCC) in Florida (Lyons, 2000). This program focuses on classroom management and pedagogical skills and includes an initial orientation followed by a course on teaching methodology. The third component was a mentoring program between full-time and adjunct instructors, and the fourth component offered structured opportunities for the adjunct instructors to participate in activities with the educational organization to strengthen the link between the two. The last component is a material resource center available for adjunct instructors to develop curriculum and build instructional knowledge (Lyons, 2000). IRCC cites this five-component program as a low-cost option to not only develop, but also include adjunct instructors (Lyons, 2000).

Another consideration with regard to adjunct instructors and professional development is the idea of compensation for professional development activities. Professional development for full-time instructors is traditionally provided during their paid work schedule. The same is not true for adjunct instructor, who may be afforded the opportunity to participate but are generally not compensated for such (Miller, 2001). There are several documented examples of professional development programs that have been used by educational organizations specifically for adjunct or part-time instructors. One example of professional development incentive includes offering up to a $300 stipend for adjuncts who attend workshops for professional development at the College of Lake County. A second example is providing tuition-free benefits to adjuncts in undergraduate and graduate courses at Marquette University (Hahn, 1999).

Roueche et al. (1995) highlighted the impact of the compensation for part-time instructors who participate in professional development by stating that these institutions "report improved relationships between part-time instructors and full-time and higher evaluations of teaching performance of part-timers" (p. 156).

Although there are many similarities between the need for professional development of PK-12 teachers and adjunct instructors, the delivery system for those professional development needs may look quite different (Wallin, 2004). Many adjunct instructors require professional development opportunities that are accessible outside conventional work schedules. Maldonado and Riman (2009) emphasize the importance of this by stating, "[r]eaching part-timers who represent the greatest percentage of teaching faculty demands that strategies be highly convenient and easily accessible" (p. 329). Flexibility is another need of adjunct instructors with regard to professional development. The combination of flexibility and accessibility has stimulated the use of online programs designed to meet the professional development needs of adjunct instructors.

Online Professional Development

Online professional development efforts are generally associated with training courses offered through an online platform. Although this is a beneficial type of online professional development, the definition of professional development within education today has expanded to encompass much more than this. A reformation movement within education has spurred a paradigm shift from thinking of professional development only in the context of traditional programs, such as workshops, conferences, and seminars, to non-traditional formats (Easton, 2008; Good, Miller, &

Gassenhiemer, 2004). Good et al.(2004) explained the significance of this transition by stating, "no longer are single-session workshops seen as a productive or effective means of professional development; rather, professional development should be an ongoing collaborative effort among faculty members, with emphasis on student needs and learning as the driving focus" (p. 28). These non-traditional opportunities embrace the idea of teachers being involved in identifying their own individual professional development needs, incorporate collaboration as a means for teacher growth and learning, and are designed to contribute to a continuous professional learning cycle instead of a singular, linear event (Easton, 2008). Technology by itself has not been the benefactor of the evolution of professional development efforts. Instead, technology purportedly has provided the means by which non-traditional professional development efforts can be more easily implemented (Good et al., 2004).

The most commonly recognized type of online professional development that has positively affected teaching practice is the inclusion of interactive training courses or workshops. Online training courses have changed from the asynchronous, one-way course offering to a synchronous format that connects the participants in a shared learning environment (MacKenzie & Staley, 2000). Online training programs are offered in various formats such as distance-learning classes, online courses, and webinars. In the past, teachers were afforded the opportunity to 'hide' behind the anonymity that static, online professional development events provided, which masked their level of learning and engagement as well as their identity. With well-structured, collaborative online learning opportunities, teachers are encouraged not only to receive information, but also to share experiences and ideas (Clark & Mayer, 2003). The

additional benefit of learning the value of networking with other educators strengthens the worth of this online venue.

The flexibility and ease of use that this type of online professional development effort provides are enticing benefits to teachers who want to participate in professional development, but have time or geographical limitations (del Valle & Duffy, 2006). The review of online professional development literature has direct applicability to the accessibility and flexibility issue central to this study in providing professional development for adjunct instructors.

Another type of online professional development is the distribution and access of on-demand professional development webcasts. These traditionally short vignettes can be in either audio or video format and are commonly referred to as podcasts (audio) and vodcasts (video) (Borja, 2005). Although asynchronous in nature, this professional development tool allows the teacher to access specific instructional methods or content information on demand (Hall, 2005; King & Gura, 2006). Hall (2005) emphasized the importance of this accessibility as being key by writing, "[t]he movement from *moment in time* to *just in time* (professional development) models is powerful" (p. 38). This online professional development medium moves the teacher from a passive recipient of information provided by administration to an active consumer of his/her own learning (Easton, 2008; West, Wright, Gabbitas, & Graham, 2006).

The interest in webcasts is reaching a high level of interest because of their dual purpose: providing timely, content-specific professional development for teachers as well as assisting in the classroom to support student learning (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005; Hall, 2005). Teachers have embraced this technology-based tool as a method to

supplement the development of knowledge and skills. One example of this is the use of podcasts in language classes to strengthen dialect skills (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005). The groundswell popularity of webcasts within education is well-illustrated by Borja (2005) as he described an educational conference in which 200 teachers attended a "standing-room-only" (p. 10) seminar presented by Apple and 200 other teachers had to be turned away. This example reinforces the impact technology is making in professional development opportunities.

Technology has also enriched the role of the coach or mentor process within professional development. The use of technology has expanded the access of teachers to glean ideas and support from other teachers and educational professionals (Atkinson & O'Connor, 2007). In an article by Dawn Hogue (2003), she explained the overwhelming feeling of being a new English teacher and how she found the support and mentoring that she needed from an online network of teachers. She concluded, "[o]f course, being where I am now would not have been possible had I not stumbled into that electronic teachers lounge where the wisest and the most inexperienced together talk about teaching English" (Hogue, 2003, p. 39). Ongoing and accessible collaborative learning is importance for adult learning, and providing this opportunity to teachers through technology has the ability to "enrich their own professional lives and the culture of the school or district" (Easton, 1998, p. 4).

Technology advances to offer professional development online are state-of-the-art; however, it is not just the use of technology that is advancing professional development opportunities for teachers. It is also the increasing awareness that teachers cannot grow professionally in isolation (Lieberman, 1995; Schmoker, 2005). It is

through the connectivity with other educators, both within and outside their schools that will bring about the transformation of teaching (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 1997; Martin et al., 2009). Incorporating online learning to meet this need has placed a greater emphasis on the benefits of online learning communities.

Online Learning Communities

The term *online learning community* can have different meanings. Carlén (2002) narrowed the definition by delineating the differences between an online learning community and an online community. He stated that, "[t]he basic foundation of an OLC (online learning community) is the mediation of knowledge between the learners, rather than the exchange of information" (Carlén, 2002, p. 2). An online community is a social network of people who have common interests (Carlén, 2002). Familiar online communities include Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn. For the purpose of this study, the literature review will be limited to online learning communities.

There are three primary types of online learning communities: (a) educational, (b) professional, and (c) interest (Carlén, 2002). Each type of online learning community has its own purpose, audience, and structure. Interest online learning communities, like online communities, typically have a non-educational focus and will not be included in this discussion. Educational and professional learning communities have a direct application to this study and will be the scope of this review.

Educational Online Learning Communities

Educational online learning communities are typically referred to as online classes. Participants in educational online learning communities include learners

(students) and a teacher or facilitator. This type of online learning community provides a defined content structure and replaces or enhances a traditional classroom (Charalambos, Michalinos, & Chamberlain, 2004; DeFigueiredo & Afonso, 2006). Although the online PLC described within this study is not an online class, the literature review for educational online learning communities produced a concept that proved to be beneficial: the community of inquiry framework (Hughes, Ventura, & Dando, 2007). The community of inquiry framework "had its genesis in the work of John Dewey and is consistent with constructivist approaches to learning in higher education" (Garrison, 2007, pp. 61-62).

Three presences work together to form the community of inquiry (Caplan, 2004; Garrison, 2007; Hughes et al., 2007; Renninger & Shumar, 2002). The first is social presence (Garrison, 2005, 2007). Social presence is the extent to which the learners feel safe and confident to express their ideas. This social cohesion must be built and fostered in the beginning to build a sense of community that encourages participants to engage in meaningful dialogue and discourse, which is the ultimate goal of social presence (Hughes et al., 2007). Garrison (2007) reinforced this by writing, "[s]ocial presence must move beyond simply establishing socio-emotional presence and personal relationships. Cohesion requires intellectual focus and respect" (p. 63).

The second presence within the community of inquiry framework is cognitive presence, which is defined as "the exploration, construction, resolution and confirmation of understanding through collaboration and reflection in a community of inquiry" (Garrison, 2007, p. 65). Through cognitive presence, learners are able to progress from the initial understanding of a problem or situation to assimilating the

information for application (Garrison, 2005, 2007). In an online setting, cognitive presence can be encouraged through the design of appropriate questions or exercises or skillful facilitation of online group progression through structure and leadership (Garrison, 2005). Cognitive presence moves the online community from a basic social interface to creating a learning opportunity for participants.

The last is teaching presence, which has multiple functions (Anderson, 2004a). The first function of teaching presence is the pre-course instructional design to provide a solid foundation for the learning experience, along with the continuous adjustment during the course as needed. The second function is also part of the instructional design; developing activities that will be used to encourage learner interactions. The last function of teaching presence is to directly add the expertise for the course through instruction (Anderson, 2004a). Translation of these three functions of teaching presence into an online PLC environment includes purposeful design and development of the PLC to include and encourage interactivity among the community participants as well as support and direction of the PLC through instructional leaders.

Educational online learning communities have a pre-set lifespan, a prescribed starting and ending point. The content and the construct of the learning are defined for the community members through the course design (Caplan, 2004). The specified structure of this type of online learning community supports the learning and purpose for which it was designed. What it lacks is the ongoing provision of collaborative professional development opportunities many educators seek. That need provides the stimulus for the professional online learning community.

Professional Online Learning Communities

The Internet is the catalyst that has led to a new definition of community. Horrigan (2001) has written about the phenomena of virtual communities and reported that 84 percent of Internet users are participating in or have visited a virtual community. These virtual communities are generally identified or classified by their members and their shared interest (Preece, 2000). The online communities included in this literature review will be those created for the purpose of learning within a specific discipline.

Professional online learning communities, unlike the educational online learning communities previously discussed, do not have a designed ending date (Carlén, 2002), which provides members with an on-going association in which collaboration and sharing of knowledge can occur. The beginnings, protocols, and participant interactions of these professional online learning communities are as diverse as the members they represent, which makes the research more descriptive or anecdotal in nature instead of theoretical (Blanchard, 2004; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Therefore, through the observation and research of different professional online learning communities, variables can be identified that have contributed to both successes and failures. The lessons learned through the review of these communities can be valuable for this study and its focus on the design and maintenance of an online PLC.

Research on a virtual professional learning community that can provide a valuable lesson is the creation and decline of MediaMOO. MediaMOO is an example of one of the earliest online professional learning communities. It was developed in 1992 at the MIT Media Lab (Bruckman & Resnick, 1995) and was created to provide a virtual meeting place for media studies researchers to communicate, collaborate, and

share ideas (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002). The design of MediaMOO was purposeful in itself, as it was pre-defined as a virtual community that would be "constructed and re-constructed" (Bruckman & Resnick, 1995, p. 94) by the community members themselves. Bruckman and Resnick (1995) reinforced this design as they wrote,

> We have found that letting the users build a virtual world rather than merely interact with a pre-designed world gives them an opportunity for self expression, encourages diversity, and leads to a meaningful engagement of participants and enhanced sense of community. (p. 94)

Although MediaMOO gained over 1000 community members through the mid-1990s, it had sharply declined in use by 2000 (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002). Several factors led to the demise of MediaMOO. The first factor was the static nature of this virtual community, which contributed to the decline in the number of the community members. As the population which participated in this community evolved, the community itself did not (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002). Professional online learning communities must have a strategy for replenishing community members as current members intermittently cycle out of the community. Bruckman and Jensen (2002) refer to this as "stage of life" (p. 30) planning. Since the community members of MediaMOO were the primary architects of the community, there was no planned progression to attract new members (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002; Bruckman & Resnick, 1995).

Another contributor was the continuously changing nature of technology. Internet was still in its infancy at the time MediaMOO was constructed and was limited to a text-only content (Bruckman & Resnick, 1995). As technology progressed,

MediaMOO did not. A continuous redesign was needed for the virtual community to stay current with technology, a labor-intensive endeavor (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002). This led to obsolescence, which stimulated participants to seek other communities that better met their new needs (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002).

The lack of leadership within MediaMOO contributed to the decline as well. As the leader decreased her time in acknowledging current and welcoming new participants, fewer participants stayed or joined (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002). With the declining interest of even the leader, the sense of community in MediaMOO began to deteriorate. However, even with its decline, MediaMOO had served to provide a foundation for professional online learning communities (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002).

Math Forum is a professional online learning community that has proven to be successful. The variables that have led to the Math Forum's impact and longevity are in direct contrast to those that contributed to the death of MediaMOO. Math Forum is supported by a staff that includes programmers, service providers, project staff, and designers, all whom are involved in the community (Renninger & Shumar, 2002). The design of Math Forum is purposefully planned and does not depend upon members to provide the tools, structured interaction features, and connectivity of community members (Renninger & Shumar, 2002). As discussed earlier, this strategic design incorporates a dynamic environment that is necessary for the attraction of new members, preventing the obsolescence that MediaMOO experienced through member-dependent community evolution (Bruckman & Jensen, 2002). Math Forum also defined the community to reach a specific population and has included features and activities that appeal to individual members at varying knowledge levels of math (Renninger &

Shumar, 2002). All these characteristics have contributed to the success of this professional online learning community.

Tapped In, funded by the National Science Foundation (Bull, Bull, & Kajder, 2004), is another example of a professional online learning community designed as a resource for educators that has enjoyed success. Unlike Math Forum, Tapped In is not content specific; instead, it is targeted toward educators of all disciplines (Schlager, Fusco, & Schank, 2002). Bull et al. (2004) described the planning and purpose of this online professional learning community by writing, "[b]uilt with extensive teacher input, Tapped In provides a response to teacher needs for support, community, and idea sharing within a virtual space that is both efficient and intuitive" (p. 35). Tapped In also has dedicated resources to provide the leadership component needed, as described by Bruckman and Jensen (2002):

> Visitors to Tapped In are almost always greeted enthusiastically and cheerfully by volunteers or paid staff immediately on arrival. Four to seven organized community events typically happen per week, of which roughly half are usually organized by staff and half by volunteers. Part of what makes this possible is that Tapped In has five paid staff members. (p. 31)

The staff does not just offer a reactive response to members when they join; there is also a strategic plan to cultivate new members. Organizations that support educators are invited to become tenants within Tapped In and other educational organizations or groups are encouraged to join (Schlager, Fusco, & Schank, 2002). This plan acts to stimulate membership as well as to provide resources for members.

The lessons learned from professional online learning communities have a direct relation to online professional learning communities designed for professional development. The first lesson is in currency and application to the learner. Designing the context for this real-world application includes embedding interactive experiences for the learners, which could be accomplished through group learning activities or other methods to encourage active learning such as discussion boards and chat rooms (Clark & Mayer, 2003; Cuthbert, Clark & Linn, 2002). The other lesson is that leadership has to be actively involved for participants to stay connected. When an educational organization provides only static professional development options and does not allow opportunities for interaction, the teachers begin to disconnect from the community (Anderson, 2004a).

The literature review has identified a blend of opportunities that could meet the on-going professional development needs of adjunct instructors while supporting the educational emphasis on student success. The online delivery option addresses the most prominent roadblock for adjunct instructors with regard to professional development – the need for accessibility and flexibility in delivery (Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Rifkin, 2000). The community approach to professional development addresses the isolation factor that can lead to disconnection from the organization (Lieberman, 1995; Schmoker, 2005). Through the PK-12 professional development literature review, the PLC model has the potential to set the foundation for an innovative adjunct instructors' professional development option.

Professional Learning Communities

History and Theories of PLCs

This review of literature has sought to identify an effective approach to promote and provide professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors and has led to considering research on professional learning communities (PLCs). The history of PLCs reaches back into the 1980s when educational researchers were discovering the benefits of teacher collaboration as a form of professional development (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989). Educational researchers began to identify that schools which had a higher level of collegiality (as distinct from congeniality, see Hargreaves, 2000) were more likely to have a higher level of student achievement versus schools where teachers worked in isolation (Little, 1982). Several titles were applied to this phenomenon. Wenger (1998) described the organizational phenomenon as communities of practice where schools teachers worked together and had a "shared repertoire of ways of doing things" (p. 49). Commonly referenced as professional community, there were five elements identified through research that commonly defined these communities (Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001): (a) a shared vision or purpose for teaching, (b) a constructed focus on student learning and well-being, (c) collaboration of teachers, (d) supportive activities and activities for teacher learning, and (e) shared control of decisions that affect instruction, such as curriculum. These studies showed that schools that had these professional communities experienced high levels of collaboration and were involved with continuous improvement activities (Rosenholtz, 1989).

The literature around PLCs is relatively recent, with the first attempt to describe and explain professional learning communities presented in 1997 by SEDL (Hord, 1997). The focus of PLCs is on increasing the learning, knowledge, and collegial interaction within the instructional and administrative staff. Carmichael (1982) underscored the importance of this focus by maintaining that the level of achievement of students is directly linked to the effective practices of their teachers; therefore, to raise student achievement, you must first increase the effectiveness of the teachers. The influence of a community of learners has the potential to create an environment of learning where administrator staff and instructors can have meaningful dialogue, challenge long-held ideals of teaching, and identify new instructional ideas and techniques (Hord, 1997; DuFour, Eacker, & DuFour, 2005).

PLC theory has been developed by educational leaders and theorists who have searched for reformation that would improve the instructional culture of their schools. The researchers agree that evidence supports the positive benefits derived by schools from embracing PLCs (Louise & Marks, 1998; Schmoker, 2004; Hord & Sommers, 2008; DuFour, Eacker, & DuFour, 2005). Hinman (2006) reinforced this when he identified that "leading educational researchers in North America endorse the PLC concept as the best hope for substantive school improvement" (p. 29). National educational organizations have also expressed their support for PLCs. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) refers to PLCs as "the building blocks that establishes a new foundation for America's schools" (p. 17). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' (2007) fifth proposition for National Board Certified Teachers charges teachers to work within learning communities for the

purpose of improved student learning. Professional learning communities are identified as significant in providing high-quality staff development by The National Science Teachers Association (2006). The National Staff Development Council (2001) states, "effective staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district" (p.1). The publication, *2008 Best Practices Guide – Closing the Achievement* Gap, noted that two of the top ten practices identified as best practices within 39 schools that had outperformed peer schools were practices common to PLCs (Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, and Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Application of PLCs

The common thread with theorists and professional education organizations is that PLCs have the potential to make a significant impact in schools, specifically in student learning. Empirical research has begun to surface that describes the effects of implementing a PLC. Below are overviews of studies that have added to the scholarship through empirical research and were selected for their direct relevance to this study.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2007) study. The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) project was a ten year initiative to implement professional communities within high schools within the Bay Area in California. McLaughlin and Talbert (2007) researched this project, selecting 10 high schools within this project that showed a "commitment to building school-wide learning community to improve student outcomes" (p. 153). These school included diversity of student demographics and organizational structure of the school. The researchers engaged in a two year study that

employed multiple research methods, including personal observations, interviews, focus groups involving teachers, quantitative student data, and a survey administered to teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2007).

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the learning community implementation at a school-wide level, not just with a department but within a school. McLaughlin and Talbert's (2007) findings indicated various levels of supporting environments with these schools for building PLCs. This was due to many factors which included: (a) leadership; (b) student involvement; (c) collaboration within the school; (d) embracing a common vision and mission; (e) providing resources (including time), (f) using data for decision-making; and (g) sustaining the PLC through staff turn-over.

The findings of this study were important to this researcher, as the study provided a guideline for the implementation and enactment of a PLC. This study set a foundational benchmark that provides the scaffolding for future PLC projects.

Wood (2007) study. A mid-Atlantic United States school district was the focus of a study that researched the implementation of a teachers' learning community (LC) within its five schools. The district included three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school and represented approximately 11,400 students (Wood, 2007). Wood reported that the administrative leadership was very strong and supportive of the LC implementation, which was an important aspect of this study. To insure privacy to participants and students within this study, it was given the fictitious name: Hillsboro. The research methodology employed by Wood was primarily qualitative, but included some quantitative data, and included focus groups, site visits,

review of documents, and observations of participants' meetings, classroom activities, and professional development sessions. A survey was also administered to 251 respondents, administrators and teachers, who had participated in the learning communities (Wood, 2007).

The implementation of the learning communities (LCs) within Hillsboro was prompted from the idea that teacher collaborative learning could have the ability of a direct and positive impact on student learning (Wood, 2007). The Hillsboro district utilized the protocols established by the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) to allow staff to structure the collaborative activities within the LCs to be reflective, focused, and productive. This was especially important so they could optimize the limited time teachers had because of their busy schedule.

Through the survey results from the respondents, Wood (2007) reported that the data showed an increase in the following professional activities: (a) collegial conversations, (b) feedback on professional performance, (c) discussions on student work, and (d) discussions about instructional practices. In addition, the survey data showed an organizational increase in: (a) trust among colleagues, (b) understanding of meeting student needs, (c) school environment of risk-taking and innovation, (d) professional efficacy. Wood (2007) concluded that the overall project resulted in a significant level of district capacity for the staff development and performance.

This empirical study was significant because of the implementation of the learning community and, specifically, the involvement of both administrators and teachers. It was also a multi-year project that included surveying teachers for their input and perceptions of the implementation process, which is a significant part of this

study. The implementation process and findings described within the Hillsboro study can add to this researcher's understanding of PLCs.

Leana and Pil (2006) study. The purpose of the study by Leana & Pil (2006) was to examine social capital in relationship to organizational performance. Spanning over 18 months, Leana and Pil conducted a mixed-method study utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to research an urban school district in northeastern United States that served approximately 38,000 students and had a staff of approximately 5,200. Eighty-eight schools out of the potential 95 that participated in this study which employed semi-structured interviews of central and site administrators and teachers, learning walks, focus groups with principals and teachers, and student performance scores in mathematics and reading based on state standards in grades 5, 8, and 11. In addition, surveys of 2,167 teachers (80% response rate) were used to assess the internal social capital at each individual school and a parent survey that included 5,130 responses (23% response rate) to identify parent satisfaction with instructional quality (Leana & Pil, 2006). The last data collection was a time diary that was used to track principals' activities within a one week period. The data collected through the time diary methodology was used to measure external social capital based on the time spent by principals with external stakeholders (Leana & Pil, 2006).

The study used the data collected to identify if internal and external social capital (the two independent variables) impacted instructional quality (the dependent variable). In analyzing the data, Leana and Pil (2006) found that both internal and external social capital had a significant correlation to student achievement scores in mathematics, but not in reading. Surprised, the researchers noted the results suggested

that both internal and external social capital had a direct impact on reading achievement; however, instructional quality was not a mediating variable for reading (Leana & Pil, 2006). Leana and Pil's (2006) conclusion to this study was that, "social capital plays an important role in predicting organizational performance in urban public schools" (p. 362). In addition, they posited that both internal and external social capital were directly related to organizational performance.

Social capital is the foundation of a PLC; therefore, the Leana & Pil (2006) study provided important findings for this study. The study established empirical evidence of the significance of social capital on student and organizational performance through scaffolding teacher performance. The conclusion of this study reinforced the need for building social capital through the implementation and enactment of a PLC.

Dalgarno and Colgan (2006) study. This study follows 27 novice elementary mathematical teachers who participated in an online community, Connect-ME, which specializes in providing assistance to new mathematical teachers. The researchers, Dalgarno and Colgan (2006), selected 27 participants for their study that met the following criteria: (a) less than five years of experience teaching, (b) completion of a specific B.Ed. program, and (c) membership in Connect-ME (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2006). There were two purposes of this study. The first purpose was to identify the support needed by new teachers. The second purpose was to review the effectiveness and challenges of an online venue (Connect-ME) to provide teacher professional development (TPD) opportunities for these teachers and developing a community of practice.

An inductive data analysis process was used through a qualitative framework described by McMillan and Schumacher (2001) that allowed the researchers to determine meaning from the data. The researchers incorporated the use of two focus groups and 16 telephone interviews conducted over a two month time period using formal, established protocols. Both the focus groups and telephone interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers.

The findings presented indicated that the professional development needs of the participants could be met through, "(1) alternative forms of TPD; (2) a professional community of practice; and (3) access to knowledge through technology-facilitated learning" (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2006, p. 1061). The findings supported that novice teachers look for both formal and informal TPD experiences, and that technology-based community of practice could provide these TPD needs through connection with others. This led to the researchers' conclusion of the, "significance of emotional and personal connections, in addition to pedagogical and curricular support, for sustaining an online community of practice (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2006, p. 1062). This research project proved to have direct relevance to this researcher based on the technology-supported venue of the study in providing professional development to new teachers.

Thompson, Gregg, and Niska (2004) study. This mixed-method, collective case study was situated within six middle schools, three urban and three suburban. The two primary purposes of this study were to: (a) investigate the belief that a school must incorporate the principles of a learning organization in order to become a professional learning community, and (b) evaluate the role leadership plays in a school becoming a professional learning community. Data were collected for this study through principal

interviews, teacher focus groups, and a survey administered to teachers that contained 25 questions selected from O'Brien's (1994) survey, *Learning Organization Practices Profile.* The conceptual framework for this study incorporates the theory of PLC grounded in the disciplines described in Senge et al.'s (2000) description of a learning organization (Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004).

The participants included the six principals and teachers within the six school districts identified. These schools were selected for their commitment to implement the principles of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), which supports the theory that the school principal is key in assuring an environment of improvement through supportive leadership, a cornerstone for PLCs (Louis & Kruse, 1995). The results of this study indicated that all six principals identified their school as a learning organization (as defined by Senge et al. (2000). Teachers involved in the survey and in the focus groups agreed or strongly agreed on the following areas: (a) team learning, (b) data was used in decision making within their schools, (c) they had achieved personal mastery (of their teaching), and (d) they had a common vision within their school of their purpose (Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004). These supported the principles of a learning organization.

The framework of this study, utilizing both the principles of PLC and the disciplines of Senge et al. (2000) made this research of particular interest to this researcher. The findings and conclusion support the compatibility of PLC and a learning organization in achieving organizational change.

Supovitz (2002) study. A four-year, district-wide team initiative study was conducted within the Cincinnati, Ohio, Public Schools. Seventy-nine schools were

included in this study with approximately 50,000 students represented within these schools. The team initiative, referred to as Students First, was a built upon a theory that if schools initiated a team-based approach with teachers, a collaborative culture could evolve, resulting in improved instructional practices with the ultimate goal of increased student achievement. Schools with the district adopted the team-based approach within a four year time period, with eight schools adopting in 1998, 12 in 1999, 19 in 2000, and a total of 41 by 2001. Supovitz (2002) conducted evaluations of the team-based schools using annual surveys of teachers and administrators, interviews with administrators and key stakeholders, site visits, attendance at professional development activities for the team-based teaches, analysis of team minutes, and an analysis of student test results.

Supovitz (2002) found through study that team-based teachers felt more involved with the school and had a higher level of collaboration with their peers than teachers that did not work within teams. However, Supovitz (2002) also found that the team-based activities did not result in improved instructional practices or significant student achievement. In reviewing the data, Supovitz (2002) was able to conclude that the formation of the team-based, communities of practice had resulted in three benefits: (a) teachers working in a collaborative setting were beginning to review student data and examine the use of different instructional strategies to support student learning, (b) co-teaching had occurred within the team, which fostered a sense of professional collaboration, and (c) teams were engaging in the capitalization of small groups with their students for instructional purposes.

While this study did not culminate in the high-performing results of many reform efforts, it did lend benefits to this researcher through the disclosure of potential pitfalls that can occur with teacher-led teams. Supovitz (2002) identified that professional development collaborative meetings focused more on processes than instruction and student learning can make them more operational then developmental. This was an important lesson to heed.

DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) study. Snow Creek Elementary School located in rural Virginia was the site of another study that researched the implementation of a PLC (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Prior to the implementation of the PLC concepts, students at Snow Creek had low scores on state assessments. With more than 50 percent of the student population eligible for free and reduced lunch, students were struggling to learn. Collaborative teaching teams were formed to provide intervention for struggling students, differentiated instruction designed and delivered to these students, and strategies were put in place to capitalize on the strengths of teachers (DuFour et al., 2008). After two years of embedding the PLC concepts within the school, Snow Creek was recognized as a Title I Distinguished School, with students in every grade testing at a higher proficiency than state performance in each subject (DuFour et al., 2008). The commitment and emphasis on student achievement supported by the enactment of the PLC concepts within Snow Creek provides some evidence of the ostensibly powerful potential a PLC can create.

Eaker and Keating (2009) study. Another example of a PLC implementation is the White River School District in Buckley, Washington. White River found that, to be successful, implementing a PLC required a behavioral change of the staff and

teachers to get beyond slogans and accomplish real cultural transformation (Eaker & Keating, 2009). Eaker and Keating (2009) described this change for White River by writing, "this meant that the central administration (had to) accept the responsibility of shifting the district culture from one in which the emphasis was on ensuring that the curriculum was taught to one in which the emphasis was on ensuring that everyone, students and adults, learned" (p. 50).

This study is relevant because of the lessons learned by White River during this implementation which have merit to other schools who are contemplating a PLC. These lessons include (Eaker & Keating, 2009):

1. To be effective, professional learning must become embedded in district operations
2. Professional learning must be seen as one of the essential duties for staff, teachers, and leaders
3. Adult learning is as important as student learning, follows the same standards, and are assessed and/or monitored to assure achievement
4. Instructional leadership teams need to model sharing and collaboration, including principal teams
5. Student learning and achievement through collaborative work is the goal – not universal happiness
6. It is difficult to argue with data, so identify the measurements desired and continually communicate results
7. Successful experiences can lead to commitment; recognize and celebrate early successes

8. There is never a ‘best’ time to start – just get started!

Conclusion

Research on PLCs provides a theoretical guideline that explains the components of PLC and empirical scholarship provides insight into the PLC journey of other schools. However, there is not a ‘step-by-step’ guideline on how to design or implement a PLC. Each theorist and researcher who has added scholarship about PLCs outlines identifiable components or characteristics of a PLC. One of the challenges, however, is that the primary theorists have researched PLCs in context of a comprehensive PK-12 education. This study was situated in a post-secondary environment with an instructional staff comprised almost exclusively of adjunct faculty. This purpose created unique needs for a PLC. In reviewing PLC theories and relevant research, the one that appeared to be most applicable for providing the framework needed for this study was Richard DuFour’s PLC theory (DuFour, 2003, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

DuFour’s Theory of Professional Learning Communities

The application of PLC presented by DuFour (2003, 2004) has three core principles labeled as *big ideas* (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour, 2003, 2004), which comprise the foundation of a PLC. The first big idea is to develop a common vision or direction that places student learning as the primary goal. DuFour (2004) reinforced the importance of this idea when he wrote, “[t]he professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn” (p. 8). This common vision or direction frame the context in making decisions and provides the catalyst that spurs

the commitment of both administrative staff and instructional staff to seek continual improvement (Little, 1997; Sirotnik, 1999).

As student learning becomes the communal focus within a school, three questions become the drivers of the PLC:

1. What do we want each student to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

(DuFour et al., 2005, p. 33)

Schools regularly ask and address the first two questions. The third question, however, is the one that DuFour et al. (2005) identified as the one that creates the divergence between conventional school setting and a PLC environment. The PLC stimulates an environment where staff and teachers work together to develop strategies that provide timely, interventional, and directive assistance to students who are experiencing difficulty learning (DuFour et al., 2005).

The second core principle directly addresses the need for teachers to work together; a collaborative culture. DuFour et al. (2005) stated, "[t]he PLC concept is specifically designed to develop the collective capacity of a staff to work together to achieve the fundamental purpose of the school: high levels of learning for all students" (p. 18). Collaboration is not defined by an event; instead, it is an environment that is purposefully designed and dedicated to encourage on-going interaction among staff, instructors, and administration. A collaborative environment requires a commitment to allot the time, provide the opportunities, and define the methods to stimulate interactions for communicating with and learning from each other (DuFour, 2005).

Ginsberg (2004) maintained that collaboration for learning is vital because "adults need time to learn from and with each other in meaningful ways. Shared learning creates a collaborative atmosphere and models lifelong learning for students" (p. 89). This environment supports a constructivist approach to learning as members of the PLC form, or construct, new knowledge together. This formalized activity serves to develop social capital in schools and school systems, a form of capital necessary in order to improve schooling outcomes for students (Resnick, 2010).

The final principle of a professional learning community is the focus on results. The effectiveness of a PLC is determined by results (DuFour, 2004). This means that data must be collected and translated into information that supports the level of student learning. In traditional systems, data is available but not transformable into meaningful information that can lead to improvement. With a PLC, this data contains results that can provide indicators for success (DuFour, 2003, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, and Kleiner (1994) reinforced that "ultimately, a learning organization is judged by results" (p. 44). Meaningful student learning goals must be developed and results constantly monitored and communicated.

Collecting the necessary data that supports student learning does not finish the requirements necessary for DuFour's (2004) third principle. The next step is communicating the results to everyone who needs this information. Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) reinforced this by writing, "data are not information. The fact that someone, somewhere in a district has data on student achievement does not ensure that teachers will be able to use that data to assess their effectiveness or improve their practice" (p. 46).

The three core principles to create a PLC as outlined by DuFour (2003, 2004) set the foundation for a professional development model that has the potential for organizational reform (DuFour, 2003, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Setting a vision for student achievement; establishing a collaborative community of learners; and creating an inclusive environment where information and data are identified, available, and used in decision making by all staff members within the school can lead to true school-based transformation.

Potential Challenges with PLCs

The literature review of PLCs has shown their potential to make a positive impact within schools; however, there are also inherent obstacles that must be considered with this type of a professional learning. The first issue that can lead to a potential challenge is the definition and scope of a PLC. The definition of a PLC provided by Hord (1997) describes educators who "continually seek and share learning, and act on their learning" (pg. 6). DuFour (2005) added the analysis and use of data to this definition. Stoll et al. (2006) expanded the definition to include "concern for individual and minority views" (p. 325) and "meaningful relationships" (p. 325). As evidence by the three definitions, PLCs have different meanings, thereby creating various perceptions. Before a school can begin the process of implementation, it must first identify and communicate the definition and scope that provide the framework for their PLC so there is a common school and/or district focus.

Even when a school has delineated the definition and scope of the PLC, the next potential challenge faced is the actual development and implementation within the organization (Stoll & Louis, 2007). There are many factors that could thwart this

implementation process such as diminished resources (Reyes et al., 1999), resistance by staff or leadership to a change in the current culture (Eaker & Keating, 2009), or not focusing on student achievement (and data derived from this focus) to drive actions and activities (DuFour, 2003, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). It is critical that these as well as other potential challenges are identified and addressed before implementation begins.

When implementing a PLC, the power and impact of social capital must be considered. Social capital is defined as "the ways in which people in an organization share what they know" (Resnick, 2010, p. 191). Mulford (2007) emphasized the importance of social capital within PLCs by writing, "I believe a way forward is to see the task of establishing professional learning communities as developmental *starting* with the building of social capital" (p. 176). The interactions created by PLCs have the potential to construct positive social networks that promote the achievement of the organization's goals and mission (Field, 2003). Social networks, however, are also at risk of becoming exclusionary to those who present different thoughts or ideas, or to those who are not embedded within the network (Smith, 2009), creating potential harm to the PLC. Cohen and Prusak (2001) explain that these risks can be minimized through "better knowledge sharing, due to established trust relationships, common frames of reference, and shared goals" (p. 10). In addition, collectively developed and agreed upon norms for professional work and the use of conversation and discussion protocols can help to situate the potential for acquiring social capital through defining specific methods to stimulate interaction, positive, yet critical transactional social processes, and the creation of knowledge (Easton, 2008; DuFour, 2005; Wood, 2007).

Sustaining a PLC once developed is another potential challenge faced by schools. In many schools, changing a portion of the staff with each new school year creates a change in the dynamics of the social capital (Stoll & Louis, 2007). This change creates an imbalance in contribution to the community due to a lack of experience and connectivity with other members of the community (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Organizational commitment must be able to withstand changes in staff, including leadership changes, in order to sustain the PLC (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) explained "[t]he future of leadership must be embedded in the hearts and minds of the many, and not rest on the shoulders of an heroic few" (p. 698). This creates the need for a distributed notion of leadership with common goals and mission.

The use of technology to support a PLC adds another layer of complexity. Stoll and Louis (2007) explain this by quoting Trauth and Jessup (2000):

> Sustaining connections and community is made more complex by the explosion of technology, which permits the development of online groups that provide stimulating sources of information and safe, neural arenas for support, but may also be unstable, more likely to involve imbalanced participation, and less amenable to the sustained, deep, reflective engagement that most of us associate with face-to-face relationships that endure over time. (p. 8)

It is important that the technology used within the structure of a PLC provide the environment to encourage and facilitate the interaction of the community members (Anderson, 2004b). Including synchronous activities can keep members engaged and interacting whereby preventing a disconnect from occurring rather than if the

presentation were only static information (Caplan, 2004). Although the integration of technology can be beneficial in overcoming logistical issues faced by the community members, the challenge of using this venue can present other problems.

An educational organization that resolves to incorporate a PLC must be cognizant of the potential challenges that are inherent. A clear definition and implementation plan can provide the scaffolding needed to begin the process (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Considering the implications and importance of building social capital promotes the people component that is critical for success (Mulford, 2007). Constructing an organizational ethos that values the principles embodied in a clearly defined PLC can increase the ability to sustain the system through changes (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). The importance of being cognizant of these challenges is summarized by Stoll and Louis (2007):

> Getting deeper into the subtleties of translating the rhetoric of professional learning communities into reality is also going to be critical to ensuring effective professional learning communities in a complex and changing world, as is really getting to grips with serious challenges that have the potential to derail the whole process. (pp. 9-10)

Organizational Learning to Support a PLC

The evolution from traditional professional development offerings to a PLC affects more than just the teachers; it requires a change in the host organization. Educational organizations can cultivate an environment of learning that supports new professional development initiatives or they can create ones that hinder and block learning (even if those very organizations are ironically formal school institutions). For

example, a school-dictated (narrow) emphasis on instruction toward students passing state tests is an example of a learning-inhibiting culture (Resnick, 2010). Kember & Kwan (2000) identified in their model of learning and teaching that institutional beliefs can affect a teacher's conceptions of and approach to teaching. Penuel et al. (2007) explained this in their study of professional development that "[m]odels (of professional development) need to capture the barriers that teachers perceive in their local school environment that impede both planning for and enacting innovations, as these are proximal influences on their instructional decision making" (p. 932). A document created for the New Jersey educational system by the New Jersey Professional Development Partnership, titled *A Common Language for Professional Learning Communities* (2008), reinforced the need for cultural changes to occur within an organization in order to effectively implement a PLC. One concept that supports this organizational change is organizational learning.

The concept of organizational learning as defined by Peter Senge (1990) has been credited for the development of the PLC reformation within schools (Hord, 2003; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Organizational learning has been successfully embraced and employed by educational organization for almost 20 years (Senge et al., 2000). Senge (1990) defined learning organizations as:

> organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (p. 3)

This definition highlights the importance of educational organizations embracing the idea of becoming a learning organization as they begin their implementation of a PLC. As a school moves toward becoming a learning organization, it prepares the teachers and staff to challenge current paradigms of possibilities for student success. Eib & Miller (2006) emphasized the benefits when they state:

> Working to create Senge's (1990) "learning organizations" or developing Wenger and colleagues' (2002) "communities of practice" takes time and commitment, but can provide big pay-offs in terms of providing energizing environments in which faculty feel connected and committed to each other and the goals of the organization. (p. 4)

Senge's Five Disciplines

The organizational learning theory, originally described by Senge (1990) in *The Fifth Discipline*, outlines five disciplines that are present in a learning organization. These key learning disciplines that Senge (1990) described as components of an organizational learning structure include personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. This learning organization theory supports the workplace environment that is needed to provide the foundation for a successful PLC.

Personal mastery. The first discipline, personal mastery, is accomplished on an individual level. Senge (1990) described the importance of personal master to organization learning when he stated, "[o]rganizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs" (p. 139). Personal mastery, as defined by Senge

(1990), requires a sense of individual commitment to continuous learning in order to 'master' professional ability and skills. Pink (2009) included personal mastery as one of the three nutrients in the ultimate type behavior, defined it as "becoming better and better at something that matters. And it connects that quest for excellence to a larger purpose" (p. 81). Since personal mastery is an individual choice, an educational organization cannot force its staff or teachers to develop this discipline. However, many schools may try to do this through required professional development programs or workshops that mandate compliance (Senge et al., 2000). Instead, Senge (1990) describes an organizational climate that encourages personal mastery through individual growth opportunities in a safe environment where people can challenge the status quo without repercussions.

Mental models. The second key discipline is *mental models* (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2000). Mental models drive not only beliefs, but also actions. Change can be halted quickly when confronted by mental models that resist or misinterpret new ideas. Developing this shared mental model involves open communication and inclusive collaboration to limit misunderstandings, both supported within a PLC environment. Individual mental models within schools can affect not only staff, but students as well. Ingrained individual mental models that do not align can lead to assumptions and conclusions that can negatively affect learning. (Senge et al., 2000).

Shared vision. The discipline that Senge et al. (2000) describes as *shared vision* is critical because it "provides the focus and energy for learning" (p. 206). The strength of this vision is its ability to create a joined sense of purpose with the people throughout the organization around a common objective (Senge, 1990). The common purpose

created by the vision can rally employees within an organization to be a part of something that gives meaning to their work. Vision is also necessary for an organization to learn. Senge (1990) wrote, "[y]ou cannot have a learning organization without shared vision" (p. 209). Identified as one of DuFour's (2004) core principles of a PLC, a shared vision within a school that is focused on student success can be the catalyst for uncovering the potential of its staff, teachers, and students.

Team learning. *Team learning*, an essential ingredient in collaborative professional development, is the next discipline Senge (1990) identified. Senge (1990) defined team learning as "the process of aligning and developing the capability of a team to create the results its members truly desire" (p. 236). The power of team learning is generated through the synergistic thoughts and actions that transcend individual capability. Teams who learn can be the catalyst needed to create an organization that learns (Senge, 1990). For team learning to thrive, dialogue and discussion have to be not only supported, but also encouraged. The discipline of teamwork directly supports DuFour's (2004) principle of a collaborative culture.

Systems thinking. The final discipline within the learning organization theory is *systems thinking*. Senge et. al., (2000) wrote, "[t]he discipline of systems thinking provides a different way of looking at problems and goals – not as isolated events but as components of larger structures" (p. 78). The evolution to become a learning organization is dependent upon understanding of this discipline in order to identify the interrelationships between actions and effects better. Meaningful change cannot happen in isolation; instead, it is the system and its response to change that determines the effectiveness of change (Senge, 1990). Senge et al. (2000) concluded that "[s]ystems

thinking is a powerful practice for finding the leverage needed to get the most constructive change" (p. 8). Systems thinking is a component of DuFour's (2004) PLC theory in that results are identified and data from these results are used to make decisions. A proactive, anticipatory movement toward student achievement becomes a systemic approach (see, Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003) through a cause and effect evaluation.

The organizational learning theory presented by Senge (1990) provides scaffolding for the organizational cultural change needed to support a PLC. Promoting individual commitment to personal and professional growth, as discussed in mental models, can assist in the creation of robust organizational bench strength. By employing team learning, teachers, staff, and administrators have the opportunity to be involved in giving input regarding the changes that are necessary, which provides for a diverse contribution and creates an ownership that has the potential to make significant improvements in student achievement. Being informed by organizational learning theory can also promote communication across the organization and raise consciousness of the shared vision of the organization (Senge, 1990). Within schools, Senge et al. (2000) reinforced the importance of organizational learning to become "a meeting ground for learning – dedicated to the idea that all those involved with it, individually and together, will be continually enhancing and expanding their awareness and capabilities" (p. 6).

Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive literature review for this study, which has a purpose of gaining insight into the development, implementation, and enactment

of an online PLC for adjunct instructors. The literature review established five concepts important for this study. The first concept emphasizes the importance of professional development and the necessity of professional development that is designed and delivered to incorporate the needs of the adult learner (Desimone, 2009; DuFour, 2003, 2004; Easton, 2008; Good, Miller, & Gassenhiemer, 2004; Hord, 2004; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; National Council on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; National Research Council, 1996; Smith, Desimone, & Ueno, 2005). The research reviewed supports the use of a social constructivism learning theory, which embraces the importance of a collaborative environment in providing professional development and instructional support (Rogoff; 1994; Smith, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism was also compatible with an online learning environment, which will be the venue used for the PLC in this study (Jonassen et al., 1995).

The second concept is the unique needs of adjunct instructors with respect to professional development (Maldonado & Riman, 2009; Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995; Wallin, 2005; Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). Although there were similarities with both higher education and PK-12, the literature still delineates the differences by identifying that the professional development needs of adjunct instructors are specific to this instructional population. Unlike the literature found for higher education and PK-12, scholarship on professional development for adjunct instructors is less frequent and has more of a program-driven perspective than a long-term sustainability focus (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gardiner, 2000; Maldonado & Riman, 2009; Wallin, 2004).

The benefits and flexibility of the PLC, along with the successes that have been identified within schools who have implemented a PLC is the third concept (DuFour,

Eacker, & DuFour, 2005; Hinman, 2006; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Jaquith et al., 2010; Louise & Marks, 1998; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2007; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; National Science Teachers Association, 2006; National Staff Development Council, 2007; Schmoker, 2004). Both empirical and theoretical scholarship revealed that this professional development concept has the ability to shift a long-standing paradigm of professional development to incorporate collaboration and teacher-driven learning (Eaker & Keating, 2009; Hinman, 2006; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Jaquith et al., 2010; Louise & Marks, 1998).

The fourth concept is the ability of an online venue to create and support a community of learners (Clark & Mayer, 2003; Cuthbert et al., 2002; Renninger & Shumar, 2002). The literature surrounding online communities affords both guidelines as well as cautions in setting up a PLC. This literature provided an historical account of factors that could affect the success or failure of an online learning community (Anderson, 2004a; Bruckman & Jensen, 2002; Bruckman & Resnick, 1995; Renninger & Shumar, 2002; Schlagger et al., 2002). In addition, it also provided strong evidence that technology-supported communities are sustainable and effective (Atkinson & O'Connor, 2007; Easton, 1998; Garrison, 2005). The literature on the community of inquiry also provided a framework for structuring an online learning environment that supports engagement and collaboration (Garrison, 2007).

The last concept is the importance of an organizational culture that can sustain ongoing change produced from the adoption of a PLC. In reviewing the potential problems that can occur within PLCs, the literature supports the inclusion of Senge's

(1990) learning organization theory, which has been used as a foundational support for this study in defining the scope and embedding the PLC within the organization (Eib & Miller, 2006; Hord, 2003; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2000).

What was found lacking within this literature review is theoretical or empirical scholarship of online PLCs provided for adjunct instructors with the purpose of providing professional development, instructional support, and a sustainable forum for instructor-driven collaboration and knowledge building. This gap in research supports the need for this study. The knowledge added by this research can help fill this gap for other educational organizations that are considering the use of PLCs or online PLCs for the delivery of professional development for adjunct instructors.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to conduct this study, which is an insider action research project that seeks to gain an understanding of an organizational improvement initiative that involves the implementation and enactment of an online PLC for adjunct instructors. This online PLC was designed for the purpose of promoting and providing accessible professional development and instructional support for the adjunct instructors of Moore Norman Technology Center, Business and Industry Services division (MNTC-BIS), a post-secondary vocational and technical school located in Oklahoma. This study is primarily qualitative; however, it will incorporate quantitative data collected from survey questionnaires, adjunct instructors' professional development reports, and usage reports from the past Adjunct Instructor website and the administratively-restructured new PLC called BISConnect. This quantitative data will be used to answer the four research questions that have been posed by this study. The need to identify a practicable venue to promote and deliver professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors within MNTC-BIS was the stimulus for this study.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain understanding from an administratively-driven organizational improvement initiative that addressed the development, implementation, and enactment of an online professional learning community (PLC) for adjunct faculty. The purpose for such an initiative was for the promotion and provision

of professional development and instructional support. This online PLC is referred to within this study as BISConnect.

Research Questions

As stated earlier, this study offers an interpretive analysis of a two-year journey in developing, implementing, and enacting an online PLC for adjunct faculty and does not engage in confirming or disconfirming the efficacy of an online PLC to provide or promote professional development or instructional support. The study will hopefully shed light on the organizational processes involved with such an initiative by capturing evidence to support the viability of such an organizational endeavor. The four qualitative research questions are used to guide this study within an interpretive framework to analyze the organization and participant's experience through this process. The research questions are:

1. How well does the online, interactive venue support, or not support, the development of a viable PLC for the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support?
2. What challenges were identified by MNTC-BIS in the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC?
3. What strategies and changes occurred with MNTC-BIS that were directly related to the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC over times?
4. What were the organizational and professional culture changes in which professional development and instructional support were valued by staff and adjunct instructors?

Insider Action Research

The broad research method that was selected for this study was action research. This study investigates a real problem that incorporates the cyclical process that begins with defining the problem, moves to planning for the action(s) to be taken, takes the action(s) identified, and evaluates the action(s) taken (Grogan, Donaldson, and Simmons, 2007) as described in Deming's PDSA model (Deming, 1982; Deming, 1994). Grogan, et al. (2007) describes the process of action research:

> Action researchers are interested in understanding as fully as possible what precedes action in the organizational setting to solve a particular problem with which organizational members are dealing, and what happens as a result of the action – and they should have some role in determining what intervention is decided upon. (pg. 5)

The principal researcher is an administrator within the organization in which the study takes place; therefore a more specific type of action research, insider action research, was selected.

When individuals are acting as the researcher in an action research study within their own work or personal environment, it is termed 'insider' action research (Levin, 2003). Insider action research emerged as a legitimate practice within action research literature within the past ten years (Coghlan & Holian, 2007). Coghlan & Brannick (2001, 2005) were instrumental in promoting insider action research through the publication of their book, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization.* With insider action research, the researcher is actively involved in the intervention or action taken during the study in an attempt to find a workable solution that can positively

affect change of an activity or infrastructure to achieve the desired outcomes of the problem or issue being studied (Coghlan, 2006). With the researcher as an active participant, insider action research provides both benefits and potential problems.

Benefits of Insider Action Research

There are multiple areas of benefits that are received through insider action research, making it a valuable research methodology. The first area of benefit is to the participants involved in the study. Individuals involved in the research become participants instead of being viewed as 'objectives' of the research. These participants act as 'co-researchers' within the study, as they work alongside a researcher that is also a member of the organization (Coughlan & Coghlan, 2002). An insider action research project can create a sense of community among participants through their shared experience in making this impact (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

The researcher (educator) involved in insider action research receives the next area of benefits. As researcher, the benefit of 'insider' knowledge provides comprehension of organizational jargon, understanding of informal structures, experiences that provide a foundation for deeper comprehension of events, and the ability to engage with participants without being obvious (Coghlan, 2006). The familiarity of the problem can also create a deeper reflection process (Atkinson, 2005; Hahs-Vaughn & Yanowitz, 2009; Leitch & Day, 2000; Rosiek & Easton, 2008;), hence an additional dimension of this research to be detailed below. Researchers in management positions have the added benefit of knowing the actual organizational reality which allows them to "see beyond objectives that are merely window dressing" (Coghlan, 2001, p. 51). The "organizational preunderstanding" (Coghlan, 2006, p. 296)

of the researcher can offer a richer experience. A third benefit for the researcher is through an affective experience that underscores the importance of the role the researcher plays as an educator and as a potential change agent (Easton, 2008; Hahs-Vaughn & Yanowitz, 2009; Leitch & Day, 2000).

There are identifiable benefits to an organization through insider action research. One of the primary benefits of insider action research to an organization is the ability to identify and implement continuous improvement activities (Easton, 2008; Holian, 1999; Nolan & Hoover, 2008; see also the Harvard PELP Cycle of Organizational Inquiry in Childress, Doyle, & Thomas, 2009). One of the strengths of action research (or conducting cycles of organizational inquiry) as a research method is the inclusion of a formal looping process for organizational learning. Action research incorporates a continuous improvement cycle, where each step of the process builds on the previous step to form an interdependent relationship (Nolan & Hoover, 2008). Insider action research provides the rare introspective look into the organization's structure, including practices, policies, and mindsets that can potentially create barriers for improvement (Nolan & Hoover, 2008). Holian (1999) described this by explaining:

> Action research in your own organization can offer opportunities for exploring links between theory and practice, enhance identification of options, assist decision making and engage organizational members in on-going reflection and feedback as to how to better meet desired results. (pp. 8-9)

Insider action research has the potential to be the catalyst to affect significant, long-term, and lasting development within an organization as it transforms.

Communicating results from insider action research studies has the potential to strengthen the organization and its individual members through organization learning. "[s]haring the results of completed projects and celebrating action research benefits individual teachers, the profession of teaching, and the school culture" (Nolan & Hoover 2008, p. 129). This allows members of the organization to participate in the experience, if not in the actual study, and encourages interest and possibly future involvement in ongoing or anticipated projects (Simm & Ingram, 2008). As individual and organizational learning increases, the potential for positive student impact increases as well (Easton, 2008; Nolan & Hoover, 2008).

The ability of other educational organizations to benefit from insider action research studies was a primary consideration in the selection of this methodology. "Action research is one valuable tool for generating new knowledge, solutions, and strategies in response to continuously emerging questions and problems" (Nolen & Vander Putten, p. 406). Through contribution of knowledge and experience, educational organizations can continue to learn from the experiences of others.

Potential Problems with Insider Action Research

Along with the benefits, insider action research brings potential problems of which the researcher needs to be aware. The first potential problem is the complications presented by role duality. Performing as both a member of the organization as well as the researcher has the potential of creating issues regarding influence (Coghlan, 2006; Coghlan & Holian, 2007). In some insider action research, the researcher may have the position or opportunity to exert influence on participants, whether consciously or unconsciously, to provide the 'answers' the researcher is

seeking (Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). Insider action researchers who hold a management or administrative position within the organization must be particularly cognizant of the problems role duality may present. The manager's desire for positive results because of organizational position can be in direct conflict with the role of impartial researcher (Coghlan, 2001).

Other potential problems include dual role responsibility and research bias, both which can create a scenario in which the researcher is pulled between the responsibility of being a practitioner and functioning as the researcher (Coghlan & Holian, 2007; McNiff, 2007). The internal position can become intertwined with the role of research, creating a potential conflict. Although referring to the classroom level, Nolen & Vander Putten (2007) explained this issue, easily understood to be a challenge at any level of the organization, by writing:

> In action research, the teacher researcher may have difficulty in meeting many of the requirements of traditional research models because he or she is never removed from the phenomenon being studied and remains in situ both before and after the study. (p. 404)

Recognizing the potential obstruction to the research project and identifying possible practices to lessen researcher role duality and bias can strengthen the research project (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Nolan & Hoover, 2008; Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). Since the primary researcher for this study was employed within the organization, the researcher incorporated activities to reduce both dual roles and bias while hopefully preserving some measure of objectivity based upon data. These activities included assigning primary projects to other staff member(s), using

committees to gain multiple perspectives, using multiple data collection methods, using existing data, and conducting a focus group with the use of a proxy researcher.

Other potential problems with internal action research includes ethical questions about the qualifications of the practitioner to assume the role of researcher, the academic value of the methodology, the protection of the rights and confidentiality of the participants, and the accuracy or veracity of findings (Coghlan, 2006; Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). Oversight of insider action research projects by Institutional Review Boards and/or professional organizations, along with professional development in research, can assist with these problems. (McNiff, 2007; Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). Although insider action research has inherent concerns, it continues to be valuable in providing information and knowledge for the development of education (Coghlan, 2002; Nolan & Hoover, 2008)

Data Classifications

This study collected data through the use of two survey questionnaires, a focus group, the website usage reports, adjunct instructor professional development reports, a journal prepared by the researcher that includes observations from the study, and a focus group coordinated by a qualified stand-in assistant. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used within this study. There are three categories of data used within this study. These categories included: (a) baseline data which is both qualitative and quantitative data collected at the beginning of the study through Survey Questionnaire #1and used to provide a beginning data analysis, (b) comparative data which is both qualitative and quantitative data collected through Survey Questionnaire #2, the focus group, website usage reports, and adjunct instructor professional

development reports for the purpose of identifying any changes that may have occurred during the study, and (c) informative data that was not quantifiable, but was determined by the researcher to be of significance to this study and collected through the researcher's journal.

Baseline Data

Baseline data were collected through the Survey Questionnaire #1 (Appendix A) which was administered at the beginning of the pilot study focused on the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website dedicated for professional development and instructional support and was used to establish usage and perception of the internet platform and garner recommendations for an administratively-driven repurposed website. This survey questionnaire collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The data were analyzed by the researcher and used by MNTC-BIS to identify recommended changes to the repurposed website in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors through an online PLC. Deming's (1982, 1994) plan-do-study-act (PDSA) model from his System of Profound Knowledge was the administrative inquiry model that was used within this study to repurpose and design a new website to support a PLC, implement BISConnect, evaluate the impact of the changes and/or corrections from the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website to BISConnet, and act on the results of its evaluation. This model provides a non-linear feedback system where the knowledge learned from the implementation and enactment process are used to insure continuous improvement. The baseline data focused on the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website are outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Baseline Data Collected for Study

Baseline data used for study		
Type of Data	Instrument Used	Purpose of Data
Quantitative	Survey Questionnaire #1	Participant demographic information
		Evaluation of current MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet Website
Qualitative	Survey Questionnaire #1	Participant perception of MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website
		Recommendations from participants for changes to the website

Comparative Data

The Survey Questionnaire #2 (Appendix B) was administered after the online PLC, BISConnect, had been in place and available for use for a 12 month time period. Four data sources were used to collect comparative data: (a) Survey Questionnaire #2, (b) data from a focus group, (c) website usage reports, and (d) adjunct instructors' professional development reports. BISConnect was designed to follow the PLC characteristics as defined by DuFour (2003, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998), supported by Senge's learning organization theory (Senge, 1990; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000), influenced by a constructivist learning theory, and included applicable recommendations and requests from the first survey questionnaire completed by the volunteer adjunct instructor participants. The second survey questionnaire also collected both qualitative and quantitative data and was used to determine the adjunct instructor's usage and perception of BISConnect. These data were analyzed by the researcher and used by MNTC-BIS administration to determine the effectiveness of BISConnect in promoting and providing access to professional

development opportunities and instructional support for adjunct instructor. Corrections and recommendations identified through these data incorporated Deming's (1982, 1994) PDSA model to make improvements in BISConnect.

The website usage reports provided comparative data that were used to track information on the use of BISConnect over the three-year study. The adjunct instructor professional development reports provided trend analysis on the activity level and perceptions of the online PLC as a mode of professional learning and collaboration. Comparative data used in this study are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Comparative Data Collected for Study

Comparative data used for study		
Type of Data	Instrument Used	Purpose of Data
Quantitative	Survey Questionnaire #2	Participant demographic information
		Evaluation of the repurposed PLC, BISConnect
Qualitative	Survey Questionnaire #2	Participant perception of BISConnect
		Recommendations from participants for changes to BISConnect
Qualitative	Focus Group Interview	Participant perception of BISConnect
		Recommendations from participants for changes to BISConnect
Quantitative	Website Usage Reports	Adjunct instructors who are using BISConnect
Quantitative	Adjunct Instructor Professional Development Reports	# of adjunct instructors who are participating in professional development
		# hours of professional development for adjunct instructors

Informative Data

The nature of this study and the methodology selected provided the researcher with the opportunity to collect informative data that could not be quantified and were not variable-specific, but provided benefit to this study through observation and reflection. The collection tool used for this informative data was the researcher's journal. The researcher collected observations and reflections within this journal weekly throughout the three year study. The journal data were then reviewed and coded to identify themes. This informative data are included in Chapter Five along with the discussion of the repurposing of the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website into the PLC, BISConnect.

Timetable

The study took place over a three year time period, from July 2009 to August 2012. The research project was divided into five phases, each of which has a data collection and/or analysis component. The four phases are as follows:

Phase I: (July 2009 to September 2009). Input from volunteer participants was collected during this phase to identify two primary pieces of information: 1) the perception and usage of the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website, and 2) recommendations for the website that would make it a more effective venue for professional development and instructional support. Survey Questionnaire #1 was administered to volunteer participants that included quantitative data collected through structured questions and qualitative information which was collected through unstructured, open-ended questions.

Phase II: (October 2009 to December 2009). During this phase of the study, the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website was repurposed into an online professional learning community (PLC) referred to as BISConnect. BISConnect was designed to incorporate the PLC characteristics as defined by DuFour (2003, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998), supported by Senge's learning organization theory (Senge, 1990; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000), influenced by a social constructivist learning theory, and included recommendations and requests included by the volunteer participants in Survey Questionnaire #1.

Phase III: (January 2010 to December 2010). This phase was used for the implementation and enactment of the BISConnect as an online PLC provided to adjunct instructors for the purpose of promoting and providing professional development and instructional support. At the end of this phase, a BISConnect communication log was generated that contained conversation threads and topics from adjunct instructors and staff.

Phase IV: (January 2011 to August 2012). The final phase of this study was comparative data collection. During this phase, Survey Questionnaire #2 was completed by volunteer participants, a focus group of adjunct instructors was conducted, adjunct instructor professional development and website usage reports were compiled, and a second BISConnect communication log was generated. The data collected during this phase were both quantitative and qualitative and were used to make an assessment of the activity and perspectives of adjunct instructors pertaining to the new PLC, BISConnect, in meeting its intended purpose of promoting and providing access to professional development opportunities and providing instructional support.

Environment

The educational system within Oklahoma is a three-pronged system comprised of comprehensive PK-12 schools, higher education, and vocational and technical education offered through the CareerTech System. Moore Norman Technology Center (MNTC) was established in 1976 as Moore Norman Vocational-Technical School District No. 17 and is one of 29 public Technology Centers in the Oklahoma CareerTech System. MNTC is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. Among the Technology Centers, MNTC is the fourth largest district based on the amount of local ad valorem taxes collected. The geographical boundary of MNTC's district is an overlay of the Moore and Norman public school districts.

MNTC provides career and technology education to high school and adult students. There are two specific divisions of MNTC: one which focuses on education for high school students and follows the organizational structure of a K-12 school, and one which serves adult and industry students and has a structure more closely aligned with higher education. This study is situated within the Business and Industry Services (BIS) division which serves adult and industry students. This division served over 18,000 students in the 2012 fiscal year. The organizational structure within BIS has an administrative staff of one executive director, two directors, and multiple program supervisors and coordinators, referenced within this study as staff. The program supervisors and coordinator provide oversight and supervision for instruction, including adjunct instructors.

Adjunct instructors are an important part of MNTC-BIS, as over 95% of the instructors are classified as adjunct. Adjunct instructors are selected based on their qualifications, experience, certifications, and education as needed to meet the requirements for the course they will teach. Although the adjunct instructors used within MNTC-BIS have a rich background in industry and in the subject matter being taught, few have any experience in the classroom. Every course has an end-of-course evaluation completed by the students. This evaluation includes an assessment of the instructor in addition to the overall course. Every evaluation is reviewed and monitored by the assigned MNTC-BIS instructional supervisor who then provides feedback to the adjunct instructor. Adjunct instructors may also be evaluated through classroom observation and personnel evaluations completed by their instructional supervisor.

Participants

Participation in this research study was limited to adjunct instructors who were employed by MNTC-BIS to teach courses during the applicable fiscal years. As this study spanned over three fiscal years, the number of potential participants varied from the beginning of the study to the conclusion of the study. Phase I of the research study began in the 2010 fiscal year which included 127 potential participants. Phase IV of the research study included the 2011 fiscal year that had 124 potential participants and the 2012 fiscal year which included 124 potential participants. The data reported in both the website usage reports and the professional development reports represented all adjunct instructors who had a signed contract in the applicable fiscal year. The survey questionnaires were offered to all adjunct instructors who had an active contract in the fiscal year in which the survey questionnaires were administers and were completed by

participants on a volunteer basis. Focus group participants were selected from adjunct instructors who had an active contract in the 2012 fiscal year.

Adjunct instructors who had a current contract with MNTC-BIS for the 2010 fiscal year were sent a letter (Appendix C) describing the study and asking for their participation in completing Survey Questionnaire #1. One week later, these potential participants received an email (Appendix D) referencing the initial letter, outlining how to participate in the study, and included an embedded link to the first survey questionnaire (Appendix A). Also included were instructions on how to access the electronic version of the survey questionnaire along with a hard copy of the first survey questionnaire and the directions for returning the completed hard-copy survey questionnaire. The first page of the Survey Questionnaire #1 was an Information Sheet for Consent for participants and included the purpose and detailed information of the study. Out of a potential 127 participants, 38 adjunct instructors volunteered to complete Survey Questionnaire #1, representing 29.9% of possible participants.

Survey Questionnaire #2 used the same process with a letter (Appendix E) describing the study and asking for participation mailed to the adjunct instructors who had a current contract with MNTC-BIS for the 2011 fiscal year. A follow-up email (Appendix F) was sent to this potential participant pool, again referencing the previously-received letter, providing the instructions on how to participate in the study, and describing how to access the second survey questionnaire (Appendix B) in both electronic format and hard-copy form. The first page of the Survey Questionnaire #2 was an Information Sheet for Consent for participants and included the purpose and detailed information of the study. From the 124 adjunct instructors who were eligible to

participate in Survey Questionnaire #2, 34 volunteered to complete the survey questionnaire, representing 27% of possible participants.

Focus group participants' selection process use two criteria: (a) adjunct instructors who had a current contract in the 2012 fiscal year, and (b) who had accessed BISConnect within the 2012 fiscal year. Out of the 124 adjunct instructors who had a current 2012 fiscal year contract, 97 had accessed BISConnect during that fiscal year. From the 97 potential participants, 20 adjunct instructors were randomly selected through a lottery selection. The 20 potential participants were sent an email invitation (Attachment G) to participate in the focus group. Nine adjunct instructors out of the potential 20 selected volunteered to participate in the focus group. The participants were provided a copy of the focus group questions (Attachment H) and asked to sign a consent form (Attachment I) for the focus group. All participants completed the consent form and actively participated in the focus group, which was held on-site at MNTC.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through five instruments: (a) survey questionnaires, (b) a focus group interview, (c) adjunct instructor professional development reports, (d) website usage reports, and (e) the researcher's journal containing observations. The customization of the survey questionnaires was necessary because of the specificity of the information needed. Therefore, these surveys were validated by professionals in their respective areas. Twelve professionals within MNTC were identified to complete and provide feedback on the content, format, and design of both survey questionnaires (Appendix A & B). These professionals were selected based on their experience and

background with educational surveys. Eleven of the12 professionals participated in the validation process for the survey questionnaires. The professionals included in the validation process included two instructional curriculum designers, two instructional supervisors, three full-time teachers, three administrators, and one data coordinator. Feedback provided by these professionals was used to make two recommended adjustments prior to the delivery of these survey questionnaires. The first adjustment was to add the question, 'Describe the professional development opportunities you have taken advantage of" to both Survey Questionnaire #1 and #2. This recommendation was incorporated to provide qualitative data that provided insight into the professional development activities and opportunities the adjunct instructors valued. The second recommended change was to add the question, 'What is your purpose for using social media (Twitter, FaceBook, LinkedIn, etc.)?' to Survey Questionnaire #2. This adjustment was recommended to gain a deeper insight into the application of social media (personal, professional, or a combination) currently used by the adjunct instructors.

The questions included within the survey questionnaires captured both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected through structured questions that included dichotomous, nominal, and Likert response questions. The qualitative data were collected through unstructured questions which were open-ended. Survey Questionnaire #1 was divided into five categories of questions: (a) demographic information, (b) technology comfort level, (c) perception and participation in professional development activities, (d) current use of Adjunct Instructor intranet website, and (e) recommendations for changes (Table 4.1). Survey Questionnaire #2

also included five categories of questions: (a) demographic information, (b) technology comfort level, (c) perception and participation in professional development activities, (d) current use of BISConnect, and (e) recommendations for improvement (Table 4.2).

Focus Group

A focus group was included within this study to encourage various points of view collected in a group setting. The benefit of the focus group was that participants could hear other participants' responses to the questions, allowing them to reflect and, if applicable, add to their own initial response (Patton, 1990). The purpose of the focus group was to capitalize on the group synergy in order to gather deeper, richer data from the adjunct instructors regarding their perception and use of BISConnect, the online professional learning community.

The focus group questions were all open-ended, and qualitative data were collected during the focus group event. A certified facilitator, the MNTC Professional Development Coordinator, was used to lead the focus group instead of the researcher because of the insider role as an administrator (e.g., the potential conflict of role interest and possible corruption of acquired data as a result of undue influence). Using a facilitator that was familiar with the adjunct instructors and who had no oversight or supervision of this population encouraged open input and rich dialogue. The focus group conversation was transcribed and participants' were assigned codes to protect their identity. The word processed transcripts were organized, coded, and analyzed by the researcher and stored electronically on the computer in the researcher's office. Potential focus group participants were selected from adjunct instructors who met four criteria: (a) have a current FY 12-13 contract, (b) have completed the adjunct instructor

orientation, (c) have taught at least one course for MNTC-BIS, and (d) have engaged with the BISConnect online venue within the past 12 months. Twenty adjunct instructors were selected through a random sample from this potential pool and were sent email invitations to participate in the focus group. Included within the email was information about the focus group and its purpose (Appendix G). Out of the twenty potential participants who received invitations, nine volunteered to participate. Those nine participants were provided a consent form (Appendix I).

Six open-ended questions were asked during the focus group, which lasted approximately two hours and took place on the campus of MNTC. The MNTC Professional Development Coordinator was the facilitator for the focus group. The focus group was video recorded so the data could be transcribed. Each participant was assigned an identification code so no data could be linked within the study to any adjunct instructor. Once the transcription was complete, the video tape was destroyed by the primary researcher. The electronic file of the transcribed focus group was password protected and maintained on the hard drive of the computer of the primary researcher. No video or paper copy of the transcription was kept.

Six open-ended questions were used within the focus group session. These questions were:

1. How has BISConnected assisted you, or not assisted you, in professional development and instructional support?
2. Explain your understanding of a Professional Learning Community?
3. How has BISConnect assisted, or not assisted, in connecting you with other staff and instructors in order to build this community?

4. Have there been new strategies and changes you have identified within MNTC that are related to the implementation of BISConnect?
5. Have you noticed changes within MNTC-BIS, as an organization, in terms of the value of professional development and instructional support? Do you think these changes are related, or not related, to BISConnect?
6. What are your perspectives and attitudes pertaining to professional learning and seeking instructional support either with or without BISConnect?

The qualitative data generated from these six focus group questions were used in answering the four research questions that guided this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected through survey questionnaires were primarily numeric in nature and were analyzed by the researcher. Descriptive statics were used within this study to represent the general characteristics of the quantitative data. Frequency distribution utilizing percentages was the primary analysis used for quantitative data comparison, as the data represented occurrences of set variables. The use of descriptive statistics was beneficial in identifying trends or patterns in the quantitative data, specifically between survey questionnaires, with the adjunct instructor professional development reports, and with website usage report. These data were used to evaluate the changes that occurred at MNTC-BIS from the beginning of the study through the conclusion of this study. This data focused on whether an environment that encouraged and provided professional development opportunities and instructional support had been established through the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC. The coding and thematic identification of data collected employed both quantitative and

qualitative content analysis, a process that has been used by respected content-analytic studies (Webber, 1990). As defined by Smith (1975), "qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form" (p. 218). This approach allowed the researcher to identify and then prioritize recurrent themes to provide a more focused approach.

The data collected from the focus group followed a three step process as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994): (a) reduction of the data, (b) displaying the data for analysis, and (c) drawing conclusions from the data. The first step involved chunking or coding the data into representative patterns from the audio transcripts. This reduction assisted the researcher in organizing the data into emerging themes or clusters, also known as data categorization (Standards for Reporting, 2006).

The next step in the focus group data analysis was to display or organize the data in order to draw conclusions or visualize patterns. Miles and Humberman (1994) describe the importance of this step as they write, "[i]n the course of our work, we have become convinced that better displays are a major avenue to valid qualitative analysis" (p. 11). The tools for focus group data display within this study is a mixture of matrices (appearing in Chapter 4) that present a strong relational analysis and conversational (appearing in Chapter 4) to give a deeper insight into the thoughts and ideas of the participants. Evidence of data reduction that manifests itself as specific codes and resulting categorization are included in the 17 codes that emerged from the data collected from the focus group (Table 3.3).

The last step in the analysis of the focus group data was to draw conclusions from the data. This study employed multiple methods of data collection; therefore, the

conclusions drawn from the focus group data were compared and crosschecked again the data collected from other sources to increase the trustworthiness of findings and conclusions. These sources included survey questionnaires, the focus group, website usage reports, adjunct instructor professional development reports, and the researcher's journal reflections.

Summary

Insider action research was the research methodology used for this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were incorporated to answer the research questions and determine the feasibility of BISConnect in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors.

The information in Chapter Three included an introduction to the study which included the research problem and research questions, the data collection tools, and the data analysis process. The data collected and the analysis of this data are reported in Chapter Four. The process used to repurpose the website into an online PLC and the lessons learned from the researcher are included in Chapter Five. The final findings, recommendations, reflections, and conclusion of the study are included in Chapter Six.

Table 3.3

Data Codes and Definitions

Code	Definitions
Attitude about Instructional Support	Adjunct instructors' viewpoint about instructional support
Attitude about Professional Development	Adjunct instructors' viewpoint about professional development
Changes in Expectations	Transformed expectations of adjunct instructors
Changes with Organization	Changes in MNTC-BIS that have been observed by adjunct instructors
Changes with Staff	Changes in MNTC-BIS administrative staff that have been observed by adjunct instructors
Collegiality	The willingness on the part of teachers to associate or cooperate
Connection with MNTC	A relational bond felt by adjunct instructors to MNTC-BIS
Instructional Focus	Actions and attitudes that are concentrated on and supportive of instruction
Instructional Support	Resources and assistance provided to teachers to support classroom instruction
Learner Focus	Actions and attitudes that are concentrated on and supportive of the learner
Limited Connection	Limited perceived link between teacher and teacher or teacher and staff
No Connection	No perceived link between teacher and teacher or teacher and staff
Operational Support	Resources and assistance provided to teachers to support basic business activities and functions
Professional Development Focus	Actions and attitudes that are concentrated on and supportive of professional development
Professional Development Support	Resources and assistance provided to teachers to support professional development activities and
Professional Growth	Activities that contribute to the competence or effectiveness of the teacher
Relational Support	Resources and assistance provided to teachers to support the connection with other teachers

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding from an administratively-driven organizational improvement initiative that addressed the development, implementation, and enactment of an online PLC for the adjunct instructors. The PLC was designed to promote and provide professional development and instructional support to adjunct instructors. The online PLC referenced within this study is BISConnect.

This study utilized an insider action research methodology which included both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collected from this study were then used to report findings and provide warranted conclusions.

Restatement of Research Questions

The research questions were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the online PLC in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors through the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The research questions that drove this study were:

1. How well does the online, interactive venue support, or not support, the development of a viable PLC for the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support?
2. What challenges were identified by MNTC-BIS in the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC?

3. What strategies and changes occurred with MNTC-BIS that were directly related to the implementation and enactment of a purported online PLC over time?
4. What were the organizational and professional culture changes in which professional development and instructional support were valued by staff and adjunct instructors?

These questions were used to guide the analysis and evaluation of the data and information to determine if BISConnect had been successful or unsuccessful in meeting the study's research purpose.

Baseline Data: Survey Questionnaire #1

Baseline data used within this study have two primary purposes: (a) determine and document the perceptions of the adjunct instructors with regard to the existing MNTC Adjunct Instructor website and professional development, and (b) generate recommendation from the adjunct instructors in order to incorporate these recommendations into the repurposed website, BISConnect. Demographic data are collected as part of the baseline data as well.

Data provided by Survey Questionnaire #1 were included in the baseline for this study. The questionnaire included five categories of questions: (a) demographic information, (b) technology comfort level, (c) perception and participation in professional development activities, (d) current use of and/or participation in website, and (e) recommendations for change (Table 4.1). It is important to note that not all of the 38 volunteer participants answered each question; therefore, each question will indicate the number of participants that answered that specific question.

Table 4.1

Survey Questionnaire #1 Question Categories

Survey Questionnaire #1		
Category of Questions	Structured questions (quantitative)	Unstructured questions (qualitative)
Demographic data of Participants	5	0
Technology comfort level of participants	3	0
Perception and participation in professional development	1	2
Current use of Adjunct Instructor Intranet website	6	3
Recommendations for the new website	0	6
Total questions	15	11

Demographic Information

Survey Questionnaire #1 included five demographic questions that were segmented into two primary areas of interest: (a) the age range and gender of the adjunct instructors participating in the survey, and (b) their teaching experience and instructional areas. All participants (n=38) responded to the demographic questions. The first area of interest indicated that the participating adjunct instructors included a higher percentage of females, 60.5%, than males, 39.5% (Table 4.2). The participants had a higher percentage of 56 and over age range at 44.7% with all age ranges represented (Table 4.3). Based upon these data, adjunct instructors who responded to the survey, and by necessity engaged with the Adjunct Instructor website, were more likely to be female and older.

Table 4.2

Survey Questionnaire #1: "Please indicate your gender"

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	15	39.5%
Male	23	60.5%
Total	38	100.0%

Table 4.3

Survey Questionnaire #1: "Please indicate your age range"

Age range	Frequency	Percent
18-25	2	5.3%
26-35	6	15.8%
36-45	4	10.5%
46-55	9	23.7%
56 or over	17	44.7%
Total	38	100.0%

The experience and instructional fields of the participating adjunct instructors showed diversity, with instructors representing a range of teaching experience and varied representation of instructional fields. The teaching experience of participating adjunct instructors' data showed that the highest percentage of participants had 16 and over years of teaching experience overall, but the majority had only taught for MNTC-BIS for two or less years (Figure 4.1). There are a total of nine primary instructional fields at MNTC. Each instructional field was represented by this participant pool with the exception of the Safety and Environmental field (Figure 4.2). Health represented the highest percentage of participants with Quality and Online fields having the lowest percentage of participants.

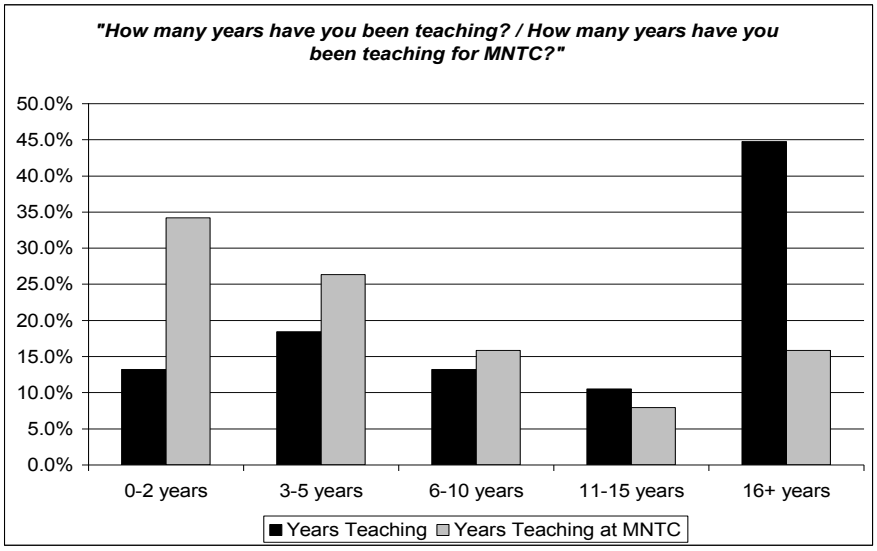

Figure 4.1: Years Teaching / Teaching for MNTC

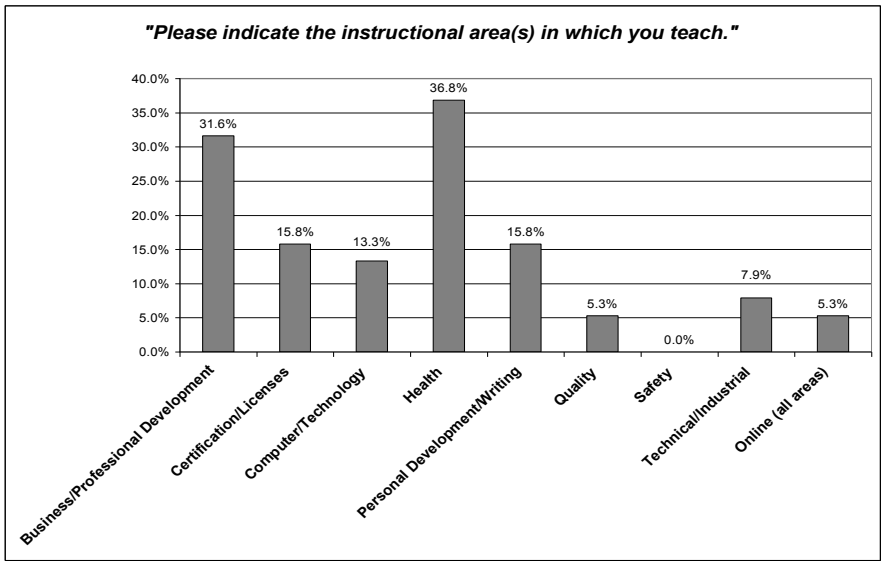

Figure 4.2: Instructional Area(s)

Technology Comfort

One factor that could potentially affect the data collected from Survey Questionnaire #1 was the technology comfort and ability of the participating adjunct instructors. Three questions were included in this survey questionnaire to determine the technology comfort of the participants: (a) current use of technology, (b) use of social networking, and (c) types of social media sites currently used. Again, every participant (n=38) answered the technology comfort questions. All participating adjunct instructors

indicated that they used a computer at least weekly, with the highest percentage of participants, 73.7%, stating they use the computer multiple times per day (Table 4.4).

The use of social networking indicated that the highest percentage of participating adjunct instructors used social networking sites occasionally or never, although the majority was familiar with social networking sites (Table 4.5). FaceBook was the clear social media site of choice, as 82.6% of the responding participants indicated that they used this social networking site (Table 4.6). This data indicated that the participating adjunct instructors were all technology users with a mixed usage of social media sites.

Table 4.4

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Please rate your current technology usage"

Technology usage	Frequency	Percent
I do not use a computer	0	0.0%
I use the computer 2 days or less per week	3	7.9%
I use the computer 3 to 6 days per week	3	7.9%
I use the computer at least once per day	4	10.5%
I use the computer multiple times per day	28	73.7%
Total	38	100.0%

Table 4.5

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Please rate your use of social networking"

Social networking	Frequency	Percent
I use 1 or more social networking sites daily	9	23.7%
I use 1 or more social networking sites weekly	4	10.5%
I use 1 or more social networking sites occasionally	10	26.3%
I do not use social networking sites, but am familiar with them	10	26.3%
I do not use social networking sites / am not familiar with them	5	13.2%
Total	38	100.0%

Table 4.6

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Please indicate which social media sites you use regularly (check all that apply)"

Social media used regularly	Frequency
Facebook	19
LinkedIn	4
MySpace	6
Twitter	3
Other	2
Total respondents	23

Perception of Professional Development Activities

The perception of professional development activities by the participating adjunct instructors was another important factor to consider within this study, as it could influence the use and/or assessment of the current MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website. Three questions were included in the Survey Questionnaire #1 to identify the participants' perception of and participation in professional development. The first question was a Likert Scale style question that asked the participants to identify how important professional development was for them (Table 4.7). The quantitative data collected from this question indicated that the highest percentage of participants (n=25) felt that professional development was very important, while only one participant indicated that professional development was not important. From these data, a significant percentage, approaching 1/4 of survey respondents, indicated that professional development held some importance, indicating possible reservation as to what professional development might mean or a possible tentativeness about professional development, *per se*. These results supported the fact that the majority of the participants were cognizant of the importance of professional development.

Table 4.7

Survey Questionnaire #1 "How important is professional development to you?"

Importance of professional development	Frequency	Percent
Very important	11	44.0%
Important	7	28.0%
Somewhat important	6	24.0%
Not important	1	4.0%
Total	25	100.0%

The second question asked the participants who indicated professional development was either very important or important to explain how it has assisted them in their practice as an adjunct instructor. This question was of value to this study to assure professional development that was most beneficial to adjunct instructors was represented in the new PLC. The qualitative data collected from this question (n=13) was analyzed and coded by the researcher. Two themes emerged from the data collected from this question: (a) professional development that provides assistance with instructional techniques and strategies, and (b) professional development that assists with classroom management. The most common response from the participants showed that professional development that provided assistance with instructional techniques and strategies was considered to be the greatest benefit to these adjunct instructors, with over half the respondents including this theme. One participant wrote, "professional development helped me learn to be a more effective teacher" while another stated, "(professional development) helped to improve my classroom skills." These responses support the research that many adjunct instructional staff members lack instructional experience or training (Kurzet, 1997; Wallin, 2004). Wallin (2004) reinforces this by writing, "[t]hey (adjunct instructors) may be unfamiliar with textbooks; they may not be

comfortable preparing a syllabus; they may not have the expertise to conduct group work or class discussions" (p. 380).

The second theme from the participants indicated that professional development that assisted them in classroom management was of value. Grieve (1995) states that the benefit of employing adjunct instructors is their depth of knowledge in their subject manner, while the potential problem is with their training and classroom management skills. One participant reinforced this by writing, "I like professional development offered because now I am learning how to manage my student and classroom." Another wrote, "I was surprised that they (the professional development offerings) helped me learn how to find resources to help me in my classroom." Classroom management for adjunct instructors goes beyond the activities in the classroom to include knowledge of the educational institution and how to access resources available to them. Smith (1980) explains this by stating:

> Part-time faculty are asked to enter the classroom and accept the responsibility to teach while at the same time they are often encumbered by inadequate support systems, lack of understanding of the philosophy of the community college, inaccurate perception of their students, unclear course syllabi, and little knowledge of alternatives that may be available to them. (p. 17)

For adjunct instructors, professional development opportunities on how to be successful in the classroom include the classroom operational management that is specific to their situation.

The responses received from the volunteer participants on how professional development opportunities had assisted them reinforced what Wallin & Sweet (2003)

found in a survey of adjunct instructors they administered in the technical colleges of Georgia. When they asked what adjunct instructors thought was important to include in professional development, they had similar responses:

> Professional activities that were important to adjuncts and which they indicated a need for further training included using organizational software for student grades and rosters, developing critical thinking skills in their students, identifying and implementing industry standards in the curriculum, using web-based course development software such as Blackboard or WebCT, and preparing instructional material. (Wallin, 2004, p. 387)

As indicated by the responses from the adjunct instructors who participated in this survey, they valued the professional development activities that supported them in the areas of instructional development and classroom management.

The final question asked the participants (n=9) to describe the professional development opportunities in which they had participated. Four specific types of professional development were identified from the responses: (a) safety updates, (b) orientation, (c) structured (in-class) professional development training sessions, and (d) informational meetings for adjunct instructors. From the responses received, it was noted that all four types of professional development in which the adjunct instructors had participated were only advertised on the website, not accessible via the website. Again, this data supported the belief that the professional development tools and opportunities embedded within the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website were not being accessed.

Use of and Participation in Current Website

The use of and participation in the current website category of questions received the most attention in Survey Questionnaire #1, as the information and data received from these questions would help in the repurposing of the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website into a purported online PLC. Six structured questions were included to collect quantitative data pertaining to the use of and participation in the current website and four unstructured, open-ended questions with written responses constituting qualitative data.

The first structured question in this category asked the participant adjunct instructors (n=38) if they had accessed the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website within the past 12 months (Table 4.8). The highest percentage of participants, 84.2%, had accessed the website within this time frame. The second question drilled down to identify the perception of the participants (n=25) in the usefulness of the website in providing basic MNTC information, including policies, procedures, announcements, and other general school information (Table 4.9). The highest percentage of adjunct instructor participants, 52.0%, had rarely or never used the website to receive MNTC information, while only 12.0% of the participants used the website for their main MNTC informational source. The impact of this question was on the instructional support for adjunct instructors, as the resources provided by MNTC-BIS were primarily available to the adjunct instructors through the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website.

The third structured question asked the participants (n=25) to rate the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website in providing classroom resources (Table 4.10). The

highest percentage of participants, 72.9%, indicated that they had not accessed the classroom resources on the website while none of the participants indicated that they frequently used this venue to access classroom resources. The data supported the belief of MNTC-BIS that the expansive classroom resources located on the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website were not providing benefit due to lack of use. This also supported the need for this study to investigate a venue that was more effective in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support.

Table 4.8

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Have you accessed the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website within the past 12 months?"

Accessed website	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	84.2%
No	6	15.8%
Total	38	100.0%

Table 4.9

Survey Questionnaire #1 "How useful is the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website in providing you with MNTC information?"

Providing MNTC information	Frequency	Percent
I use this website as my main source for MNTC information	3	12.0%
I use this website for MNTC information, but it is not my main source	9	36.0%
I rarely or never use the website for MNTC information	13	52.0%
Total	25	100.0%

Table 4.10

Survey Questionnaire #1 "How beneficial is the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website in providing you with classroom resources?"

Providing classroom resources	Frequency	Percent
I use this website frequently to access classroom resources	0	0.0%
I use this website occasionally to access classroom resources	7	28.0%
I use the website, but have not accessed classroom resources	18	72.0%
Total	25	100.0%

The fourth structured question asked the participants (n=25) how beneficial the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website was in connecting them with other adjunct instructors (Table 4.11). No participant indicated that he/she uses the website frequently to connect with other adjunct instructors. The highest percentage of respondents at 52.9% indicated instead that it did not connect them with other adjunct instructors. One of the factors in developing a viable platform for a PLC is the benefit of instructors having the ability to collaborate with and learn from each other (Ginsberg, 2004; DuFour et al., 2005). The data provided through this question showed that the current system used by MNTC-BIS was not effective in achieving this organizational goal.

The next structured question asked the participants how they have used the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website to connect them with professional development opportunities. The highest percentage of respondents (n=25), 60.0%, indicated that they had not used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities, while another 20.0% marked that they had used the website to identify professional development opportunities, but had not taken advantage of any (Table 4.12). Only five participants (20%) stated that they had used this website to

identify *and* take advantage of professional development opportunities. The responses received from this question supported the data from the adjunct instructors' professional development report that showed a low participation in professional development activities by the adjunct instructors.

Table 4.11

Survey Questionnaire #1 "How beneficial is the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website to 'connect' you with other adjunct instructors?"

Connecting with other adjunct instructors	Frequency	Percent
I use this website frequently to connect with other adjunct instructors	0	0.0%
I use this website occasionally to connect with other adjunct instructors	4	16.0%
I use the website, but it does not connect me with other adjunct instructors	13	52.0%
I have no need to connect with other adjunct instructors	8	32.0%
Total	25	100.0%

Table 4.12

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Have you used the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website to connect you with professional development opportunities?"

Connecting to professional development opportunities	Frequency	Percent
I have used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities and have taken advantage of these	5	20.0%
I have used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities, but have not taken advantage of any yet	5	20.0%
I have not used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities	15	60.0%
Total	25	100.0%

The last structured question that pertained to the participation in and use of the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website asked the participants to rate the ease of the website to navigate (Table 4.13). The highest percentage of respondents (n=25), 40.0%,

indicated that it was somewhat easy to use, while 28.0% said that it was not very easy. Eight respondents (32.0%) stated that the site was very easy to use.

Table 4.13

Survey Questionnaire #1 "How easy is the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website?"

Ease of navigation	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	8	32.0%
Somewhat easy	10	40.0%
Not very easy	7	28.0%
Total	25	100.0%

The qualitative data collected through the unstructured, open-ended questions provided rich data which was used for the repurposing of the website. The first question asked the participants (n=21) to identify the information they currently accessed through the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website. Four specific themes emerged from the responses: (a) general school information, (b) professional development information, (c) email, and (d) adjunct instructor information.

The second open-ended question asked the participants (n=7) what classroom resources they have accessed through the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website. This question provided only seven responses that included three resources accessed: (a) equipment and technology use, (b) instructor suggestions, and (c) lesson plan templates. Four responses stated that they had not accessed classroom resources, with one participant writing, "[t]his site is difficult to navigate, so I have not accessed the classroom resources." MNTC-BIS had embedded a significant amount of classroom resources into this website; however, this data indicated that these resources were not

being accessed or used. Obviously, professional development and instructional support resources are not effective if they are not used (Gerhart, 2004; Seifert, 2002).

One of the primary components of a PLC is the sense of group-ness or collective identity; the connectivity of instructors with each other for the purpose of support and learning (Ginsberg, 2004; DuFour et al., 2005). The question included to collect qualitative data asked the participants to identify how the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website assists in connecting them with other adjunct instructors. The majority of the responses (n=8) had one common theme: to have access to email or contact information of other adjunct instructors and staff. This response supported previous research that instructors can have a sense of working in a vacuum – of being in a solitary profession (Lieberman, 1995; Schmoker, 2005). One participant's response, however, supported the connectivity that teachers need in order to work as a community in a PLC environment as stressed by DuFour (2004). The participant wrote, "I wish there was a way I could communicate easier with other instructors, especially when I have a problem or would like to know what other instructors do."

Recommendations

The final category of questions asked the participants for their recommendations for the new, repurposed website. Because of the nature of the information needed, only unstructured, open-ended questions were asked, resulting in all qualitative data. Six questions were assigned to this category to assure a breadth of recommendations that might be applicable to the new repurposed website. The first question focused on the mechanics of the website, asking how the website could be easier to navigate (n=10). Three themes were identified from the data received: (a) simpler tabs and menus, (b)

assuring the information is clear and not buried within the website, and (c) providing a method to prevent broken links. These recommendations were taken into consideration as the new online PLC was constructed.

The next two questions dealt with the value of the features, information and tools included within the current MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website. The first question asked which of the features, information and tools were of value. Five themes were identified within the answers to this question. The responses (n=25) are shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Which current features, information, and/or tools on the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website are of value to you as an adjunct instructor?"

Theme	Frequency
Operational documents	14
Email access	9
General school information	7
Classroom resources	6
Professional development	5

The second value question asked the participants (n=25) to identify the features, information and tools that were *not* of value. The primary responses were "none" or "I don't know." No themes emerged from this question.

The next question asked the participants (n=25) to identify features they would like to see in the repurposed online PLC. This question resulted in five overall themes (Table 4.15). Although 'communication tools' was a prominent theme, there were no

responses that indicated a perceived need by the adjunct instructors for a community based resource.

Table 4.15

Survey Questionnaire #1 "Which features, information, and/or tools could we add to the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website that would make it of greater benefits to you?"

Theme	Frequency
School information (news, calendars, etc.)	12
Communication tools (emails, phone numbers, etc.)	10
Professional development opportunities/activities	9
Class schedules / rosters	8
Operational documents (timesheets, forms, etc.)	6

The next question asked the participants (n=25) for suggestion to increase the adjunct instructors' connectivity with other instructors. Although the majority of the responses indicated that they did not have a recommendation, four recommendations were given: (a) provide a link to full-time teachers, (b) include tips and tricks from other instructors, (c) use a real-time chat feature, and (d) include all MNTC staff information (within the website). The responses indicated that the participants associated connectivity with communication, not the sense of collaboration. One response highlighted this by writing:

> We seem to enjoy and benefit from interaction in a classroom setting on a particular topic, but, in general, we do function as islands. If a department is large enough to have several faculty, it would make sense to interact. I am a department of one. (Anonymous Respondent)

The final recommendation question asked the participants (n=13) for any other suggestions. The responses provided more insight into why the current MNTC Adjunct Instructor Internet website was not used. The majority of the participants indicated that they did not have suggestions. Those that did respond supported our concern that the adjunct instructor website was not user friendly. One participant wrote, "We don't have time to access information if it is not easy to find." Another participant supported this by writing, "It is hard to find information." Not only was information hard to access, participants explained that the information that was included was not of benefit. One of the participants wrote, "Information is not new or updated." Another supported this response by stating, "Can't find any new information – if there is any."
The emergent themes were clear: (a) information not new or updated, and (b) information included but hard to find.

The responses from the recommendations provided through Survey Questionnaire #1 were reviewed and compiled by the researcher and provided to the MNTC-BIS administrators and staff who were tasked with the responsibility for the repurposing of the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website to the new online PLC, BISConnect.

Comparative Data

Comparative data used within this study have three primary purposes: (a) analyze the data collected to identify changes in actions and/or attitudes from baseline data collected in Survey Questionnaire #1, (b) identify trends in data that occurred during the study, and (c) generate perceptions and recommendations for BISConnect. Demographic data were collected as part of the baseline data as well to compare the

respondents of Survey Questionnaire #2 with those who participated in Survey Questionnaire #1. The recommendations will be reviewed and considered for implementation following Deming's (1982) Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle of continuous improvement. The perceptions presented will be analyzed to identify themes and patterns.

Comparative data were collected from four sources: (a) Survey Questionnaire #2, (b) an adjunct instructor focus group, (c) adjunct instructor professional development reports, and (d) the website usage reports. Quantitative data from Survey Questionnaire #2, the Adjunct Instructor Professional Development reports, and the Website Usage Report were compared to identify similarities and dissimilarities, which provided a level of evidentiary rigor as comparative data. Qualitative data from Survey Questionnaire #2 and the adjunct instructor focus group will be compared to identify common themes or patterns in responses, which can assist in the reduction of researcher bias in analyzing and evaluating participants' comments and statements.

Comparative Data: Survey Questionnaire #2

Data provided by Survey Questionnaire #2 were included as comparative data for this study. The questionnaire included five categories of questions: (a) demographic information, (b) technology comfort level, (c) perception and participation in professional development activities, (d) current use of and/or participation with BISConnect, and (e) recommendations for improvement (Table 4.16). As with Survey Questionnaire #1, not all of the 34 volunteer participants answered each question; therefore, each question will indicate the number of participants that answered that specific question.

Table 4.16

Survey Questionnaire #2 Question Categories

Survey Questionnaire #2		
Category of Questions	Structured questions (quantitative)	Unstructured questions (qualitative)
Demographic data of Participants	5	0
Technology comfort level of participants	3	0
Perception and participation in professional development	1	2
Current use of BISConnect	5	3
Recommendations for improvements	0	3
Total questions	14	8

Demographic Information

Survey Questionnaire #2 mirrored Survey Questionnaire #1 by including five demographic questions that were segmented into two primary areas of interest: (a) the age range and gender of the adjunct instructors participating in the survey and (b) their teaching experience and instructional areas. The comparison of this demographic data were used to identify any significant variations between the two groups of participants, understanding that , based upon the limitations of the study, respondents did not represent matched cases in a pre-/post-treatment experimental design.

All respondents (n=34) to Survey Questionnaire #2 completed the demographic questions. The first area of interest indicated that the participating adjunct instructors included a higher percentage of females at 58.8% than males which was 41.2% (Table 4.17). The participants had a higher percentage of "56 and over" age range at 38.2% with all age ranges represented with the exception of 18-25 (Table 4.18). The

demographic data from Survey Questionnaire #2 were very similar to the data reported from Survey Questionnaire #1, supporting the inference that differences detected within this study may not necessarily be impacted by the age or gender of participants.

Table 4.17

Survey Questionnaire #2: "Please indicate your gender"

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	20	58.8%
Male	14	41.2%
TOTAL	34	100.0%

Table 4.18

Survey Questionnaire #2: "Please indicate your age range"

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
18-25	0	0.0%
26-35	6	17.6%
36-45	7	20.6%
46-55	8	23.5%
56 or over	13	38.2%
TOTAL	34	100.0%

The experience and instructional fields of the participating adjunct instructors showed diversity in both teaching experience and instructional fields in Survey Questionnaire #2. The teaching experience of participating adjunct instructors indicated that the higher percentage of participants had 16 and over years of teaching experience overall, although the majority had only taught for MNTC-BIS for two or less years (Figure 4.3). There are a total of nine primary instructional fields at MNTC. Every instructional field was represented by participants (Figure 4.4). The two instructional areas that had the highest percentage of participants were Business / Professional Development and Computer / Technology. The instructional area with the lowest

percentage of participants was Quality with only one participant. As with age and gender, the teaching experience and field of study data were somewhat similar to Survey Questionnaire #1.

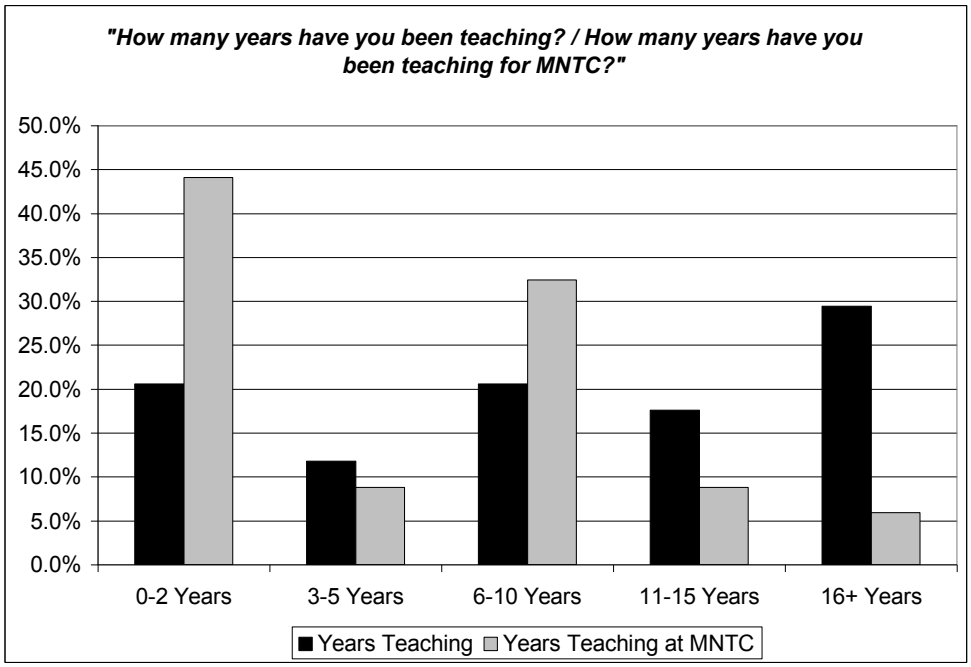

Figure 4.3: Survey Questionnaire #2 - Years Teaching / Teaching for MNTC

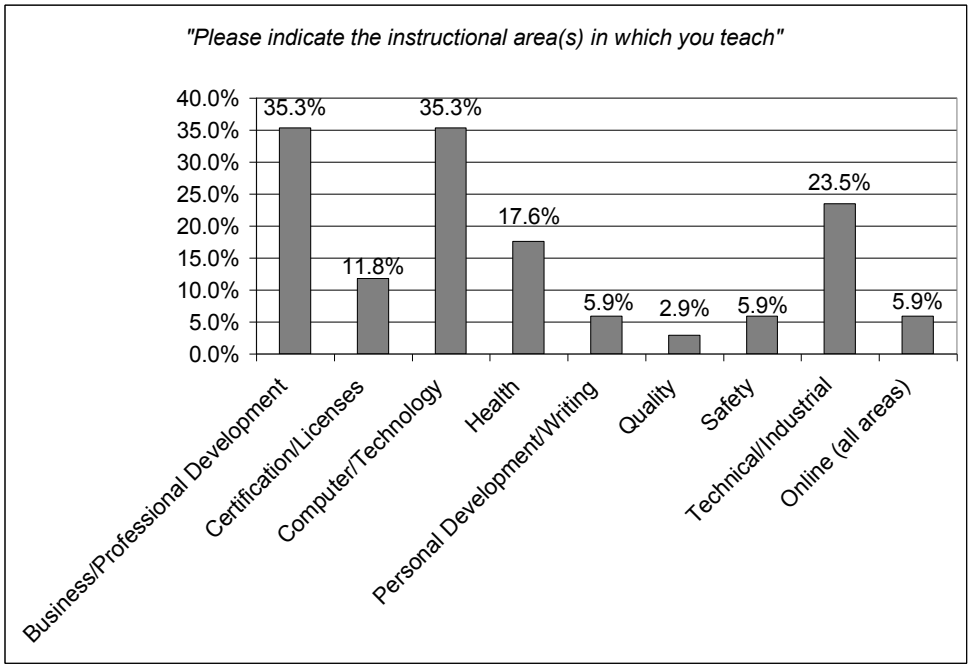

Figure 4.4: Survey Questionnaire #2 - Instructional Area(s)

Technology Comfort

Survey Questionnaire #2 included two questions to determine the technology comfort of the participants: (a) current use of technology and (b) current use of social media sites. The initial question included in Survey Questionnaire #1 that asked the type of social media sites used was not included, as this information was used only for the initial set-up or structure of BISConnect. A third technology question was added to Survey Questionnaire #2 that asked for participants to rate their primary purpose for the use of social media sites. This question provided MNTC-BIS with data for the continual improvement cycle of BISConnect enabling the organization to identify and potentially incorporate features that complimented the adjunct instructors' motivation. Again, every participant (n=34) answered the technology comfort questions. All participating adjunct instructors indicated that they used a computer at least weekly, with the highest percentage of participants, 85.3%, indicating they use the computer multiple times per day (Table 4.19).

The use of social networking indicated that the highest percentage of participating adjunct instructors used social networking sites on a daily basis, with only four participants (11.7%) indicated that they do not currently use any social networking sites (Table 4.20). The question regarding the participants' purpose for using social media asked participants to select multiple answers as applicable, resulting in a total of 72 responses received from the 34 participants. Of the 67 responses that indicated they used social media, 87% (58) indicated the primary use of social media was to keep up with family members and connect with friends and business associations (Table 4.21).

The remaining responses (nine) indicated they used social media to stay current in specific areas of interest.

The technology usage data indicated a slightly higher usage of technology, with 84% of participants in Survey Questionnaire #1 indicated that they use the computer at least once per day or more (Table 4.4) while participants in Survey Questionnaire #2 revealed that 94% of participants use the computer at least once per day or more (Table 4.19). The data also showed a noticeably higher use of social networking from the baseline data collected, with 88% of the Survey Questionnaire #2 respondents indicating they participate in social networks (Table 4.20) versus 60% from Survey Questionnaire #1 (Table 4.5).

Table 4.19

Survey Questionnaire #2, "Please rate your current technology usage"

Technology Usage	Frequency	Percent
I do not use a computer	0	0.0%
I use the computer 2 days or less per week	2	5.9%
I use the computer 3 to 6 days per week	0	0.0%
I use the computer at least once per day	3	8.8%
I use the computer multiple times per day	29	85.3%
TOTAL	34	100.0%

Table 4.20

Survey Questionnaire #2, "Please rate your use of social networking"

Social Networking	Frequency	Percent
I use 1 or more social networking sites daily	14	41.2%
I use 1 or more social networking sites weekly	7	20.6%
I use 1 or more social networking sites occasionally	9	26.5%
I do not use social networking sites, but am familiar with them	1	2.9%
I do not use social networking sites and am not familiar with them	3	8.8%
TOTAL	34	100.0%

Table 4.21

Survey Questionnaire #2, "What is your purpose for using social media (Twitter, FaceBook, LinkedIn, etc.)? (Please check all that apply)?"

Purpose for Using Social Media	Frequency	Percent
Connect with friends / business associates	21	61.8%
Keep up with family members	26	76.5%
For business purposes	11	32.4%
Stay current with specific areas of interest	9	26.5%
Do not currently use, but would like to	0	0.0%
Do not currently use and have no interest in using	5	14.7%
Other	0	0.0%

Perception of Professional Development Activities

The attitudes of and desire for professional development of the participating adjunct instructors continued to be an important factor for this study. Two questions were included in Survey Questionnaire #2 with regard to professional development. The first question was a Likert Scale style question that asked the participants to identify how important professional development was for them (Table 4.22). The quantitative data collected from this question indicated that 93% of participants (n=30) felt that professional development was very important or important, while only one participant (3.3%) indicated that professional development was not important. The data from Survey Questionnaire #2 indicated a higher level of importance from participants than reported in Survey Questionnaire #1, where 72% of respondents indicated professional development was very important or important (Table 4.7).

Table 4.22

Survey Questionnaire #2, "How important is professional development to you?"

Importance of Professional Development	Frequency	Percent
Very important	18	60.0%
Important	10	33.3%
Somewhat important	1	3.3%
Not important	1	3.3%
TOTAL	30	100.0%

The next question asked the participants if they have used BISConnect to identify or access professional development opportunities (Table 4.23). The highest percentage of respondents, 43.3%, indicated that they had participated in professional development opportunities that they had identified through BISConnect. Another 26.7% answered that they had identified professional development opportunities through BISConnect, but had not yet taken advantage of them. In comparison, Survey Questionnaire #2 data showed that 70% of respondents had used BISConnect had assisted them in identifying professional development opportunities where only 40% of respondents from Survey Questionnaire #1 had indicated that the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website had assisted them in connecting with professional development opportunities.

Another question asked the participants to describe the professional development opportunities in which they had been involved. Eleven participants responded to this question. The respondents answered this question in terms of the venue of professional development course in which they participated. The two primary categories of opportunities were in-class professional development courses and online

professional development courses. Eight indicated in-class professional development courses, while only three reported they had participated in online training courses.

Table 4.23

Survey Questionnaire #2, "Have you used BISConnect to identify or take advantage of professional development opportunities?"

Used BISConnect for professional development	Frequency	Percent
Used BISConnect to identify or link to professional development opportunities and have taken advantage of these opportunities	13	43.3%
Used BISConnect to identify or link to professional development opportunities but have not taken advantage of these yet	8	26.7%
Have not used BISConnect to identify or link to professional development opportunities	8	26.7%
Have no need to take advantage of professional development opportunities	1	3.3%
TOTAL	30	100.0%

The final question directed toward professional development was open-ended and asked the participants to identify what kinds of professional development opportunities and/or activities they would like to have available to them as an adjunct instructor. This question elicited 30 responses. Ten participants indicated that their professional development needs were met with the current courses offered while two participants said they did not have specific suggestions. From the remaining responses, three themes emerged from the data received: (a) lack of time to participate, (b) instructional techniques, and (c) computer / technology upgrade training. Several of the comments supported the first theme which was a lack of time. This has been pointed out as an underlying problem associated with adjunct instructors by Walling (2004) and Rifkin (2000). One participant expressed the time issue by saying,

> I think Moore Norman does an excellent job of providing professional development opportunities for its instructors. Working another job, I find it hard to complete the professional training Moore Norman provides. But I think the training provided is informative, current and useful.

Another respondent reinforced this by writing,

> You are providing an excellent array of choices. It's just that I work full time at another job. It's hard to work part-time at MNTC and do professional development too. Not enough hours in the day.

A third respondent summed it up by stating, "All current offerings are adequate – I just don't have time to take advantage of them."

Comments requesting professional development opportunities related to instructional and teaching strategies highlighted the challenge of adjunct instructors and conform to findings identified by Kurzet (1997) and Wallin (2004). Adjunct instructors are, in most cases, hired on their expertise in the subject being taught, not on their experience or skill level as a teacher. This was evident in the comment from one respondent,

> (I need) [a]nything that will help enhance my teaching to my students. I am trying to better familiarize myself with teaching aids and requirements. I feel like this would benefit both myself (credibility and confidence), and the students.

Other participants supported this by writing, "effective teaching styles" and "instructional strategies." One respondent summed it up by writing, "[h]elp to be a better MNTC teacher."

The need for technology and computer training was another theme that was clear in the participants' comments. Some respondents had very direct comments such as, "technology training" or "training on computers." Other had specific technology needs that were expressed such as, "I need more up to date training on technology and equipment so I can keep in tune with the business community" and "notification of and training on new software and updates to software that are installed on the classroom computers."

Use of and Participation in BISConnect

One of the primary purposes of the second survey questionnaire was to identify the value and perception of BISConnect; therefore, 10 questions were designated for this purpose. The development of BISConnect was based on adjunct instructors' input from Survey Questionnaire #1, which indicated the top request to be included in BISConnect was school information. The first question asked the participants to rate the usefulness of BISConnect in providing this information (Table 4.24). The results of this question indicated that there was an awareness of all participants that BISConnect contained school information, with 70% using it as a source of information, although only 23.3% used it as their primary source. These data might possibly indicate that BISConnect was used more for information than the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website, as the data from Survey Questionnaire #1 revealed that only 48% of respondents used this website as a source of information, with only 12% using is as the main source (Table 4.9).

Table 4.24

Survey Questionnaire #2, "How useful is BISConnect in providing you with MNTC information (policies, procedures, announcements, etc.)?"

Useful to Provide Information	Frequency	Percent
BISConnect as primary source for MNTC information	7	23.3%
BISConnect as a source, but not the primary source	14	46.7%
Rarely to never use BISConnect for information	9	30.0%
Not aware BISConnect contained information	0	0.0%
TOTAL	30	100.0%

The second question regarding BISConnect was to explore what types of information the participants were accessing via BISConnect. Three categories of information emerged from this question (Table 4.25) from the participants (n=21), several which provided multiple types of information they accessed from BISConnect. The highest number of responses from participants indicated that the majority of the information accessed through BISConnect was focused on operational information, although almost half the respondents indicated that they accessed instructional support information through BISConnect.

Table 4.25

Survey Questionnaire #2, "What is the primary MNTC information you currently access from BISConnect?"

Primary Categories of Information Accessed	Participant Responses
Operation support information (schedules, timesheets, forms, etc.)	15
Instructional support information (professional development opportunities, class resources, etc.)	10
MNTC general district information (news, announcements, etc.)	5

The next two questions on the survey questionnaire focused on classroom resources. The first question asked the participants how beneficial they found BISConnect in providing classroom resources (Table 4.26). The results from this question indicated that the majority of the participants, 63.3%, did not use BISConnect as their source for classroom resources. Another 10% of the respondents were unaware that classroom resources were available on BISConnect. This was similar to the results from Survey Questionnaire #1 where 72.0% of the respondents did not access classroom resources through the MNTC Adjunct Intranet website (Table 4.10).

Table 4.26

Survey Questionnaire #2, "How beneficial is BISConnect to provide you with classroom resources?"

Benefit of BISConnect to provide classroom resources	Frequency	Percent
BISConnect used to frequently access classroom resources	2	6.7%
BISConnect used occasionally to access classroom resources	6	20.0%
Do not access classroom resources through BISConnect	19	63.3%
Unaware that classroom resources were available on BISConnect	3	10.0%
TOTAL	30	100.0%

The second question asked the participants what classroom resources, if any, they were accessing through BISConnect. Eight participants provided answers. Although no themes emerged from this question, the input provided a listing of different types of resources that were used by the participants, such as games, icebreakers, classroom activities, teaching methods, and instructional suggestions. What was not indicated in the answers was any mention of community involvement or access. This topic was a link to the next question in Survey Questionnaire #2.

This question was used to investigate the connectivity with other instructors and staff, a primary component of a encouraging, building and maintaining a virtual PLC. The first question asked how effective BISConnect was in connecting the adjuncts with other instructors and staff (Table 4.27). The results of this question signified that 40.0% of the respondents had used BISConnect, but not to connect with others. In comparing these results, there was a decrease in the number of respondents that stated they had no need to connect with other adjunct instructors, with 32.0% of the participants from Survey Questionnaire #1 stating they had no need to connect with other adjunct instructors (Table 4.11) to 6.7% of the respondents in Survey Questionnaire #2. In Survey Questionnaire #1, 16.0% of the respondents indicated that they used the MNTC Adjunct Intranet website to connect with other adjunct instructors, compared to 40.0% of the respondents who connect with other adjunct instructors through BISConnect.

Table 4.27

Survey Questionnaire #2, "How effective is BISConnect in 'connecting' you with other adjunct instructors and staff?"

Effectiveness of BISConnect in connecting with adjunct instructors / staff	Frequency	Percent
BISConnect used to frequently to connect with others	1	3.3%
BISConnect used occasionally to connect with others	11	36.7%
Use BISConnect, but not to connect with others	12	40.0%
Do not use BISConnect	4	13.3%
Have no need to connect with others	2	6.7%
TOTAL	30	100.0%

Although data from Survey Questionnaire #2 showed an increase in the use of BISConnect to connect participants to other adjunct instructors, 10 of the 11 respondents who answered the second question were not able to articulate an answer for

the question that asked them to explain how they used BISConnect to make this connection. Some responses indicated that they used BISConnect to look up email or telephone numbers of other instructors or staff, while others provided statements that did not relate to connecting with others, such as, "ASSET Certification," "If I cannot reach the coordinator, I leave a message," and "I know how to connect with (MNTC Professional Development Coordinator)." Only one respondent's answer indicated a true connection to other adjunct staff by indicating they used forums (which are discussion boards within a website) for this purpose. The answers indicated that the majority of the participants equated 'contacting' with 'connecting.'

Recommendations

In following the continuous improvement process of Deming' (1982) Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, Survey Questionnaire #2 ended the survey with questions that asked the participants for their recommendations for improvement to BISConnect. Three open-ended questions were asked for the purpose of continuous improvement. The first question asked the participants to identify what would make BISConnect easier for them to use. Two themes emerged from the 14 responses received on this question: (a) site design / navigation, and (b) instructions on use.

The first theme that emerged was the navigation of the site. Comments from respondents indicated that, "[t]he layout is hard for me to navigate, so improving the navigation would be helpful." Other comments supported this by stating, "[n]ot sure, I think it has to do with navigation," and "need a different format." One respondent highlighted a potential reason why participants might have trouble with the design or

navigation by writing, “I would like a better layout, but it might be fine if I used it more frequently.”

The second theme was closely related to the first: the need for BISConnect instructions. Respondents commented, “(I need) instructions for use,” and “printed baby steps on how to use the site would be helpful.” Another participant wrote, “I think it is easy to use, but maybe instructions might help others.” The two themes indicated BISConnect still had room for improvement to make it more user-friendly.

Comparative Data: Adjunct Instructor Focus Group

A focus group comprised of nine volunteer adjunct instructors selected from a random sample of 20 potential participants. The focus group was facilitated by the MNTC Professional Development Coordinator and lasted approximately two hours. Six questions were asked of the focus group participants. The data collected from these questions were collected and used for comparative analysis in providing results for the study’s research questions.

Focus Group Question #1: How has BISConnected assisted you, or not assisted you, in professional development and instructional support?

The first question asked how BISConnect had assisted them as an instructor. The focus group participants gave multiple responses. The didactic nature of the answers given on this question lent itself to flat or non-hierarchical coding (Table 4.28). The respondents became engaged in providing a listing of all the support activities or opportunities that had been provided through BISConnect. Although the question focused on assistance specifically offered for professional development and

instructional support, four different categories or themes of support emerged from the data: (a) operational, (b) instructional, (c) professional development, and (d) relational.

Table 4.28

Focus Group – Support Question

Question #1	Types of Support	Responses from Focus Group Participants
How has BISConnected assisted you, or not assisted you, in professional development and instructional support?	Operational	• Check enrollment reports • Access to my time sheets • Find forms • Post my calendar for my supervisor • See school news and updates
	Instructional	• Watch instructional videos • Ideas for games and ice breakers • Lesson plan template • Classroom activity ideas • Access to curriculum and activities
	Professional Development	• Emergency orientations and training (example - intruder alerts) • Link to outside PD resources • See the calendar of PD classes • Read articles that are linked
	Relational	• Feel connected to / part of school • Communicate with other instructors (through forums) • Send emails to other adjuncts • Connect with my supervisor

Focus Group Question#2: Explain your understanding of a Professional Learning Community.

The development of a professional community is the foundational step in forming a PLC. Little (2006) describes a professional community as, "close relationships among teachers as professional colleagues, usually with the implications that these relationships are oriented toward teacher learning and professional development" (p. 15). The second question asked the participants to explain their

understanding of a professional learning community. This question received fewer responses from the participants than the first question; however, included in the comments were statements that supported their overall understanding of the concept of professional community as described by Little (2006). Two main themes emerged from this question: 1) increased collegiality, and 2) professional growth (Table 4.29).

Collegiality within education can be defined as the willingness of teachers to associate or cooperate with other teachers (Barth, 2006). One of the principal components of a PLC is collaboration (DuFour, 2003). While collaboration of teachers is the goal, collegiality is the beginning of growing a culture of collaboration. Barth (2006) offers an explanation of the importance of collegiality within a school by making the assertion, "[t]he nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else" (p. 8). By building collegiality among teachers, the stage is set for collaboration to grow. The prominent theme of increased collegiality was supported by the statement of Participant B:

> I am not sure this is right, but I think a professional learning community is where we can talk and email with each other and find out what the other instructors are doing. I mean, well … it is like I have someone else I can contact to see how they handle a certain situation or something like that. I can learn from them.

Other participants agreed, stressing the importance of this collegiality in providing the support of other instructors:

> Not just that, but we can also learn how to be a better teacher through the classes that (Professional Development Coordinator) is giving. I also really feel like I am a part of a group instead of being by myself in the classroom. Does that make us a professional learning community? I know other instructors now. I have called (name of instructor) to see what he did when he had a problem with a student or I can call (Professional Development Coordinator) and she can help me, too. I just don't feel as alone anymore. (Participant G)

The responses from the participants indicated that the implementation of BISConnect had made a positive impact on collegiality among the adjunct instructors. Participants continued to provide descriptions of a PLC, describing how they now had, "…other instructors I can call to ask questions" or how they could, "…work with other teachers to solve problems."

In addition to collegiality, the second theme that surfaced from this question was professional growth. Professional development or growth of instructors has been identified as one of the most important factors in improving schools and increasing student performance (Desimone, 2009). Participant C explained his attitude toward professional growth as he stated:

> I think I am part of the learning community. I use to not take any classes offered (by MNTC-BIS) to help me teach. Now I have taken three and plan to take more next semester. I guess I didn't think about how I taught the class. I thought if I taught the students how to use a computer I was doing a good job. Man, I think back now on how I use to teach and, well … I just could have done better.

A common remark by the focus group participants was they believed taking advantages of professional development activities and opportunities had a positive impact on their classes and students. Their comments indicated that their understanding of a PLC was linked to their professional growth resulting in a higher quality of their instruction. Participant E summed up this feeling by saying:

> I feel like being a learning community means we are all trying to get better together, you know. We talk to each other and all, but we also try to get better by taking classes and learning new things we can use in our classes.

Although the focus group participants were not able to articulate the actual description or definition of a PLC, they were able to identify the benefits they had received through participation in BISConnect.

Table 4.29

Focus Group Question #2: Understanding of a PLC

Question #2	Theme	Responses from Focus Group Participants
Explain your understanding of a Professional Learning Community.	Collegiality	• Communicate with each other; contact other instructors • Feel like part of a group • Learn from other teacher • Can ask other instructors for advice/help • Feel part of a community • Teachers work together to be better teachers
	Professional Growth	• Take professional development classes • Look for ways to be a better teacher • Get better by learning new skills • (Teachers) talk together about new things they have learned

Focus Group Question #3: How has BISConnect assisted, or not assisted, in connecting you with other staff and instructors in order to build this community?

Following the discussion about the participants' understanding of a professional learning community, the next question delved deeper to discover the participants' perception as to whether BISConnect had assisted or not assisted in building a community. The responses to the previous question had pointed to the benefits they had identified which were associated with BISConnect. With this question, however, the focus narrowed to community. Although the participants had supported BISConnect and had listed the benefits they had received through this online PLC, the responses to this question underscored the fact that community had never really developed. Two themes emerged from this question that made this point clear: (a) no connection, and (b) limited connection (Table 4.30).

The participants struggled with their answers. There were several responses that indicated they used tools within BISConnect to communicate with other adjunct instructors and staff, such as, "I send emails to teachers and my supervisor through BISConnect." or, "I read the forums to find out what other instructors are doing." Although this supported communication, it did not indicate a community had developed. Other participants were more straight-forward as they replied there was not a community built through BISConnect. Participant G's response was indicative of this:

> Honestly, I don't have the time to spend … to write anything – or read the forums. I work a full-time job then come here to teach two, sometimes four, nights a week. I just don't have time.

This response, along with the other participants who stated they had little time to connect with others, supported the initial scholarship about adjunct instructors that indicated the need for this study. A primary challenge in providing professional development opportunities to adjunct instructors members is the time constraints they face (Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Wallin, 2005), even with the flexibility afforded by intra-institutional virtual professional learning and community building platforms. Although participants throughout the focus group had identified the need for and use of professional development and instructional support, they had not identified the need or time to participate in a PLC.

Table 4.30

Focus Group Question #3: BISConnect in Building Community

Question #3	Theme	Responses from Focus Group Participants
How has BISConnect assisted, or not assisted, in connecting you with other staff and instructors in order to build this community?	No Connection	• Not really connected – I read forum discussion sometimes, but I don't post • Really hasn't affected my communications • Not much • Don't have time to connect with others – I have a full-time job • Not sure how we can connect besides email • I read forums, but interactions? Really none
	Limited Connection	• BISConnect makes me feel like part of the loop; not alone • I write to people on their forums • I email other instructors and my supervisor through BISConnect • Gives me a way to communicate ideas with other instructors • Learn what other instructors are doing • I send people message through it (BISConnect)

Focus Group Question #4: Have there been new strategies and changes you have identified within MNTC that are related to the implementation of BISConnect?

When asked about new strategies and changes the participants had identified that they related to the implementation of BISConnect, there several responses. With the responses, the energy and passion contained within the responses were evident. Participant F explained the changes she had identified since BISConnect had been implemented:

> I now feel like a part of Moore Norman – not just breezing in on a Saturday to teach my class. I have been a teacher here for over 10 years and I can tell you, this is a change. It is a real change – and I hope it keeps going!

As participants began to discuss the changes they had identified, four themes emerged: (a) instructional focus, (b) professional development focus, (c) learner focus, and (d) connection with MNTC. Their comments indicated they had indeed experienced or noticed a change within MNTC since the implementation of BISConnect. More professional development opportunities and instructional support resources were now available to them. The participants were cognizant that these resources were in place for them, but had the ultimate purpose of increased student learning. According to participants, BISConnect had provided tools they were using to increase the quality of their instruction for their students. Participant H explained this by reporting:

> My evaluations and hand-outs are on BISConnect and I really – when I first got it set up – I used it about every day. Use to, they just handed me a book and showed me the room. I wasn't really sure what I was supposed to teach or what I was supposed to do. That meant I didn't give the students the best instruction

at times. And they could tell. That is all different now. I feel more in control, more prepared and, well, professional.

The strategies and changes within MNTC the participants identified had benefits to them as well as the students. With these changes, the participants indicated a stronger bond with MNTC; however, the responses of these participants did not include the development of a community where stronger forms of social capital were realized.

Table 4.31

Focus Group Question #4: New Strategies and Changes within MNTC

Question #4	Theme	Responses from Focus Group Participants
Have there been new strategies and changes you have identified within MNTC that are related to the implementation of BISConnect?	Instructional Focus	• Online access to curriculum • Instructional philosophy • Supervisor communicates with me and helps with lesson planning • Sandboxes used for online classroom activities
	Professional Development Focus	• Frequent articles and links to videos that help us grow as teachers • We have been taught how to do lesson plans for our classes • Supervisor recommends professional development opportunities • Short video clips available online when we need them
	Learner Focus	• We talk a lot about student learning instead of just teaching • We have new (classroom) tools to help individual students • Follow-up with students after they complete the class • Encouraged to call students when they are not in class
	Connection with MNTC	• Feel a part of Moore Norman • Now have Christmas parties and other activities for Adjunct Faculty • Treated like part of a team instead of just an adjunct

Focus Group Question #5: Have you noticed changes within MNTC-BIS, as an organization, in terms of the value of professional development and instructional support? Do you think these changes are related, or not related, to BISConnect?

A common response from the participants throughout the focus group was the identified increase in professional development opportunities and instructional support for adjunct instructors. This question reinforced this as well. The participants related the addition of professional development opportunities and increased instructional support offered through BISConnect as MNTC's increased value of both. All the responses from the participants credited BISConnect with the changes. The two themes that emerged from the responses did not answer the questions if there was a change in value or even if BISConnect was the impetus for the change. Instead, the themes that emerged identified the two categories in which the participants had noticed the change: (a) with staff, and (b) with the organization (Table 4.32). Participants reported that the increased professional development and instructional support in which they now had access began with BISConnect and indicated a change within organizational thinking. Participant B described this change as she stated:

> We have always been told we could take classes, you know, the ones in the catalog. But now we have classes that (Professional Development Coordinator) puts together just for us. These (classes) are offered at night and on the weekend when we can take them. And we have the classroom activities on it (BISConnect) that we can use with our classes. This is all new since BISConnect started.

Other participants shared how they had noticed a change in the organization through increased support to adjunct instructors, such as, "[c]urriculum is now available online, which we have never had before." Another participant connected this change with benefits to students, as he reported that his students now had, "online resources through BISConnect to help them continue learning outside the classroom." It was clear from the responses that the participants had identified definite changes within MNTC-BIS.

Participants also reported changes in their supervisor. One participant recounted how her supervisor had become more engaged with the classes and students. "My supervisor now comes to see me in my classes and spends time talking with students." Another participant shared how, "[m]y supervisor talks … about instructional philosophy during our meetings." Along with the organizational change, the supervisor attitudes and changes had been just as noticeable to the participants.

Table 4.32

Focus Group Question #5: Noticed Changes in MNTC-BIS

Question #5	Theme	Responses from Focus Group Participants
Have you noticed changes within MNTC-BIS, as an organization n, in terms of the value of professional development and instructional support? Do you think these changes are related, or not related, to BISConnect?	Changes with Staff	• Supervisor is more visible with my classes and students • Supervisor shares evaluation results with me • Administration is acting on suggestions for changes/improvements • Supervisor recommends classes for me to take for improvement
	Changes with Organization	• More Professional Development classes / opportunities developed just for Adjunct Instructors • Classroom tools (ice breakers, games, etc.) are available to us • Curriculum being available online – great support! • Online help for students is now offered • Listing of books and articles to read

Focus Group Question #6: What are your perspectives and attitudes pertaining to professional learning and seeking instructional support either with or without BISConnect?

The last question asked in the focus group had the purpose of investigating the participants' perspectives and attitudes with regard to professional learning and instructional support with or without BISConnect. Emergent themes were initially difficult to identify in the responses to this question, but after reading and subsequently coding the transcript multiple times, three categories surfaced: (a) attitude about professional development, and (b) attitude about instructional support, and (c) change in expectations.

All participants reinforced their commitment to professional development and their appreciation for the instructional support tools that were embedded within BISConnect. Several of the participants recounted their experience as an adjunct instructor for MNTC-BIS prior to this change.

> I can't imagine going back to the way it was, to not having access to the tools and training we have now. That would be a real shame for our students, not just us (adjunct instructors). I sure hope that doesn't happen! (Participant A)

Other participants echoed this attitude, explaining, "I really depend on the tools on BISConnect now that I have used them" and expressing how they, "have really grown as a teacher because of the (professional development) classes I have taken."

As the participants reinforced their commitment to professional development and instructional support, the third theme surfaced. During the three years in which

BISConnect had been offered as a conduit for professional development and instructional support, the adjunct instructors had come to expect a higher level of services and support from MNTC-BIS than had been offered prior to BISConnect. The comment by Participant C represented this attitude:

> At first, I was surprised to find the classes and tools that are on BISConnect. Now that I use them, I just expect them to be there – and that they (MNTC-BIS) will keep adding more. I guess I can't imagine (MNTC) taking them away. That would hurt us (adjunct instructors) and our students.

The participants expressed their support for professional development and instructional support and had reinforced the desire and expectation that these would be continued.

Table 4.33

Focus Group Question #6: Perspective and Attitudes about Professional Learning.

Question #6	Theme	Responses from Focus Group Participants
What are your perspectives and attitudes pertaining to professional learning and seeking instructional support either with or without BISConnect?	Attitude about Professional Development	• Will keep learn more about teaching • Have grown as a teacher through classes • Want to take more classes • Interested in take different types of professional development (example – coaching) • Will take more classes this year
	Attitude about Instructional Support	• Have grown as an instructor • Classroom resources have helped me be a better teacher • Will continue to use new classroom tools and skills • Using online support for students have helped them learn
	Change in Expectations	• Expectations that the resources will continue • Want access to more tools and classes • Don't want to go back to the way it was (before BISConnect) • Know now what quality teaching means

Focus Group Data Summary

The responses collected through the focus group provided rich data that could assist in answering this study's research questions. The themes generated from the focus group questions maintained that the participants' perception was that professional development opportunities and activities and instructional support had increased since the implementation and enactment of BISConnect. They also noted a change in MNTC, including organizational changes as well as changes in the behavior and actions of staff. Participants also reported a greater sense of collegiality between adjunct instructors, and an environment that had a stronger focus on student learning. What the participants did not report, however, was the development of an interconnected community of knowledge sharing and building.

Comparative Data: Adjunct Instructor Professional Development Reports

One of the impetuses for the online PLC for adjunct instructors was to increase their access to and participation in professional development opportunities. The data from the adjunct instructor professional development reports showed a 56% increase in the percentage of adjunct instructors who participated in professional development classes from fiscal year 2009, which was before the implementation of BISConnect, to fiscal year 2010 (Table 4.34). This increasing trend in percentage of adjunct instructors who participated in professional development stabilized in fiscal years 2011 and 2012. In addition to an increase in adjunct instructors participating in professional development, the total hours of professional development completed by adjunct instructors continued to be higher than fiscal year 2009. From fiscal year 2009 to fiscal year 2010, the number of professional development hours increased by 62%. This

trend, although not as dramatic, also continued during fiscal years 2011 and 2012. The adjunct instructor professional development reports showed that there was a marked increase in professional development activity that coincided with the implementation and enactment of BISConnect.

Table 4.34

Adjunct Instructor Professional Development Reports

	FY 12	FY 11	FY 10	FY 09	FY 08
Total # Adjunct Instructors with active contracts	124	124	127	125	127
Total # Adjunct Instructors who participated in professional development	78	72	85	14	7
% of Adjunct Instructors who participated in professional development	63%	58%	67%	11%	6%
Total # hours of professional development completed by Adjunct Instructors	1426	1223	1393	529	124

Comparative Data: Website Usage Reports

The number of adjunct instructors accessing the websites (MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website and BISConnect) was an indicator of the use of the websites by the adjunct instructors, although these reports cannot be used to determine the value placed on these websites by the adjunct instructors. There was a 43% increase in the number of adjunct instructors who accessed BISConnect at least one time during the fiscal year from fiscal years 2009 to fiscal year 2010 (Table 4.35). There were no adjunct instructors who accessed the website 11 times or more during fiscal year 2009. In contrast, there were 74 adjunct instructors (58%) that accessed BISConnect 11 times or more during the fiscal year 2010, the first year of BISConnect. Subsequent years

since fiscal year 2009 have all had more than 50% of the adjunct instructors access the website 11 times or more during the fiscal year. This data indicates that there was a significant increase in adjunct instructors members who accessed BISConnect in fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012 than the MNT Adjunct Instructor Intranet website in fiscal year 2009.

Table 4.35

Website Usage Reports

	FY 12	FY 11	FY 10	FY 09
Total # Adjunct Instructors with active contracts	124	124	127	125
# / % of Adjunct Instructors who has accessed the website once with the fiscal year	97 / 78%	89 / 72%	92 / 72%	36 / 29%
# / % of Adjunct Instructors who accessed the website 2-5 times during the fiscal year	88 / 71%	76 / 61%	82 / 65%	21 / 17%
# / % Adjunct Instructors who accessed the website 6-10 times during the fiscal year	83 / 67%	71 / 57%	79 / 62%	12 / 10%
# / % Adjunct Instructors who accessed the web site 11+ times during the fiscal year	79 / 64%	63 / 51%	74 / 58%	0 / 0%

Summary

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through two survey questionnaires, a focus group, adjunct instructor professional development reports, and website usage reports. The two types of data presented within this chapter were baseline and comparative data. The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings from the baseline data and to review and analyze the comparative data collected in order to answer the four research questions that guided this study. The interpretations of this data, along with the recommendations, will be presented in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEHIND THE SCENES: REFLEXIVITY THROUGH JOURNALING THE DUAL ROLE OF ADMINISTRATOR AND RESEARCHER

Introduction

Throughout the study, the researcher captured observations within a journal that were made in her role as an administrator. This chapter includes reflections from that journal, including two different insights that will assist the reader in better understanding this study. Both will be presented from the role of the administrator, not as the researcher. The first insight describes the process of designing and developing BISConnect, again as explained from the perspective of the administrator. The second insight provides a glimpse into the lessons learned as an administrator while going through the process of implementing and enacting the online PLC. The perspectives offered within this chapter serve the purpose of providing a glimpse into the experiences of an administrator who assumes the role of an internal action researcher for the purposes of organizational development.

The role of an insider action researcher has, as indicated in Chapter Three, both benefits as well as challenges. The challenges of role duality and role responsibility have the potential of placing see-through blinders on the researcher. You are cognizant that, as the researcher, you must maintain your focus on the study protocol; however, as an administrator, you can see outside the protocol, beyond the blinders that are in place to keep your focus steady. You have the peripheral knowledge or "sight" that is afforded an administrator, but not to an outsider researcher. To maintain integrity during the study, the insider action researcher must segregate in some way ("bracket") organizational knowledge and responsibilities from the research protocol. That can

result in the researcher having information that could affect the study, but cannot be considered because of the parameters or scope of the study. However, although it may not be considered, the 'behind the scenes' activities still can have a direct impact on the study. This chapter will explore this phenomenon and allow the researcher to step out of the study just long enough to use her administrator voice.

Building an Online PLC

The decision to repurpose the current MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet Website into an online PLC for adjunct instructors was not made without careful consideration. This would be a cultural change not only for the adjunct instructors, but for the MNTC-BIS staff as well. In the past, instructional quality had been a consideration, but now it would take a prominent role in our educational process and delivery. I was quite aware that the current culture of MNTC-BIS would not support a PLC. There was not a common vision or focus on student results. Instead, there was an organizational obsession with productivity, such as total number of hours and training and number of students served, and operational compliance to policies and procedures. With the focus centered on activities, little attention was being placed on the quality of education provided or the student success factors. Therefore, environmental preparation was the first mission to be accomplished.

Following the literature on professional communities (DuFour, 2003; Hord, 2003; Little, 1997, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), the administration and staff within MNTC-BIS began to create the environmental culture in which a PLC could develop by establishing a shared vision or purpose. This vision included a focus on the student and was accomplished through the development of an instructional philosophy

for MNTC-BIS. The instructional philosophy was the culmination of the input from staff and adjunct instructors. The instructional philosophy is:

> *We believe that the administration, staff, and instructors have the shared responsibility to provide our students with…*
>
> *… innovative course design and instruction*
>
> *… a safe, learner-centered environment*
>
> *… an authentic learning experience*

This instructional philosophy defined the expectations set for a quality educational experience for our students, as well as included the PLC philosophy of a learner-centered environment.

Once the vision was set, the next step was to determine the platform in which BISConnect would be housed. The existing MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website was located on the Internet as a simple website designed in Druple, a free, open-source content management system (CMS). BISConnect could take the same path and be designed as a website; however, MNTC-BIS had started to move toward online course offerings to meet the rising demand of students and situating BISConnect on Moodle (a free, open-source learning management system with the purpose of producing modular internet-based courses that support a modern social constructivist pedagogy), which was the learning management system (LMS) selected for our online courses. This would offer the introduction to online learning for our adjunct instructors and familiarize them with the LMS. The decision was made to house BISConnect within the Moodle LMS.

Two members of the MNTC-BIS team were selected as the technical administrators to design and oversee the BISConnect site. The administrators, along

with these team members, reviewed the results from Survey Questionnaire #1 and studied the responses from adjunct instructor participants regarding what they identified as important. The contents of BISConnect were then designed to meet the requests, requirements, and comments provided by participants of this survey within the framework of the MNTC-BIS instructional philosophy. In addition, BISConnect included the communication tools that were needed to support a community, such as forums, a chat room, and sandboxes for the adjunct instructors to build their webpage. These communication tools set the stage for the primary difference between BISConnect and the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website and provided the scaffolding for the PLC.

Within three months, the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet Website had been repurposed into the new BISConnect and was ready for use by both staff and adjunct instructors. Emails were sent to staff and adjunct instructors to encourage them to 'check out' BISConnect. The instrument for the online PLC was ready. We were ready to move forward in determining if the online PLC could positively affect the professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors.

Lessons Learned

Journaling through this study allowed me to reflect on the journey and capture lessons learned, not just concentrate on the results. Within the journal, I highlighted five lessons that I considered to be important. Below are these lessons as related from an administrator's perspective.

One can never over-communicate the vision

One of the first lessons I learned through this journey is that one cannot over-communicate the vision or mission of a project. As the administrative leader who was responsible for this transformational journey, I reinforced the vision with the staff, especially those who would be administering the implementation process. For over a year, I communicated the vision through meetings, emails, and training sessions to all staff. It was posted on BISConnect. It was my belief that the vision was well communicated and understood and had become engrained into the culture, so it no longer was afforded the prominence it first had. I soon found that initial communication of a vision is not enough; instead, the emphasis on and communication about the vision can never end.

The first year of BISConnect, the results were positive. The adjunct instructors were active within the forums; professional development activities for both staff and adjunct instructors rose significantly from the year before; instructional support tools were being accessed by adjunct instructors and implemented within their classes. It initially appeared that the online PLC was in place and functional. The results of the second year, however, told another story. There was a drop in both forum participation and professional development activities by the adjunct instructors. Staff's commitment began to migrate back to an attitude of teaching versus student learning. I was faced with the reality that culture can revert back to what was more comfortable unless it is given continuous attention.

Set parameters as you empower

Several times during this project, I found that BISConnect had been redirected from its originally intended purpose. The first time I discovered this was within the first year of BISConnect. Forums had been identified as the primary community building tool on BISConnect. With the initial development of BISConnect, there were three forums: one for communications about instruction, one for professional development, and one for new course ideas. With the project still in its initial stage, I began to observe a rapid increase in the different types of forums. The number of forums soon became overwhelming to both staff and adjunct instructors. It was time consuming and confusing to keep up with so many different conversations. This change, although meant by well-meaning staff to increase the lines of communication, was impeding the community environment. Adjunct instructors and staff soon had too many choices, and the 'noise' of all the forums soon quieted the community, which was still in a developmental stage. Redirection was quickly put in place with the purpose to return BISConnect to its original state with only three forums. However, the change had taken a toll on the community, and the initial level of activity within the forums never returned.

Within months, another well-intended change occurred; BISConnect was given a new look, a redesign of the website. The revamp changed not only the look, but the layout. We had spent almost a year acclimating adjunct staff member to the BISConnect site, and now they were faced with a site they no longer recognized. One of the site's technical administrators designed the 'facelift' to keep it fresh and to prevent a static-looking site. What was not considered, though, was the impact this

change would have on the community. The change was structured to place emphasis on the site information, not encourage the community. The BISConnect site was once more redirected; however, not before creating confusion with the adjunct instructors. This was confirmed when we administered Survey Questionnaire #2 and identified that adjunct instructors were not able to find the classroom resources they had previously used.

As the administrator overseeing this endeavor, I had failed to set the boundaries that would direct the BISConnect site's administration. I had assumed that the staff providing the technical support had absorbed the training and embraced the concept of a PLC. I had empowered these staff members without defining parameters that included the 'when; or 'how' changes to the site were to be made. After this change, I corrected the root cause of the problem by delineating the process for any changes on BISConnect, something I realized should have taken place at inception.

One cannot force a community

The greatest 'ah-ha' for me, as the lead administrator, was that the adjunct instructors never took control or 'owned' the PLC. The administration and staff had worked hard to create an online environment that could support a community; however, the community did not mature. The feedback from the surveys and the focus group confirmed that, while they valued BISConnect as a communication venue and resource repository, they did not have the desire to nurture a community. It became evident that one cannot force a community to be formed. We could till the environment to make it successful; we provided the seeds and soil (resources) needed, but it was ultimately up to the adjunct instructors to tend the community, to make it either grow or let it wither

away and die. We could not find the magic solution to spark the interest in the adjunct instructors to identify and grasp the need to form a community. Therefore, our PLC online community did not take root and grow into a fruitful venture. Instead, it was used as a repository for information and resources.

During the first year, adjunct instructors were encourage and enticed into participating in the PLC. As we identified their interest and involvement beginning to wane after the first year, persuasion turned to pressure. Staff members were given directives to participate in the community with the purpose of creating more interest in the community by adjunct instructors. Forced participation to be part of the community, however, does not foster a viable community. Instead, it only resulted in mandated postings or viewing, not a connection to others or a building of a sense of community. Again, one cannot force a community. To become a true, sustainable community, there needs to be an organic evolution of individuals who have a desire to be a part of the community, to see it grow and prosper. One cannot sustain a community where members are pressured or obliged into participation. The carrots and sticks of rewards and punishment used in past practices are no longer effective methods of engaging employees (Pink, 2009), and this practice is especially not successful in building a community. A true community can only exist when the participants within the community have a desire to be a part and identify benefits from being a community member.

The attitude of the administrative staff is reflected in the behavior of the instructor

Some of the staff's commitment was less than passionate about not only implementing a PLC, but the vision change itself. Instead of becoming a resource that

was valued and viewed as important, BISConnect involvement became a chore or a 'have-to-do,' so it was infrequently accessed by these staff members. This apathy was reflective in the attitudes and actions of the adjunct instructional members supervised by these staff members. Reviewing individual adjunct instructors' activities, such as contributing to BISConnect, participating in professional development opportunities, and accessing instructional support activities, a trend appeared which was linked to the staff supervisor. The adjunct instructors who were supervised by staff members who did not subscribe to the concept of the PLC did not participate in these activities. However, adjunct instructors who reported to staff members that were committed to the change and the new vision had a higher rate of participation in the activities. This phenomenon supported the need to start from the top in implementing changes, to make sure all administrators are on-board and supportive as well as preparation to mitigate the impact that can occur when they are not.

The vision was painted and the training, both individual and group, was provided to support this vision. However, there were still individuals who did not embrace the change, who were more interested in business as usual than making the leap toward an environment that focused on the students and their success. It became clear that we would be working against a faction that had no intention of accepting the vision set.

Sometimes the outcome can be achieved without meeting the goal

We were clear with the intended goal for BISConnect to create a community of learners, but the intent of creating a community of learners was to achieve an outcome of increased professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors.

Although we did not accomplish the defined goal, we had accomplished the purposed outcome. Adjunct instructors began to take advantage of professional development activities. The types of professional development opportunities were increased to keep up with the demand, such as one-on-one coaching for adjunct instructors and access to online just-in-time video clips to meet immediate needs. This new awareness of professional development created an excitement when the adjunct instructors began to identify they could use the techniques and skills learned to make their teaching more effective to achieve student success.

Instructional support had also increased. The adjunct instructors had indicated in both the second survey questionnaire and through the focus group that they were now accessing instructional support tools through BISConnect and integrating these tools within their classes. Supervisors were reporting classroom observations of new instructional technology and tools being used by adjunct instructors. End-of-class evaluations were making positive references about activities and instructional tools that had been used in their classes. An example of this was the cake decorating class that incorporated an online feature that gave students access to instructional videos at home that could be used to provide scaffolding for novice students as they practiced new skills learned in the classroom. The woodworking class began including free memberships to an online professional woodworking association for the students so they could build relationships with and continue learning from seasoned professionals. Sandboxes were created within BISConnect so adjunct instructors could customize online class features to support and increase their students' learning. The new

instructional support opportunities available for adjunct instructors within BISConnect were assimilated into the way they delivered their training.

Although the adjunct instructors had not embraced the idea of joining the online PLC as an active participant, they had welcomed the opportunities they had been offered for professional development and instructional support. The results of this study may indicate that the online PLC was not achieved; however, I can honestly report as an administrator that we experienced a positive step toward our endeavor to focus on providing a learning environment that placed the highest emphasis on student learning. We had met the outcome desired.

Final Thoughts

What I found in participating as an insider administrator leading an action research study within my organization is wearing both hats, one as an administrator and one as a researcher, can be difficult at times. As the study progressed, there were times when the roles clashed. The administrator had to consider the best for the organization, while the researcher had to remain true to the study. The administrator had knowledge the researcher could not consider. The researcher would have to draw empirically-informed conclusions based upon the questions driving the study, while the administrator celebrated success in accomplishing the primary purpose that instigated the study in the first place. By playing both roles, I was provided the rare opportunity to see beyond the limitation set by either position; to discover results as a researcher while having the knowledge privy to an administrator of the behind-the-scenes impact. Although challenging at times, it was still the best of both worlds.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The origination of the concept of PLCs, as recognized today, stems back to late 1980 when the benefits of teacher collaboration were identified by researchers as an effective form of professional development (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Since that time, teacher and administrator collaboration continues to be recognized as effective staff development that has the potential for improving student learning (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards', 2007; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; National Staff Development Council, 2001). Both empirical and theoretical studies have revealed that PLCs have the potential to make an improvement in both the school culture as well as student learning (DuFour et al., 2008; Eaker & Keating, 2009; Jaquith et al., 2010; Reyes et al., 1999). This underscores the importance of studies, such as this one, to investigate the implementation of PLCs in different settings and using different venues. The data and findings presented through continued research add to a scholarship and empirical base in order to assist us in the understanding the complexities of implementing PLCs.

This chapter outlines the results and findings from an insider action research study that was conducted to investigate the feasibility of developing a internet-based platform to support a viable professional learning community designed for the purpose of providing professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors. The results are derived from the cumulative qualitative and quantitative data gathered from surveys, website usage reports, focus group, adjunct instructor professional

development reports, and observations made by the researcher and captured within a journal. Findings are interpreted within this chapter with implications for both theory and practice.

Limitations

There were several limitations identified that must be considered when determining the contributions of this study to educational research and practice. The first limitation is the scope of the study, which was confined to data collection within one post-secondary career and technology school. This limitation affects the generalization or transferability of these results to other educational organizations (Cresswell, 2009). It was the intent of the researcher, however, to provide insight into the journey of one school's use of technology to create and develop a virtual PLC for its adjunct instructors, not to generalize findings to other settings.

Another limitation is the awareness that adjunct instructors who participated in the survey questionnaires were volunteers rather than a random sample of the population. In addition, not all of the participants who volunteered to complete the survey questionnaires answered every question. Another limitation was the compilation of the BISConnect usage reports, which represented all adjunct instructors but did not disaggregate the data to the individual instructor level.

Although professional development reports were inclusive of all adjunct instructors, another limitation was the report did not take into account the motivation or desire of the adjunct instructors who participated in the professional development activities. This limitation was considered when multiple instruments for data collection included questions regarding professional development. The quantitative and

qualitative data collected through these questions provided a better understanding of the attitudes and perspectives of the adjunct instructors who participated in the survey questionnaires and the focus group with regard to professional development.

One limitation was specific to the survey questionnaires. Questions were designed by the administration of MNTC-BIS and were worded to achieve trending data between the first two survey questionnaires and future survey questionnaires that will be administered in coming years; therefore, the questions asked were similar in nature and did not allow the researcher to tailor specific sets of questions that would allow for the measurement of particular social or psychological constructs.

The last limitation is derived from the nature of an insider action research study. As the researcher is also an administrator within the school and had administrative oversight of the development and promotion of the online PLC, BISConnect, the very nature of role overlap between administrator and researcher could inadvertently jeopardize the veracity of data collection, the reporting of findings, and related interpretations, although every effort was made to limit such a distortion. Recognizing this as a potential problem, the researcher implemented practices to address the issue of role duality (Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007). Some of the activities employed to attenuate this limitation included using multiple data collection methods, using extant data as baseline data, and using of another staff member to facilitate the focus group.

Interpretation of Results

The review and analysis of data sources provided the input needed in order to answer the research questions (Appendix J). Table 6.1 describes the quantitative and qualitative data sources that were used in answering the research questions. The

triangulation of these data are used to strengthen the overall trustworthiness of the study and to lessen researcher bias that can be associated with insider action research studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Patton (1990) described the benefit of data triangulation to a study by writing, "[o]ne important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches" (p. 187).

Table 6.1

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

Research Question	Data Source
1. How well does the online, interactive venue support, or not support, the development of a viable PLC for the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support?	• Survey Questionnaire #1 • Survey Questionnaire #2 • Focus Group • Researcher's Journal • Website usage report • Professional development reports for adjunct instructors
2. What challenges were identified by MNTC-BIS in the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC?	• Survey Questionnaire #2 • Focus Group • Researcher's Journal
3. What strategies and changes occurred with MNTC-BIS that were directly related to the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC over time?	• Focus Group • Researcher's Journal • Professional development reports for adjunct instructors
4. What were the organizational and professional cultural changes in which professional development and instructional support was valued by staff and adjunct instructors?	• Survey Questionnaire #1 • Survey Questionnaire #2 • Focus Group • Professional development reports for adjunct instructors • Researcher's Journal

Research Questions 1: How well does the online, interactive venue support, or not support, the development of a viable PLC for the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support? To answer this question, the question was dissected into three areas of consideration: (a) the efficacy of the online venue, (b) the establishment of a virtual PLC, and (c) the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support. The online placement of BISConnect was proven to be a viable venue for the deployment of professional development opportunities and instructional support tools. The results from the survey questionnaires and the focus group indicated that the adjunct instructors found the online venue to be convenient for them. The Internet based venue allowed adjunct instructors to access BISConnect on their time and at their convenience. The website usage reports also indicated a significant increase in usage from the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website to BISConnect. This data supported the online venue for the PLC.

The data, however, were inconclusive, at best, in determining if an online venue was effective in supporting an organizationally-bound PLC, since a viable PLC was not able to be sustained during the three year study. The MNTC-BIS adjunct instructors indicated through data and actions that they did not have the time or identify the importance of participating in a PLC. These reasons are supported by the scholarship on adjunct instructors. Leslie and Gappa (2002) identify that adjunct instructors may have the desire to teach, but lack the time and interest in participating in organized activities for professional development. The comments from survey questionnaires and from the adjunct instructor focus group corroborate this, as they indicate the adjunct

instructors members did not see the importance of connecting with other adjunct instructors. Limited time is also a common theme that appeared when asked about participation in the PLC.

What both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated was that the adjunct instructors valued BISConnect as a repository for resources, such as professional development and instructional support. The on-going interaction and collaboration that comprises a PLC did not meet instructors' needs as they perceived them. The adjunct instructors reported that they were learning and growing as instructors because of the resources that were provided through BISConnect. The PLC, however, was not the stimulus to do this. Instead, the adjunct instructors wanted assigned, although infrequent, face-to-face interactions with other adjunct instructors and resources that were easily accessible and pertinent to their immediate needs. This preference for face-to-face interaction and the exchange of knowledge and resources directed to immediate professional needs indicated a lack of interest in or understanding of the need to develop an on-going learning community. Building this type of a community requires a higher level of leadership assumed by instructors or teachers (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001; Murray, 2009; Whitford & Wood, 2010). There appeared to be hesitancy with the adjunct instructors in accepting this type of leadership role.

Although the professional community did not formulate, qualitative and quantitative data from data sources reported that instructors had found the professional development and instructional support opportunities within BISConnect to be of value. The professional development reports for adjunct instructors noted a significant increase in adjunct instructors participating in professional development activities as well as total

number of hours of professional development with the implementation of BISConnect. There was also a 30% increase reported from participants in Survey Questionnaire #1 to Survey Questionnaire #2 of BISConnect assisting them in identifying professional development activities. This data showed a correlation between the implementation of BISConnect and the increase in the perceived value of and participation in professional development activities.

Research Question 2: What challenges were identified by MNTC-BIS in the implementation and enactment for the purported online PLC? One of the primary challenges that emerged from the study was the transfer of ownership of the online PLC, BISConnect, from administration to the adjunct instructors. The data indicated a lack of interest of the adjunct instructors in being a part of this online community. One of the impetuses for implementing an online PLC was for the adjunct instructors to have an outlet to grow professionally through connecting with other instructors. The adjunct instructors, however, did not subscribe to the idea of joining a community that would focus on teaching or education. While they were committed to providing quality instruction, it was clear that their position as adjunct instructors influenced the fact that they had other priorities and interests. Several attempts to increase or entice their involvement met with failure. This reinforced the scholarship that adjunct instructors many times do not identify themselves as professional teachers; instead, their identity is in their primary occupation or their status as part-time (Leslie & Gappa, 202; Rifkin, 2000; Wallin, 2004). Therefore, they showed little interest in being involved in a community centered on a profession in which they do not relate (Grossman et al., 2001).

Another challenge that was identified through the researcher's journal was the resistance of some of the staff with the cultural change that took place through the implementation of the online PLC. One of the significant changes was a new focus on student data. A core principle espoused by DuFour (2003; 2004) was a focus on student results. This principle proved to be challenging, not because the measurements were hard to define or the data hard to collect; instead, it was because of a culture that was difficult to change. Productivity measurements had been the focal data prior to BISConnect. These data included total number of students served, hours of training and education provided, and other generic data that measured output, not outcomes. With the implementation of the PLC, these measurements had changed from productivity to student-centered data such as student completion rates, certification and licensing pass rates, and student evaluation data of courses and instructors. This change required a shift in priorities from operational mechanics to student-focused success. This emphasizes one of the challenges of implementing a PLC as described by Eaker and Keating (2009). Staff resistance to change the current culture to focus on student achievement is a potential roadblock to implementation (DuFour, 2003; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Although this resistance was not wide-spread throughout MNTC-BIS, staff members were identified who did not embrace this new cultural change. This underscored the importance organizational learning plays when implementing a PLC.

Research Question 3: What strategies and changes occurred with MNTC-BIS that were directly related to the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC over time? The implementation and enactment of BISConnect resulted in several observable transformations with MNTC-BIS. Adjunct instructors participating in the

focus group reported one change they identified was an increase in organizational value and emphasis on professional development and instructional support. This increase in organizational importance was then translated into more opportunities and activities available for adjunct instructors.

A second change identified by participants was an increase in supervisory staff involvement and attitudes toward professional development as well as the organizational vision and information. Participants identified these changes as staff attending classes and interacting with students and instructors more frequently. The data indicated that some supervisors were talking about the instructional philosophy in instructional meetings as well. The adjunct instructors reported that this change resulted in their feeling more connected to the organization. Drake (1984) identified that what many professional development programs for adjunct instructors lack is the institutional information and support that connects these instructors members to the organization. BISConnect provided this institutional connection by including the information and support from MNTC-BIS while also providing professional development opportunities and activities. It is through connectivity to the educational organizations that adjunct instructors gain a stronger understanding of the institution's mission and goals, thus providing the context in which they can focus their instruction (Roueche et al., 1995).

Another change identified through the data was an increase in the participation of adjunct instructors in professional development activities and opportunities. The online venue of BISConnect provided the opportunity for accessibility and flexibility for the adjunct instructors, which has been identified as one of the primary roadblocks

that prevent this population from accessing professional development opportunities (Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Rifkin, 2000). The increased participation, therefore, reset the organizational awareness and expectation that adjunct instructors would participate in professional development and challenged the organization to continue to offer more relevant and accessible opportunities and activities for adjunct instructors. This culture shift within MNTC-BIS created a new norm with regard to professional development.

The comradeship felt by adjunct instructors was the last change identified. The responses from the focus group pointed to the transformation of adjunct instructors from feeling disconnected to feeling like they were part of an instructional team. This was identified through the focus group as collegiality. The core principle of a collaborative culture described as important by DuFour (2003; 2004) was designed to be achieved through BISConnect by forums and other interactive opportunities; however, the data suggested collegiality was the highest level of interaction that was achieve during the three years of this study. DuFour (2003; 2004) described collaboration as the environment designed to encourage on-going interactions between staff, instructors, and administrators. Collegiality, in contrast, is a cooperative relationship between colleagues (Jarzabkowski, 2002; Little, 1999). While collaboration was the initial goal for BISConnect, the ability to achieve collegiality established the foundation for social capital identified as important for instructors and student success (Mulford, 2007; Resnick, 2010).

Research Question 4: What were the organizational and professional cultural changes in which professional development and instructional support were valued by staff and adjunct instructors? One of the first cultural changes that was attributed

to the implementation and enactment of BISConnect was the incorporation of an instructional vision which was in the form of an instructional philosophy. The PLC model presented by DuFour (2003; 2004) includes three core principles: (a) a common vision or direction, (b) a collaborative culture, and (c) a focus on results. The instructional philosophy developed within MNTC-BIS set the common vision for learning that provided the foundation for the PLC. This instructional vision also supported Senge's (1990) organizational learning concept. The data received from participating adjunct instructors indicated that they were familiar with the instructional philosophy. Some even indicated the inclusion of the instructional philosophy by supervisors in meetings. BISConnect had the instructional philosophy posted clearly on the front page to provide continuous support and emphasis of this vision.

Although BISConnect provided the "space" or usable platform to support of a PLC a viable online PLC did not develop. Alternatively, BISConnect was found to be beneficial in providing access to professional development and instructional support outside the confines of a PLC. BISConnect provided adjunct instructors with direct and immediate access to just-in-time instructional support for student or curricula issues, operational information, and other assistance needed by the instructors both inside and outside their classrooms. Maldonado and Riman (2009) stressed the need for professional development opportunities to be convenient and accessible to meet their demanding schedules. The online venue of BISConnect proved to meet this need.

Results from the adjunct instructors' professional development reports indicated a significant increase in the professional development training completed by adjunct instructors coinciding with the implementation of BISConnect. Comments collected

through both the questionnaire survey #2 and the adjunct instructor focus group supported this data. Professional development awareness and participation had increased by 56% from the 2009 fiscal year prior to the beginning of the study to the 2010 fiscal year, which was the first year of BISConnect implementation. Although the professional development involvement of the adjunct instructor had a slight decrease during the next two fiscal years (2011 & 2012), it continued to be substantially higher than the years prior to BISConnect.

Additional Interpretations of Findings

There were three primary findings revealed by the data from this study. The first finding was that there was not the ability to form a collaborative, online community as defined by the accepted definition of PLC for adjunct instructor. The translation from the elementary or secondary level of PLC to the implementation and enactment at the post-secondary level for adjunct instructors did not occur. In the empirical studies from secondary education organizations, the PLCs were focused on their joint interest in mutual students as well as their instructional commonalities (DuFour et al., 2008; Eaker & Keating, 2009; Reyes et al., 1999). With adult education, however, few instructors share students; therefore, the only commonality is instructional methodology or the educational area or topic. Since MNTC-BIS has very few instructors who share common areas or topics of education, only common instructional methodology and techniques were left to discuss.

The status of instructors as adjunct versus full time was another consideration when contemplating the transferability of the empirical and theoretical studies of PLCs. The first difference between adjunct instructors and full-time instructors was the fact

that the adjunct instructors do not see themselves first as teachers; instead, their primary passion is for their primary career, such as a welder or nurse (Wallin, 2004; Rifkin, 2000). They teach because of their passion for their skill and career. Building their knowledge as an instructor is secondary in their priority areas.

The second finding was that the online venue of BISConnect provided adjunct instructors the access to professional development and instructional support. As indicated by the data, adjunct instructors' participation in professional development increased significantly with the implementation and enactment of BISConnect. The delivery of professional development opportunities for adjunct instructors has been identified as important, but difficult to deliver because of accessibility (Wallin, 2004). The ability to access BISConnect online provided the access needed for this instructional population. It allowed accessibility outside of conventional work schedules and without consideration for location. Maldonado and Riman (2009) stressed the importance of overcoming the access barrier in providing professional development for adjunct instructors.

In addition to increased professional development, the comments and data from the participants of both Survey Questionnaire #2 and the focus group indicated an increase in instructional support they received from MNTC-BIS. This instructional support was in the form of ice breakers, lesson plans, access to curriculum, and other aids that provided scaffolding for the adjunct instructors. Hogue (2003) explains the importance of this type of support as a teacher when she describes the relief found by new or inexperienced teachers when they were provided instructional support. Along with professional development, instructional support for adjunct instructors can make

the difference between student success or failure; therefore, the qualitative data from adjunct instructor participants that indicated their understanding of the importance of increased instructional support offered by MNTC-BIS suggested an increased awareness and expectation of these activities and services.

The last finding indicates an organizational benefit from the implementation and enactment of BISConnect. Although the initial focus was to create an online PLC, the ultimate purpose of the PLC was to provide access to professional development and instructional support. Hord (1997) touts the benefits of implementing a PLC to include the reduction of teacher isolation, to create better informed and committed teachers, and ultimately resulting in academic gains for students. Although the parameters of this study did not include the measurements of student success, the first two benefits identified by Hord (1997) did occur through the implementation and enactment of BISConnect. Qualitative and quantitative data continued to reveal that the adjunct instructor participants felt a greater sense of collegiality with other instructors, which addressed the reduction of teacher isolation. Collegial development for instructors supports the social constructivism theory that is at the foundation of PLCs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Hung, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).

The second benefit of implementing a PLC described by Hord (1997), which was creating better informed and committed teachers, was also supported by the data from Survey Questionnaire #2 and the focus group. Particularly with adjunct instructors, there can be a disconnect from the educational organization that can results in instructors' inability to grasp the institution's mission and goals (Roueche et al., 1997). This type of organizational knowledge link that is provided by better informed

teachers can result in a higher committed teacher who feels more connected to the organization and its mission (Drake, 1984; Lyons, 2000).

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study provided insight into one career and technology school's journey in the implementation and enactment of a virtual PLC for adjunct instructors. It is important to stress that MNTC-BIS is not representative of all post-secondary educational organizations; therefore, these findings are transferrable or applicable to other organizations only in the sense that consumers see relevant and meaningful implications for their own settings.

The use of part-time and adjunct instructors continues to grow within the United States, as they offer current work-based experiences for their students, while offering flexible and low-cost options to post-secondary educational organizations. Adjunct instructors can represent as much as 58 percent of instructional staff in some post-secondary organizations (Anthony & Valadez, 2001). There is scholarship that identifies the need for professional development for adjunct instructors (Kurzet, 1997; Papp, 2002, Paulson, 2002, Wallin, 2004). The challenges faced by organizations in providing professional development to adjunct instructors include opportunities that are flexible and accessible to their schedules, as well as activities and opportunities that provide the encouragement and motivation for instructors to participate (Wallin, 2004). Therefore, there continues to be a need to research programs and venues for adjunct instructors that balance their needs for professional growth with their needs for flexibility in venue and delivery as well as activities and opportunities that satisfy their perceived needs. With these ideas in mind, three research opportunities are

recommended by this researcher. The scholarship on these three areas were found by the researcher to be limited, thus in need of additional research.

The first is additional empirical studies to investigate the efficacy of PLCs designed and implemented specifically for adjunct instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual. This researcher was not able to find either theoretical or empirical studies on PLCs developed and designed for adjunct instructional staff. The majority of scholarship on adjunct instructors focuses on the benefits and challenges of using adjunct instructors (Gappa & Leslie, 1997; Wallin, 2004) or on different programs that have been designed to provide professional development for adjunct instructors (Lyons, 2000, 2007; Wagoner, 2005; Wallin, 2005). In addition, the primary literature on PLCs is limited to PK-12 educational organizations (DuFour et al., 2008; Eaker & Keating, 2009; Hord, 1997; Jaquith et al., 2010; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Reyes et al., 1999). With the need for professional development identified for adjunct instructors and the benefits espoused through the use of PLCs in providing effective professional development for instructional staff, additional literature that links the two would provide strong benefits for those post-secondary educational organizations who are continuing to depend on a growing adjunct instructor base in providing educational opportunities for students.

The second area is the need for a literature that reports on the current professional development activities and opportunities designed and offered for adjunct instructors. As stated previously, adjunct instructors will continue to be a growing part of the instructional staff for many post-secondary educational organizations (Anthony & Valadez, 2001; Bagwell & Elioff, 1981; Eliason, 1980; Leslie, 1998; Wallin, 2004).

Therefore, there is a need to add current research to the literature on professional development for adjunct instructors. The literature supports the benefits of professional development for adjunct instructors (Maldonado & Riman, 2009; Roueche et al., 1995; Wallin, 2005; Ziegler & Reiff, 2006), yet the challenges of providing these opportunities and activities for adjunct instructors are still barriers to many organizations. Continuing to add to the scholarship regarding professional development for adjunct instructors provides the scaffolding for organizations who seek to find an avenue to provide these opportunities for their adjunct instructors.

The last recommendation for future research is for continued empirical research in implementing PLCs in an online venue. The integration of technology to expand the incorporation of PLCs for teachers provides the flexibility and accessibility that transcends logistics. Through this venue, teachers at different locations could participate in a PLC. The use of technology to build these communities can increase the collaboration of teachers and expand the boundaries of traditional PLCs to encourage a higher level of participation (Collins & Halverson, 2009; del Valle & Duffy, 2006; Easton, 2008). As Tu et al. (2008) explained, technology "has potential to improve and enhance social interaction and to generate valuable collective intelligence" (p. 340). As technology is used to increase the access of education to students, it also has the potential to take professional development for teachers to a higher level (Collins & Halverson, 2009).

Concluding Remarks

This insider action research study described the three-year journey of one Career and Technology School toward the implementation and enactment of an online PLC

designed for adjunct instructors. Although this study was not able to confirm or disconfirm the effectiveness of using the online venue for PLC for adjunct instructors during this research study, it did result in data that indicated that an online venue is a viable way to provide professional development opportunities and instructional support. By examining the practice and outcomes of other educational organizations, we can begin to learn how we can move professional development for adjunct instructors to a higher level with the ultimate goal of increasing student learning and success.

Implementing a PLC is not a 'quick fix' for education. Instead, it is a long-term commitment to an organizational shift toward professional development for the purpose of student achievement. Although this three-year study may not have proven the establishment of a PLC that included a collaborative learning community, the data did support the growth of the organization toward a learning culture. The benefits identified through this study have been found significant enough by MNTC-BIS to continue with BISConnect. The findings presented here are an initial snapshot of the endeavor toward providing both professional development and instructional support for adjunct instructors and does not represent the end of the journey. The results of this study in relation to implementing BISConnect has underscored changed expectations of both staff and adjunct instructors, increased participation in professional development, greater instructional support, and, most importantly, in the awareness of the significance of quality education provided to students. Although there is uncertainty for both roles as the administrator and researcher as to the outcome of the continued trek, it has proven to be a path worth following.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE #1

(Includes the Information Sheet for Consent)

Adjunct Intranet Website

Information

Because this data will be published in a study, OU has requested the following information to be included. You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted within the Moore Norman Technology Center, Business and Industry Services division (MNTC/BIS). You were selected as a possible participant because of your status as an adjunct faculty member for MNTC/BIS with a current 2009-2010 fiscal year contract. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to develop an online professional learning community (PLC) for adjunct instructional staff that will be a valued resource for professional development and collaborative interaction. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in two surveys. The first survey will be issued at the beginning of the research study (September 2009 to October 2009) and will include structured questions, open-ended questions, and demographic questions. The survey questionnaire has two purposes: (1) to determine your current use of and interest in the MNTC Adjunct Intranet website, and (2) to solicit feedback from you on your recommendations on how we can improve this website to make it a more viable resource for adjunct instructors. Changes to the website will include data received from the first survey questionnaire. The second survey questionnaire will be issued in fiscal year 2011, and will be used to determine if changes made to the website have made a change in the perception and use of the website. This survey includes structured questions, open-ended questions, and demographic questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in the surveys should take no longer twenty minutes each to complete.

The surveys present no risks to participants, as it is evaluating the effectiveness and use of the Intranet website developed for the adjunct faculty. This website was initially developed to provide professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty members; however, data indicates it is not being used frequently. The input given by the participants will be used to identify changes that can make this site value-added to the adjunct faculty, or help determine if there is a need to identify another method to offer these opportunities.

This research study and its findings have the potential benefits of improving access to professional development opportunities and instructional support for our adjunct faculty members. These findings could also provide information to other postsecondary educational organizations to increase their awareness regarding online professional learning communities for adjunct faculty.

The data obtained from the surveys are anonymous and, therefore, are not linked to individual adjunct instructors. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Electronic research records will be secured by a password and hard-copy research records will be kept in a locked file in the principal researcher's office. Only approved researchers will have access to the records. There is no compensation for your time and participation in this study.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher conducting this study can be contacted by email at kmarshall@mntechnology.com or by telephone at 405-217-8220. You may also contact the advisor, Dr. William "Bill" Frick, by email at frick@ou.edu or by telephone at 405-325-2447. In the event of a research-related injury, contact the researcher(s). You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher or if you cannot reach the researcher, you may contact the University of Oklahoma's Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Please print this information sheet for your records. By completing the survey, I am agreeing to participate in this study.

Adjunct Intranet Website

Questions

1. How many years have you been teaching?

- ○ 0-2 years
- ○ 3-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11-15 years
- ○ 16+ years

2. How many years have you been teaching for MNTC?

- ○ 0-2 years
- ○ 3-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11-15 years
- ○ 16+ years

3. Please indicate the instructional area(s) in which you teach (check all applicable)

- ☐ Business/Professional Development
- ☐ Certification/Licenses
- ☐ Computer/Technology
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Personal Development/Writing
- ☐ Quality
- ☐ Safety/Environmental
- ☐ Technical & Industrial
- ☐ Online (any instructional area)

4. Please rate your current technology usage.

- ○ I do not use a computer
- ○ I use the computer 2 days or less per week
- ○ I use the computer 3 to 6 days per week
- ○ I use the computer at least once per day
- ○ I use the computer multiple times per day

Adjunct Intranet Website

Questions

5. Please rate your use of social networking (MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

- ○ I use one or more social networking sites on a daily basis
- ○ I use one or more social networking sites on a weekly basis
- ○ I use one or more social networking sites occasionally
- ○ I do not currently use any social networking sites, but am familiar with social networks
- ○ I do not currently use any social networking sites, and I am not familiar with social networks

6. Please indicate which social media sites you use regularly (check all that apply)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ MySpace
- ☐ Twitter

Other (please specify)

7. Please indicate your age range.

- ○ 18-25
- ○ 26-35
- ○ 36-45
- ○ 46-55
- ○ 56 or over

8. Please indicate your gender.

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Adjunct Intranet Website

Questions

9. Have you accessed the MNTC Adjunct Intranet Website within the past 12 months?

- Yes
- No

10a. How useful is the MNTC Adjunct Intranet website in providing you with MNTC information (policies, procedures, announcements, etc.) ?

- I use this website as my main source for MNTC information
- I use this website as a resource for MNTC information, but it is not my main source
- I rarely or never use the website for MNTC information

10b. Describe what MNTC information you access on the MNTC Adjunct Intranet website.

11a. How beneficial is the MNTC adjunct intranet website to provide you with classroom resources?

- I use this website frequently to access classroom resources
- I use this website occassionally to access classroom resources
- Although I use this website, I have not accessed the classroom resources

11b. Describe how you have used any classroom resources you have accessed from the MNTC adjunct intranet website.

Adjunct Intranet Website

Questions

12a. How beneficial is the MNTC adjunct intranet website to "connect" you with other adjunct instructors?

- I use this website frequently to connect with other adjunct instructors
- I use this website occasionally to connect with other adjunct instructors
- Although I use this website, it does not connect me with other adjunct instructors
- I have no need to connect with other adjunct instructors

12b. Describe how this website connects you with other adjunct instructors.

13a. Have you used the MNTC adjunct intranet website to connect you with professional development opportunities?

- I have used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities and have taken advantage of these opportunities
- I have used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities,but have not taken advantage of any yet
- I have not used this website to identify or link to professional development opportunities

13b. Describe the professional development opportunities you have used.

Adjunct Intranet Website

Questions

14a. How important is professional development to you?

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

14b. If you marked professional development as very important or important, how has it assisted you in your practice as an adjunct instructor?

15a. How easy is the MNTC adjunct intranet website to navigate?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Not very easy

15b. What would make the MNTC adjunct intranet website easier to navigate?

16. Which current features, information, and/or tools on the MNTC adjunct intranet website are of value to you as an adjunct instructor?

Adjunct Intranet Website

Questions

17. Which features, information, and/or tools could we add to the MNTC adjunct intranet website that would make it of greater benefit to you?

18. Which features, information, and/or tools on the MNTC adjunct intranet website do you find to be of little or no value to you?

19. What suggestions do you have to increase the adjunct instructors' connection to other instructors via the MNTC adjunct intranet website?

20. What other thoughts or suggestions regarding the MNTC adjunct intranet website would you like to share with us?

Thank you for your input.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE #2

(Includes the Information Sheet for Consent)

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Information

Because this data will be published in a study, OU has requested the following information to be included.

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted within the Moore Norman Technology Center, Business and Industry Services division (MNTC/BIS). You were selected as a possible participant because of your status as an adjunct faculty member for MNTC/BIS with a current 2010-2011 fiscal year contract. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate BISConnect to determine if it has proved to be a valued resource for adjunct instructors for professional development and instructional support. This survey questionnaire has two purposes: (1) to determine your current use of and interest in BISConnect, and (2) to solicit feedback from you on your recommendations on changes or additions you would like to see included within this website. This survey includes structured questions, open-ended questions, and demographic questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participation in the survey should take no longer twenty minutes to complete.

The survey present no risks to participants, as it is evaluating the effectiveness and use of the BISConnect website developed for the adjunct faculty. This website was a result of input from a previous survey completed by volunteer adjunct faculty that evaluated the previous Adjunct Instructor Intranet website as well as research on the development of a professional learning community (PLC). The input given by the volunteer participants will be used to identify changes that can make BISConnect a greater value to the adjunct faculty, or help determine if there is a need to identify another method to offer these opportunities.

This research study and its findings have the potential benefits of improving access to professional development opportunities and instructional support for our adjunct faculty members. These findings could also provide information to other postsecondary educational organizations to increase their awareness regarding online professional learning communities for adjunct faculty.

The data obtained from the surveys are anonymous and, therefore, are not linked to individual adjunct instructors. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Electronic research records will be secured by a password and hard-copy research records will be kept in a locked file in the principal researcher's office. Only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There is no compensation for your time and participation in this study.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher conducting this study can be contacted by email at karla.marshall@mntc.edu or by telephone at 405-217-8220. You may also contact the advisor, Dr. William "Bill" Frick, by email at frick@ou.edu or by telephone at 405-325-2447. In the event of a research-related injury, contact the researcher(s). You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher or if you cannot reach the researcher, you may contact the University of Oklahoma's Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Please print this information sheet for your records. By completing the survey, I am agreeing to participate in this study.

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Questions

1. How many years have you been teaching?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16+ years

2. How many years have you been teaching for MNTC?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16+ years

3. Please indicate the instructional area(s) in which you teach (check all applicable)

- Business/Professional Development
- Certification/Licenses
- Computer/Technology
- Health
- Personal Development/Writing
- Quality
- Safety/Environmental
- Technical & Industrial
- Online (any instructional area)

4. Please rate your current technology usage.

- I do not use a computer
- I use the computer 2 days or less per week
- I use the computer 3 to 6 days per week
- I use the computer at least once per day
- I use the computer multiple times per day

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Questions

5. Please rate your use of social networking (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

- ○ I use one or more social networking sites on a daily basis
- ○ I use one or more social networking sites on a weekly basis
- ○ I use one or more social networking sites occasionally
- ○ I do not currently use any social networking sites, but am familiar with social networks
- ○ I do not currently use any social networking sites, and I am not familiar with social networks

6. What is your purpose for using social media (Twitter, FaceBook, LinkedIn, etc.)? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Connect with friends / business associates
- ☐ Keep up with family members
- ☐ For business purposes
- ☐ Stay current with specific areas of interest
- ☐ Do not currently use, but would like to
- ☐ Do not currently use and have no interest in using

Other (please specify)

7. Please indicate your age range.

- ○ 18-25
- ○ 26-35
- ○ 36-45
- ○ 46-55
- ○ 56 or over

8. Please indicate your gender.

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Questions

9. How useful is BISConnect in providing you with MNTC information (policies, procedures, announcements, etc.) ?

- I use BISConnect as my main source for MNTC information
- I use BISConnect as a resource for MNTC information, but it is not my main source
- I rarely or never use BISConnect for MNTC information
- I was not aware BISConnect contained MNTC information

9a. What is the primary MNTC information you currently access from BISConnect?

10. How beneficial is BISConnect to provide you with classroom resources?

- I use BISConnect frequently to access classroom resources
- I use BISConnect occassionally to access classroom resources
- Although I use BISConnect, I have not accessed the classroom resources
- I am not aware of what classroom resources are available on BISConnect

10a. If you currently use BISConnect to access classroom resources, what are these resources?

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Questions

11. How effective is BISConnect in "connecting" you with other adjunct instructors and staff?

- I use BISConnect frequently to connect with other adjunct instructors / staff
- I use BISConnect occasionally to connect with other adjunct instructors / staff
- Although I use BISConnect, it does not connect me with other adjunct instructors / staff
- I do not use BISConnect, so it cannot connect me with other adjunct instructors / staff
- I have no need to connect with other adjunct instructors / staff

11a. Describe how BISConnect connects you with other adjunct instructors and staff.

12. Have you used BISConnect to identify or take advantage of professional development opportunities?

- I have used BISConnect to identify or link to professional development opportunities and have taken advantage of these opportunities
- I have used BISConnect to identify or link to professional development opportunities,but have not taken advantage of any yet
- I have not used BISConnect to identify or link to professional development opportunities
- I do not need to take advantage of professional development opportunities

12a. Describe the professional development opportunities you have taken advantage of.

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Questions

13. How important is professional development to you?

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

14. What kind of professional development opportunities / activities you would like to have available to you as an adjunct instructor at MNTC.

15. How easy is it to find what you need on BISConnect?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Not very easy
- Don't know

15a. What would make BISConnect easier for you to use?

16. What information, tools, or resources would encourage you to access BISConnect on a daily or frequent basis?

BISConnect Adjunct Survey

Questions

17. What other thoughts or suggestions regarding BISConnect would you like to share with us?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C

LETTER FOR SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE #1

(Date)

To our MNTC Adjunct Faculty:

One of the commitments we have made is to provide greater access to professional development opportunities for our adjunct staff. Two changes we have made to accomplish this include (1) the development of a Professional Development Coordinator position, and (2) the development and implementation of a MNTC-BIS Adjunct Instructor Intranet website. This website was initially developed based on your input and it has been available for use since July of 2008. After reviewing the usage of the website over the past year, we feel it is time to solicit your input again and determine what suggestions you have to make this resource more valuable and used.

I am asking you to help us by taking the time to complete a brief survey. All responses to the survey are anonymous, and I encourage you to give open and honest feedback. Your responses will help us make this a better professional development tool for you.

You will receive an email that has a link to the survey (through Survey Monkey) that you can complete electronically. This email will also include the survey in an attached file if you prefer to complete it in a hard-copy format. You may return the hard-copy surveys through inter-office mail or through the USPS at the following address:

MNTC – BIS
Attn: Karla Marshall
4701 12th Avenue NW
Norman, OK 73069

It is important, no matter which way you choose to complete the survey, to return it by the due date indicated in the email.

As this project will be included within my dissertation at OU, I have included an Information Sheet on the first page of the survey. Please read through this before starting the survey. Participation is voluntary and anonymous.

As a MNTC adjunct staff member, we understand the valuable role you play in providing a high-quality educational experience for our students. Please take the 15-20 minutes to complete this survey so we can better support you. Please contact me (217-8220) if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Karla J. Marshall
Executive Director

APPENDIX D

EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENT SCRIPIT FOR
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE #1

(date)

On (date letter sent), I sent you a letter describing the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet website improvement project we are working on this year. We realize this project will only be successful if we have your input, so please take the time to complete this survey. Below is the link to the survey that will allow you to provide your feedback to us on our current website.

(survey link to Survey Monkey)

A file copy of the survey is also attached if you would prefer to print and return the survey in a hard-copy format. You may return the hard-copy survey through inter-office mail or through the USPS at the following address:

MNTC – BIS
Attn: Karla Marshall
4701 12th Avenue NW
Norman, OK 73069

It is important, no matter which way you choose to complete the survey, to complete and return it by (due date).

As this project will be included within my dissertation at OU, I have included an Information Sheet for Consent on the first page of the survey. Please read this Consent form thoroughly before starting the survey. Participation is voluntary and anonymous.

Again, thank you for helping us provide a better website for you.

Karla Marshall
Executive Director

APPENDIX E

LETTER FOR SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE #2

(Date)

To our MNTC Adjunct Faculty:

Promoting and providing accessible professional development opportunities and instructional support for our adjunct staff is an important value to MNTC-BIS. A new online professional learning community, BISConnect, was introduced in January 2010 as a resource for adjunct staff. BISConnect was initially developed based on research of professional development best practices along with the input received by our adjunct faculty participants in a survey completed in 2009. Since BISConnect has been available to you for over a year, it is time to request your input again so we can determine what suggestions you have to make this resource more valuable and used.

I am asking you to help us by taking the time to complete a brief survey. All responses to the survey are anonymous, and I encourage you to give open and honest feedback. Your responses will help us better promote and provide professional development and instructional support for you.

You will receive an email that has a link to the survey (through Survey Monkey) that you can complete electronically. This email will also include the survey in an attached file if you prefer to complete it in a hard-copy format. You may return the hard-copy surveys through inter-office mail or through the USPS at the following address:

MNTC – BIS
Attn: Karla Marshall
4701 12th Avenue NW
Norman, OK 73069

It is important, no matter which way you choose to complete the survey, to return it by the due date indicated in the email.

As this project will be included within my dissertation at OU, I have included an Information Sheet on the first page of the survey. Please read this consent form thoroughly before starting the survey. Participation is voluntary and anonymous.

As a MNTC adjunct staff member, we understand the valuable role you play in providing a high-quality educational experience for our students. Please take the 15-20 minutes to complete this survey so we can better support you. Please contact me (217-8220) if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Karla J. Marshall
Executive Director

APPENDIX F

EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENT SCRIPT FOR
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE #2

(date)

On (date letter sent), I sent you a letter describing the MNTC-BIS online professional learning community, BISConnect, evaluation process we are conducting. The development and implementation of BISConnect was a project started in 2010 with the purpose of providing professional development and instructional support for our adjunct faculty. BISConnect has been in use for over a year, and it is time to gather feedback in order to identify how successful it has been in meeting its intended purpose. The feedback you provide will assist us in identifying what is working and what recommendations you have for improvement. Please take the time to complete this survey, as your input is very valuable to us.

Below is the link to the survey that will allow you to provide your feedback to us on BISConnect.

(survey link to Survey Monkey)

A file copy of the survey is also attached if you would prefer to print and return the survey in a hard-copy format. You may return the hard-copy survey through inter-office mail or through the USPS at the following address:

MNTC – BIS
Attn: Karla Marshall
4701 12th Avenue NW
Norman, OK 73069

It is important, no matter which way you choose to complete the survey, to complete and return it by (due date).

As this project will be included within my dissertation at OU, I have included an Information Sheet for Consent on the first page of the survey. Please read this consent thoroughly before starting the survey. Participation is voluntary and anonymous.

Again, thank you for helping us provide a better resource for you.

Karla Marshall
Executive Director

APPENDIX G

EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENT SCRIPT FOR FOCUS GROUP

(Date)

The MNTC online professional learning community (PLC), BISConnect, was introduced in January 2010 as a resource for adjunct staff. BISConnect was initially developed based on research of professional development best practices along with the input received by our adjunct faculty participants in a survey completed in 2009. BISConnect has now been available to you for over two years. In following our continuous improvement process cycle, we will be holding a focus group comprised of our adjunct faculty to gain more insight into how this PLC is functioning in meeting its intended purpose.

I am asking you to participate in a focus group that will be held on Saturday, (date), from 9am to 11 am. You will be asked eight questions about BISConnect in the areas of instructional support, professional development and overall benefit for you as a MNTC Adjunct Instructor. The focus group will be video recorded so we can transcribe your responses. These responses will help us identify how we can improve BISConnect to be more effective in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for you.

As this project will be included within my dissertation at OU, I am attaching an Information Sheet with this email. Please read this consent form thoroughly before volunteering for this focus group. Participants will be reimbursed $40 for your time and travel.

As a MNTC adjunct staff member, we understand the valuable role you play in providing a high-quality educational experience for our students. Please respond to this email by (date to be determined) if you would be willing to participate. If you have any questions, please contact me at (405) 809-3505.

Sincerely,

Karla J. Marshall
Executive Director

The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution.

APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1) How has BISConnected assisted you, or not assisted you, in professional development and instructional support?

2) Explain your understanding of a Professional Learning Community.

3) How has BISConnect assisted, or not assisted, in connecting you with other staff and instructors in order to build this community?

4) Have there been new strategies and changes you have identified within MNTC that are related to the implementation of BISConnect?

5) Have you noticed changes within MNTC-BIS, as an organization, in terms of the value of professional development and instructional support? Do you think these changes are related, or not related, to BISConnect?

6) What are your perspectives and attitudes pertaining to professional learning and seeking instructional support either with or without BISConnect?

APPENDIX I

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Developing an Online Professional Learning Community for Adjunct Instructors
Principal Investigator: Karla J. Marshall
Department: Education

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at Moore Norman Technology Center You were selected as a possible participant because of your position as an adjunct instructor for Moore Norman Technology Center with a current FY 2012-13 teaching contract.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and evaluate the ability to provide professional development and instructional support opportunities for adjunct instructors through the use of an online professional learning community (PLC).

Number of Participants

About 20 Moore Norman Technology Center adjunct instructors are being recruited to participate in this study.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group where the group will be asked to answer eight questions about BISConnect in the areas of instructional support, professional development and overall benefit for you as a Moore Norman Technology Center Adjunct Instructor. The focus group will be video recorded in order to transcribe your responses. These responses will help us identify how we can improve BISConnect to be more effective in promoting and providing professional development and instructional support for you.

Length of Participation

The focus group will be approximately two hours long.

Risks of being in the study are none, as this study is evaluating the effectiveness and use of BISConnect developed for the adjunct faculty.

Benefits of being in the study are through an improved online professional learning community providing professional development and instructional support opportunities that better meet your needs.

Compensation

You will be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study. You will receive a $40 stipend for your time and travel for participation in this focus group with no decrease in the stipend if you choose to refrain from answering any question. This stipend will be paid through the normal Moore Norman Technology Center payroll.

Confidentiality

In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researcher will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include Moore Norman Technology Center and the OU Institutional Review Board.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Waivers of Elements of Confidentiality

Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses. The data you provide will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Video Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of your responses, the focus group will be recorded on a video recording device. If you do not agree to video-recording, you cannot participate in this study. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to video recording. ___ Yes ___ No

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at karla.marshall@mntc.edu or by telephone at 405-809-3505. You may also contact the advisor, Dr. William "Bill" Frick, by email at frick@ou.edu or by telephone at 405-325-2447.Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions, or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Participant Signature	Print Name	Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX J

RESEARCH QUESTIONS DATA MATRIX

Research Question #1: How well does the online, interactive venue support, or not support, the development of a viable PLC for the promotion and provision of professional development and instructional support?

Data Source	Evidence from Data Source
Survey Questionnaire #1 (SQ1) and Survey Questionnaire #2 (SQ2)	− SQ2 reported a 30% increase over SQ1 in the participants who indicated that the website (MNTC Adjunct Instructor Website versus BISConnect) had assisted them in identifying professional development activities − SQ2 reported that the highest percentage, 71%, of participants indicated that they used BISConnect primarily for operational support information (timesheets, schedules, forms, etc.) − SQ2 reported that 73.3% of participants did not access classroom resources through BISConnect − SQ2 participants who did access classroom resources did not mention community involvement or access as a resource − SQ2 reported that only 3.3% of participants used BISConnect to frequently connect with others; 36.7% used BISConnect to occasionally connect with others; 60% did not use BISConnect to connect with others
Focus Group (FG)	+ Three of the four themes of the FG question on how BISConnect has assisted them included instructional support, professional development, and relational support + FG participants indicated an understanding of the purpose of a PLC − FG Participants did not indicate a need to connect with other adjunct instructors
Website Usage Report	+ Website usage reports indicate a significant increase in adjunct faculty members who have accessed BISConnect over the MNTC Adjunct Instructor Intranet in the past four years (Have accessed the website 11+ times during fiscal year: FY 09 – 0%; FY 10 – 58%; FY 11 – 51%; FY 12 – 64%)
Professional development reports for Adjunct Instructors	+ A significant, sustained increase in participation of Adjunct Instructors in professional development activities from pre-BISConnect (56% from FY 09 to FY 10; 47% increase from FY 09 to FY 11; 52% increase from FY 09 to FY 12) + An increase in the total number of professional development hours completed by Adjunct Instructor from pre-BISConnect (increase of 864 hours from FY 09 to FY 10; increase of 694 hours from FY 09 to FY 11; increase of 897 hours from FY 09 to FY 12)

Research Question #2: What challenges were identified by MNTC-BIS in the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC?

Data Source	Evidence from Data Source
Survey Questionnaire #2 (SQ2)	– SQ2 participants who did access classroom resources did not mention community involvement or access as a resource – SQ2 reported that only 3.3% of participants used BISConnect to frequently connect with others; 36.7% used BISConnect to occasionally connect with others; 60% did not use BISConnect to connect with others
Focus Group (FG)	– FG participants did not indicate a need to connect with other adjunct instructors – FG participants identified that there was limited to no connection with other adjunct instructors through BISConnect
Researcher's Journal (RJ)	– Transfer of ownership of BISConnect was never transferred to adjunct faculty – Staff resistance to the changes were observed – You cannot force a community

Research Question #3: What strategies and changes occurred with MNTC-BIS that were directly related to the implementation and enactment of the purported online PLC over time?

Data Source	Evidence from Data Source
Focus Group (FG)	+ FG participants identified an increase in organizational value and emphasis on professional development and instructional support + FG participants identified an increase in staff involvement and attitudes toward professional development and organizational vision + FG participants reported an increase in focus on instruction, professional development, and learners within MNTC-BIS + FG participants' responses indicated an increase in expectation of MNTC-BIS with regard to professional development and instructional support + FG participants indicated that they feel more connected with MNTC
Researcher's Journal	+ There is an increased awareness of and participation in professional development of adjunct faculty + Some supervisory staff have increased their involvement with instructional support and encouraging professional growth of adjunct faculty
Professional development reports for Adjunct Instructors	+ A significant, sustained increase in participation of Adjunct Instructors in professional development activities from pre-BISConnect (56% from FY 09 to FY 10; 47% increase from FY 09 to FY 11; 52% increase from FY 09 to FY 12) + An increase in the total number of professional development hours completed by Adjunct Instructor from pre-BISConnect (increase of 864 hours from FY 09 to FY 10; increase of 694 hours from FY 09 to FY 11; increase of 897 hours from FY 09 to FY 12)

Research Question #4: What were the organizational and professional cultural changes in which professional development and instructional support was valued by staff and adjunct instructors?

Data Source	Evidence from Data Source
Survey Questionnaire #1 (SQ1) And Survey Questionnaire #2 (SQ2)	+ SQ2 reported a 21.3% increase over SQ1 in the participants who indicated that professional development was very important or important to them + 48% of participants in SQ2 reported that their primary use for BISConnect was instructional support, including professional development activities and opportunities
Focus Group (FG)	+ FG participants identified an increase in organizational value and emphasis on professional development and instructional support + FG participants identified an increase in staff involvement and attitudes toward professional development and organizational vision + FG participants' responses showed an increase in attitude and commitment with regard to professional development and instructional support
Professional development reports for Adjunct Instructors	+ A significant, sustained increase in participation of Adjunct Instructors in professional development activities from pre-BISConnect (56% from FY 09 to FY 10; 47% increase from FY 09 to FY 11; 52% increase from FY 09 to FY 12) + An increase in the total number of professional development hours completed by Adjunct Instructor from pre-BISConnect (increase of 864 hours from FY 09 to FY 10; increase of 694 hours from FY 09 to FY 11; increase of 897 hours from FY 09 to FY 12)
Researcher's Journal	+ There is an increased awareness of and participation in professional development of adjunct faculty + The instructional philosophy within MNTC-BIS had been integrated within the staff and the adjunct faculty