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HOW LEADERSHIP INFLUENCES TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL REFORMS: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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HOW LEADERSHIP INFLUENCES TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL REFORMS: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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

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Abstract

In 2009 a rash overhaul of educational reform occurred in our nation's educational system, specifically preempted by Race to the Top. Administrators and teachers have been in a flux of understanding the importance of these prescribed educational changes and the necessity to implement a different pedagogy within the classroom. For teachers to embrace educational reform changes, leadership is essential to weave through this maze of complexity to achieve school change. Most educational initiatives are structured around a governance approach and motivated by political systems (Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013). These educational reform measures are normally viewed as a top down approach when it comes to implementing policy (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). There seems to be a concretive effort to keep teachers out of the decision-making process in regard to educational reform. There is a need for teacher input within the discussions of educational reform because the teacher has a central understanding of their work (Spencer, 1996; Hargreaves, 1996). Teachers are seen as *pawns in political schemes* instead of respected as key components of educational reform (Edwards, 2011). This research examines the meaning of the teacher-leader relationship within an educational reform process. These teacher-leader relationships are important within the educational realm because it presents an unscripted insight to leadership influences on teacher effectiveness. To gain insight of teacher experiences, this research uses hermeneutic phenomenology, to analyze the teachers' *situation in the world* (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012) and

utilizes van Manen's (2014) five existential life-worlds: temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body), relationality (lived self-other), spatiality (lived space), and materiality (lived things) to examine how teachers' describe school leadership that promotes/contributes to teacher effectiveness. Thematic threads of strategies, states-experience/support, participation/interactions and consequences were illuminated through data analysis and were examined through van Manen's (2014) five existential life-worlds. An overlay of these primary thematic findings led to the identification of superordinate themes of support, communication, and inclusion as effective leadership practices for implementation of educational reform measures. Specifically from the teachers' experiences within this study, support, communication and inclusion are important factors of leadership practice to promote teacher effectiveness during implementation of educational reform measures and answer the research question: What are select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? The study's implications of educational practice for school leadership effectiveness and contributions to research show when leaders utilize a two-way communication, provide professional development and instructional feedback support, and actively include teachers throughout the phases of integrating educational reform. These leadership practices provide direct and indirect influential actions. They correlate with supervision of instruction for school effectiveness and student achievement. In conclusion, this research finds there is a need for including supportive models in leaders' trainings, for ensuring leadership

standards speak of specific ways of communicative efforts, and for building teams for teacher inclusion to promote teacher effectiveness during educational reform.

Prologue

"*Teaching in today's society is challenging and at times overwhelming, but it is still what I enjoy doing."* –Middle School Teacher

The bell rings to signal the end of the school day. Children draped with their backpacks make their way to the outer doors, the admission to their freedom, all the while leaving the teachers behind to prepare for another day of procuring the child's future. Beyond these outer doors lies an invisible roadmap outlining the educational attainment pathway for children known as educational reform. While American policy created this roadmap, educational leaders and teachers have been the navigational components helping students find their way through the public educational system.

Educational reform has been at the heart of the policy debate in the United States for over 100 years. Throughout this time educational reform policies helped create the issues necessary for teachers to navigate the educational system and has been an integral element of school change initiatives, with the purposes of raising student achievement, providing equity to all students and implementing new educational innovations (Fullan, 1993). When an educational reform comes into law, government relies on the educational system through leadership to implement new policies and standards within the classroom. However, most leaders and teachers are not equipped with the tools necessary to implement immediate change (Harris, 2012). When teachers do not have the tools necessary for educational change, the complexity of classroom issues increases. Le Fevre' (2014) notes this complexity and states,

"Educational change is complex and there are many barriers that must be navigated to enable effective change" (p. 57). When our nation falls short of the expectations of not ensuing change, blame is placed upon the educational system and the complex cycle begins again creating another educational initiative to produce a change and increase teacher expectations once again. Although educational reform is necessary for educational growth, most reforms are grounded by poor educational performance and the interest of increasing global competitiveness of students in the United States; hence, the need to change a weakened educational system (Morgan & Taylor Poppe, 2012). The need for reforms stems from cultural changes, financial security, international comparisons, and data prominent in poverty, income, and education outcomes. Schools play a pivotal role for the reforms future by presuming both *gatekeeper* and *gateway* to careers for the school system's children (2 Education and the Changing Nation, 2002).

When a new educational reform emerges, educators feel the pressures of existing demands placed upon them to implement the reform quickly and efficiently, while trying to grasp the reality and depth of the reform. There is an emotional "buy-in" to the reform that takes place because there are times reform initiatives perish before full implementation comes to light leaving educators stuck in the revolving door of trying to make changes but running in circles of unproductivity. Leadership is an essential aspect of assisting teachers to embrace and implement the intentions of the reform. However, educational leadership demands insight to teachers' needs. In 1938, Darsie stated, "Leadership is a

meaningless word in a static society. It has significance only in a world of movement and change" (p.145). This sentiment is still true today.

To address this issue of a static educational system, many leadership styles have emerged over the years, which include instructional leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership to assist with school improvement. School leaders who embody characteristics of instructional leadership will look to provide assistance for teachers to improve their practice (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). "Today's teachers don't necessarily look for answers from an instructional leader" (Hoerr, 2008, p. 65). Transactional leaders look at immediate self-interests while transformational leaders motivate and move teachers beyond the immediate needs (Bass, 1999). These leadership styles are supported by educational leadership policy standards, which provide direction for leadership to promote the success of every student through collaboration of vision creation, supervision of instruction, promoting the welfare of the student and safeguarding the values, just to name a few (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). Even when the styles of leadership are supported by standards, sometimes leadership lacks guidance in what works and what does not work.

This study focused on how educators were affected by educational reforms. It reviews the years from 2009-2014; wherein, a number of reform policies were promulgated in the United States to improve public education. These reforms include: Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top. Most educational reform research is

witnessed through the eyes of students and their achievement while only some research has been completed on teachers' experiences of educational reform and the controls placed by the organization (Dee & Jacob, 2011), which is why this study seeks the meaning of the leadership-teacher relationship within an educational reform process. These relationships present an unscripted insight to leadership influences on teacher effectiveness.

CHAPTER ONE

Discussion of Educational Reform

An educational reform is normally viewed as a top down approach when it comes to implementing the policy, and faith has been put into this approach because there is someone responsible for achieving school change (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). History shows that educational reform is brought about by political motivation (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This motivation is normally due to a lack of confidence in the educational system to increase student achievement. Teachers are tethered back-and-forth from performing the duties of the profession and being told what they are doing is incorrect. Sometimes they do not realize the need to change until it becomes apparent to them (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2009). Since there is still widespread concern in public schools about increasing student performance, creating an environment to promote educational reform is important to increase teacher effectiveness.

When educational reform transpires, the educational system must develop an implementation plan, organize the process, conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, identify objectives and measurements, disseminate information, provide immediate support, and monitor and maintain the reform initiative (Marsh, Strunk, & Bush, 2013). These are simply some areas of focus when implementing an educational reform. When there are many elements, the complexity to achieve school change and improvement grows, and the teachers' experiences of educational reform are dynamic while understanding these

experiences and the subjective meanings of the experiences they practice through the educational reform is significant for guiding policy.

School organizations in the form of local educational agencies take the helm of translating educational reforms. Some educational reforms are meant to create an improved, organized, structured school system to prevent the uncoupling of teachers and instructional practices. This research explored state-level teachers of the year with a direct relation to a tested content area that is openly influenced by educational reform measures, which pondered the following question: What are select, high performing teachers' experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? This study took a look at retrospective and prospective practices and experiences the teachers face through the mandated changes proposed through educational reforms. This study also narrowed its focus on the interconnectedness of the leadership relationship, which existed beyond time and space influencing teachers' experiences and teachers' effectiveness in the classroom.

There is a need to understand the professional self and how system controls influence teachers' effectiveness during educational reform. Reflective self is an integral factor in understanding teachers' experiences of educational reform, but for this study to reach further, expand the literature, and relate the self to organization routines, it looked at educational leadership practices and identified variables, which lead to administrative support. An important tool to question self and provide evidence of practice is reflective practice (Fullan, 2011).

> Although there can be no doubt that a top-down approach to changing human service system contributes to accountability, conventional wisdom (the "new federalism") and empirical data related to school reform (changing a human service system at its elementary and secondary levels) suggest a bottom-up approach is also necessary for accountability. Both top-down and bottom-up are necessary; neither alone is sufficient. (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000, p. 232).

Darling-Hammond (1992) challenged the school paradigm for school reform showing that leadership should transcend from *designing controls* anticipated for system direction to *developing capacity* where responsibility for student learning is enabled by the organization and the teacher. The need for this study analyzed how leaders influenced teacher effectiveness during the time of educational reform.

Educational reform, change, effective teaching, and leadership support are included in the background to this study to give insight on all aspects relating to the influence leadership places on teacher effectiveness during the implementation of educational reform. Educational reform influences change, and change could promote effective teachers. The central focus in this study is the leadership support. How will leadership influence or lack of leadership influence teacher effectiveness within the organizational system?

Educational reform is not new to the dynamics of the educational system. Where national level agencies feel control is better left to the state level government, three national educational initiatives implemented over the last

forty-plus years have shaped and have note-worthy implications for the local educational system. The educational initiatives have been tweaked, reconfigured or revamped while all initiatives still house the same foundational workings but just sporting a different appearance. The three are initiatives considered in this study include:

a) *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA). Under the direction of President Lyndon Johnson, the creation of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) was proposed to reduce the achievement gap and raise academic achievement. In 1983 society received a glimpse of the educational system through the report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, with claims the educational system is declining, and students are not ready for college or the work place (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This promoted a structural change using top-down approaches in regulating educational organizations (Fullan, 1993).

b) *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*(NCLB). Public Law 107-110 the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, revised) brought forth many components that educators see today in the public school system with the overall purpose of understanding the elements within the achievement gap, which include *accountability, flexibility* and *choice*. (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

c) *Race to the Top* (RTTT). With deadlines approaching for assurances that no child *will* be left behind, President Obama stated, "It's time to stop just talking about education reform and start actually doing it. It's time to make education America's national mission," and produced another initiative deemed, *Race to the Top* (RTTT) since again, students were not deemed ready for the college or workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The overall need for reform stems from cultural changes, financial security, international comparisons, and data collected from poverty, income, and education outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) began paving the way for educational reform in the United States since the public began to notice the educational system was declining and students were not ready for employment. A national problem emerged from implications that students were not ready for higher institutional learning and most 18-24-year-olds were not ready for employment. The federal government felt the need to intervene and ensure an education for the underprivileged youth (Powell, 1965).

Five federal title programs through this act infused money in the educational system to increase the quality of education for our youth. *Title I* provided financial assistance to local educational agencies for the education of children of low-income families with the purpose of paying particular attention to needs of impoverished children. *Title II* provided the necessary resources

through school library, textbooks, and other instructional materials with the purpose of "supplanting", which gives monetary support for materials where monies for these materials were not available before this programming. *Title III* called for supplemental educational centers and services with the notion of involving cultural representatives. *Title IV* established supporting programs such as drug prevention for education. *Title V* infused money on the state level to enhance state agencies with the idea of measuring educational outcomes, improving teacher preparation, and assisting local educational agencies (Alford, 1965).

No Child Left Behind

Under the direction of then President George W. Bush's Administration in 2001, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* was a revision of the *Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965* with the following educational emphases (Bush, 2001).

> Increase Accountability for Student Performance: States, districts and schools that improve achievement will be rewarded. Failure will be sanctioned. Parents will know how well their child is learning, and that schools are held accountable for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessment in grades 3-8.
>
> Focus on What Works: Federal dollars will be spent on effective, research based programs and practices. Funds will be targeted to improve schools and enhance teacher quality.

> Reduce Bureaucracy and Increase Flexibility: Additional flexibility will be provided to states and school districts, and flexible funding will be increased at the local level. Empower Parents: Parents will have more information about the quality of their child's school. Students in persistently low-performing schools will be given choice.

Federal policy stepped into the educational dynamics again due to what the public deemed a "national crisis" of education and produced the No Child Left Behind legislation. Educational reform tends to be ignited by the fact the current educational policy is not meeting the goals set out by the reform for excellence in education. Seven performance-based priorities for schools were established in the No Child Left Behind educational reform:

"Improving the academic performance of disadvantaged students, boosting teacher quality, moving limited English proficient students to English fluency, promoting informed parental choice and innovative programs, encouraging safe schools for the 21st Century, increasing funding for Impact Aid, encouraging freedom and accountability." (Bush, 2001, p. 2)

Some priorities of educational reform lend to standardizing education, but differentiating instruction is also necessary to meet the needs of all students.

Race to the Top

Race to the Top (RTTT) was incorporated into the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The United States was in an economic recession, and RTTT was established through a *competitive grant program* to help educational

agencies qualify for grant funding to advance student achievement. This qualification included creating educational innovation through the development of plans for state and local agencies and establishing reforms aligned with federal policy priorities. Each state submitted their proposals, were ranked and awarded according to their ranking of educational innovation grounded in the school change initiative. Grants were awarded each year in phases over a 4-year period from 2009-2013 with $4.35 billion total dollars being spent in education (Kolbe, 2012).

The intentions of RTTT were to advance student achievement through increased rigorous standards and prepare them for college or career. Yet, RTTT still promoted a top-down approach to school reform and the academic success of the student is still based on a single test score. Furthermore, RTTT has been met with many challenges across the United States, but the possible effects of RTTT will not be known for years to come (Tanner, 2013). Ironically, many well-intentioned educational reforms have overburdened teachers, complicating the need to focus time on effective teaching and learning practices. With performance demands and reporting requirements from *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*(NCLB), teachers feel the additional pressures of increasing student achievement at a more rapid pace (Chval, Reys, Reys, Tarr, Chavez, 2006). Ultimately, teachers tend to view their profession as "surviving" instead of "thriving" due to the adaptations necessary through the impediments of educational reform (Grenville-Cleave, 2012).

Weaving through the maze of educational reforms seems the mainstay of school administrators and educators over the last 40-plus years. Dual accountability, student achievement pressures, replacing time with educational reform measures for instructional time, and organizational control are some of the demands on instructional change teachers must face today. Changing beliefs about school change initiatives is an important aspect of implementing and promoting any type of change in school (Harris, 2012). Where does the responsibility lie for school leaders to change teachers' instructional beliefs? Since most educational organizations use a top down approach for implementing educational reform, leadership plays a critical role in changing teacher beliefs surrounding the new reform (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The research focus of this study is to examine: What are leadership practices that have helped teachers become effective through the mandated reform change process?

Leaders are expected to be the change agents to usher teacher effectiveness as responsibilities increase throughout the reform progression. Leadership standards help guide the process increasing teacher effectiveness, and leaders are to help promote the success of every student (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). Even though policy standards are intended to help with the change process and influence leadership through policy, policy standards focus on the practice that promotes effective teaching. Through the reform process, leaders face the challenge of helping teachers become effective with teaching to the high stakes test, while at the same time maintaining a focus on teaching creatively without losing the extemperaneous and constructive

pedagogy. Thus, the complexity of leadership increases when educational reform happens. This study is reflective of how leadership promotes teacher effectiveness in the classroom during times of educational reform initiatives.

Context of the Study

The context of this study included a public school setting where an educational reform was prevalent within the school system, and teachers experienced a curricular change from the reform within the timeframe 2009-2014. Also included, are teachers who taught a state tested subject during the timeframe. This context is relevant for this study because it provides an insightful look at teachers' lived experiences and poses questions of school leadership responsiveness to the educational reform measures.

Problem Statement

Educational reform brings about change to the educational system. Reform has been at the heart of the policy debate in the United States for over 100 years. When an educational reform comes into law, government relies on the educational system through leadership to implement new policies and standards within the classroom. Most educational initiatives are structured around a governance approach and motivated by political systems (Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013). These educational reform measures are normally viewed as a top down approach when it comes to implementing policy (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). The problem seems to be a concretive effort to keep teachers out of the decision-making process in regard to educational reform. There is a need for teacher input within the discussions

of educational reform because the teacher has a central understanding of their work (Spencer, 1996; Hargreaves, 1996). Teachers are seen as *pawns in political schemes* instead of respected as key components of educational reform (Edwards, 2011). Although research from Fullan (2001) has shown that teachers need support through the implementation process, and Leithwood and Janzi (2000) note sharing a common meaning is important, teachers are still experiencing school reform decision-making that emanates from the top down without the inclusion of teacher voice. This research examines the meaning of the teacher-leadership relationship within an educational reform process. These teacher-leader relationships are important within the educational realm because it presents an unscripted insight to leadership influences on teacher effectiveness. This study shows the inclusion of teachers' voice is still an issue for teachers, and emphasizes the need for teachers' voices in the decision-making process for practice of leadership support for promoting teacher effectiveness because teachers become a part of the process instead of simply the product, which in turn create teacher buy-in for educational reform.

Significance of Study

The role of educational leadership presents many demands placed within the job description such as increased accountability guidelines, discipline, site management, but ultimately the role of educational leadership is to increase student achievement. Hence, when the teacher is faced with a new educational reform, leadership should guide them through the necessary improvements. The significance of this study provides insight to leadership practices that state

recognized effective teachers experienced during the time of educational change within the educational system. These experiences give awareness to policy makers and educational leaders within the educational system. The awareness helps further practice, research and possibly impact policy concerning educational reform measures.

Purpose of the Study

To progress in this world, education evolves through a change process known as educational reform. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to explore the leadership-teacher relationship through the teachers' experiences during an educational reform process. This research uncovered the meanings of the phenomenon through these teachers' experiences and developed a better understanding of leadership, whether it was administrative or teacher level, of leadership practices during complex times within an educational system.

This context was important to deepen an understanding of the phenomenon and expose the leadership-teacher relationship that teachers experience within complex changes to the educational system. Participants are state teachers of the year who went through an educational reform and stayed true to their excelling pedagogical practices in the classroom. Schmidt and Datnow's (2005) study about a need for leaders to make sure teachers have the resources necessary to implement reform, understanding of the changes of pedagogy and emotional support. This study identified key school leadership factors involved in promoting an educational reform. These school leadership

factors should be a focus of educational leadership and infused in leadership training programs.

Guiding Research Question

This hermeneutic phenomenological study investigated lived experiences of three state teachers of the year that teach a state tested content area, teach in rural, suburban, and urban schools, and teach in elementary and secondary locations. This study asked teachers to describe their experiences with relation to leadership during educational reform process. The primary research question for this study was: What are select, high performing teachers' experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform?

The researcher used an overarching question as points of examination during the interviewing process to unpack responses to support questions as a means to further the primary research question (See Appendix A).

Guiding Framework

The guiding framework of this study is van Manen's (2014) five existential life-worlds: temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body), relationality (lived self-other), spatiality (lived space), and materiality (lived things). This framework assisted the researcher in reviewing data about *what* teachers experienced and *how* teachers experienced educational reform within the constructs of the school system. This framework aided in exploring teachers' lived experiences and what leadership faced in the challenge of helping teachers become effective with teaching to the high stakes test and

mandates of a reform, while at the same time without losing the extemperaneous and constructive pedagogy.

Research Method Used

This research study was employed with a qualitative methodological lens and followed the tenants of hermeneutic phenomenology . Specifially, the study draws to the work of Max van Manen (2014) to uncover teachers' lived experiences with leadership practices during educational reform. By following Max van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology approach, this aided the research to capture the lived experience of the phenomena being studied: select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with school leaders during near recent educational reform. To synthesize data, this research encompassed three processes: lifeworld existentials as guides to reflection, thematic analysis, and hermeneutic phenomenological writing. The research included a population of three participants: three state teachers of the year that taught a state tested content area from the 2009-2014 timeframe. The method of data collection was a purposeful sampling as a method to select the participants in this study. This purposeful sampling helped inform practice by exploring the meanings of leadership practices from effective classroom teachers' experiences. These participants were able to lend an embodied manner in relation to leadership and educational reform for this research context.

Leadership Definitions

Over the past few decades, empirical studies have provided conceptual models of leadership: instructional, transactional and transformational. Since

this study examined the teachers' experiences of leadership within educational reform context, it is important to provide a brief discussion of instructional leadership, transactional leadership and tranformational leadership. These are the prodominent leadership styles that describe a vision for change within the educational system.

Instructional Leadership: A key factor to effective leadership and support of *successful change, school improvement,* or *school effectiveness* is skillful instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger (2003) concluded five findings on instructional leadership:

- Principals provide indirect influential actions for school effectiveness and student achievement.
- Principal shape the commitment of the school through the creating and caring out the school's mission.
- Alignment of school structures with the school's mission influences outcomes.
- There is a correlation of hands-on supervision to classroom instruction, teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
- The school setting influences the type of instructional leadership within the system.

Transactional Leadership: Transactional leadership sometimes coincides with transformational leadership, but "…transactional leaders focus on the exchange relation between themselves and their followers…" (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014, p. 415). This leadership style

tends to extract the individual from a team approach, which negates a collectiveness of performance while focusing on the individual achievements.

Transformational Leadership: Visionary leaders use transformational leadership and are sometimes rare to find (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Studies on transformational leadership show there is a positive correlation with teachers on changes in school improvement and instructional practices (Leithwood, 1992). Transformational leaders influence others through the communication of the vision for the future (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). With the implementation of transformational leadership, there is a sharing or distributing of roles within the educational system instead of a managerial or controlled approach to leadership, which lends to the transactional side of the leadership influence. Thinking differently than the operational norms promotes transformational leadership. Hallinger (2003) concludes that transformational leadership routinely promotes the following:

- Increasing the capacity of others.
- Creating a climate to engage learning and sharing with others.
- Identifying and working toward personal goals related to the educational organization goals.
- Increasing school/community relations.

Leaders face barriers in enacting effective leadership practices. These barriers are brought to light by the many roles leaders face within the

educational organization. The varied responsibilities of a school leader encompass many areas such as hiring teachers, disciplining students, and providing instructional leadership, makes it imperative to understand how leaders navigate these functional roles but still become exemplary leaders that promote teacher effectiveness (Donaldson, 2013).

Educational reform can put constraints on the leaders within the school organization, and this brings complexity to the educational system. Leadership that knows how to adapt to the complexity usually is able to promote teacher effectiveness. Some prerequisites to authentic leadership come through self-knowledge, capacity and sensitivity and are represented in a layering effect for better understanding of leadership support (Begley, 2006). Leaders need to understand change in order to lead it. "Understanding the [school] change process is less about innovation and more about innovativeness. It is less about strategy and more about strategizing. And it *is* rocket science, not least because we are inundated with complex, unclear, and often contradictory advice" (Fullan, 2001, p. 31). Further, Wagner (2001) notes the importance of effective school leaders for the future of the educational system, and that these leaders need to have the courage to work within a community that shares responsibility and builds collaboration within the system.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

This study stems from the pursuit to further understand and examine complexities of educational reform, the process of change, the variables in effective teaching and especially the leadership support provided or not provided

through the process. Five chapters are presented to provide the background for the study, educational reform discussion, literature review, methodology, phenomenological narratives and interpretation of findings. This, Chapter One provides an overview of educational reform and its interplay with the significance of the study. Chapter Two depicts through the empirical research related to school reform, teacher experiences of educational reform and teacher effectivess within the school system. Chapter Three describes the the research methodology, and describes the essence of hermeneutic phenomenology following van Manen's (2014) Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection for the interpretivist framework for this study. Chapter Four presents the findings of the phenomenological narratives of three teachers who display teacher effectiveness during educational reform. The final chapter, Chapter Five, discusses an interpretation of findings including a reflective awareness of the research questions and conclusions. These chapters provide discussion of educational reform, literature, descriptive narratives and findings that anchor the research question, and the implications this study adds to educational research and school leadership practice.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Perception is sometimes a difficult phenomenon to define because perception can take on different dimensions: emotions, social constructs and pressures. This research prescribes teachers' lived experiences with a hermeneutic phenomenology methodology. van Manen (2014) elicits the hermeneutic phenomenology should be free of emotions and perceptions because it sometimes overshadows the true lived experience. Most scholarly literature brings forth perceptions and emotion when discussing teachers and educational reforms. Therefore, this literature shows these two (emotions and perceptions) as a precipice for this research.

Concerns of the quality of education have been a topic that is ever changing. Detrich and Lewis (2012) paused to ask where we stand in the educational system, and where we need to go. Their research uncovered problems with the implementation process of educational reforms. There is very little research connecting how leadership is carried out in the implementation process of educational reforms to support teachers. This notion leads to a need to develop an understanding of how teachers experience self, the school system and leadership support before an effective implementation of the educational reform could even transpire. To grasp an overall understanding of what the teacher faces within a reform context, this review of literature begins with a descriptive analysis of school reform then moves to the discussion of empirical

research pertaining to teachers' experiences on educational reforms, and the impact of reforms on teacher effectiveness.

School Reform Research

Educational reform is meant for good intentions but is met with challenges along the way. With teachers being the mainstay and real practitioners of the classroom, it is important to look at the realities these teachers face due to educational reforms. Olsen and Sexton (2009) used a school reform research analytical frame in their study of teachers at a reforming high school to show how the implementation of school reform mediated how teachers perceived their work through the reform implementation process. The school reform research is added to this study to gain insight in the underlying challenges teacher may face with reform implementation, and review of the timeframe of the years 2009-2014 since it is a focus of this study.

Recently, the United States has taken a renewed interest in the public educational system. The nation, through businesses and higher education, voiced their opinions of the educational system deeming students were not college and career ready (Achieve, 2008). This sparked conversations through the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to provide standards that met the needs for students to be college and career ready. Therefore, a tidal wave of educational reform transpired throughout most of the United States.

Through the Achieve Report (2008), America sees the unveiling of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a national educational reform to create a

common set of standards across states. In 2001, Achieve, Inc., the Education Trust, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the National Alliance of Business to increase success for all students so they are ready for college or career founded the America Diploma Project (ADP). This CCSS focused on two areas: English and mathematics. The Common Core State Standards in addition to college or career readiness then became a consequence of the America Diploma Project when states began work on aligning the standards to meet global demands (Achieve, 2008). Increasing student achievement is the underlying goal of adopting the Common Core State Standards in addition to college or career readiness, because these standards increase student expectations (Stecher, Hamilton, & Gonzalez , 2003). In March 2010, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers were the first organizations to release the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010a). Most of the fifty states adopted the Common Core State Standards including the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) (Standards in Your State, 2014).

A report produced by the Center of Education Policy in 2012, tracked the progress of implementing the Common Core State Standards. The key findings included progress towards the new standards, more rigorous standards and challenges with implementing the standards. These challenges included finding the sufficient funds necessary to fully implement this initiative. This has caused states to push back its full implementation of these standards timeline (Kober &

Rentner, 2012). Common Core State Standards have met challenges with nine states in 2013 proposing to cut funding or drop the Common Core initiative (Bill Status Tracker, 2013). This puts educational systems in disarray with limited directions on which way to go for educational leaders and teachers.

Recent Oklahoma legislation examined the Common Core State Standards closer and turned the educational system upside down by changing the educational standards once again.

> HB 3399 by Speaker Jeff Hickman (R-Fairview) and Senator Josh Breechen (R-Coalgate) passed the House last Wednesday evening with a vote of 78 Yeas to 12 Nays. This bill repeals the current Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and directs the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt revisions to the CCSS by August 1, 2016 in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act. College and Career Ready Standards must be certified by higher education institutions before implementation in 2016-2017 school year. The bill calls for the SBE to conduct a comparison of the new standards and the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) standards and submit a report of that comparison to the Governor and legislative leadership. Finally, it prohibits a state agency, employee or official from entering into an agreement or contract with a federal agency or private

> entity that cedes or limits state discretion over the subject matter standards and student assessments, and states that those standards and assessments will be under the sole control of the SBE. This bill passed the Senate Education Committee on Monday, March 24 (Ross, 2014).

Oklahoma is once again revising the academic standards in which the teachers need for classroom instruction. While the revision process is ensuing, they are reverting back to the previous standards before the Common Core initiative called the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) of 2009, which is also called the Oklahoma Academic Standards (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2014).

Oklahoma vied for Race to the Top grants by establishing educational innovation effort standards. Efforts continued by implementing the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) in 2011, which heightened the teacher evaluation system in Oklahoma. Fifty-percent of teacher evaluation is measured through qualitative means (quality of instruction in the classroom), and fifty-percent is measured by quantitative means (value-added models and other academic measures) (Lacireno-Paquet, Morgan, & Mello, 2014). Oklahoma was not awarded the Race to the Top funding on the first attempt, which was announced March 29, 2010 (Phase One Resources, 2011). This put into action another educational initiative through an accountability measure called the A-F Report Card. This report card is prepared by the state using local education agency data. Many factors are integrated in the grade reporting creating a dynamically

challenging quantitative measurement for districts in achieving a grading of A-F (Tamborski, 2014). Again, Oklahoma was not awarded the funding through the Race to the Top federal initiative (Phase Two Resources, 2011). Oklahoma again fell short in phase three of the Race to the Top grant (Department of Education Awards $200 Million to Seven States to Advance K-12 Reform, 2011). In light of the RTTT grant, this grant brought about many educational changes and demands upon the educational organizations within the state of Oklahoma.

This tangled web of educational reform initiatives and its effects on Oklahoma's public education system provides a macro level view of what states are experiencing with educational reform. It is difficult for teachers to understand the directions these policies want them to travel when it seems they are not stable and continue to change regularly. Overall, change is necessary to keep up with the global educational demands and the evolving human nature for advancement and success in society. For the teachers there are complex processes involved with educational change because it involves many levels including the individual, organization and the system (Le Fevre', 2014). With teachers being the mainstay and real practitioners of the classroom, it is important to look at the educational realities these teachers face due to educational reforms.

Educational Leadership Practices

As described in the previous chapter, many educational leadership styles have emerged over the years: instructional leadership, transactional leadership,

and transformational leadership, but to elicit more insight to this research, focusing on best leadership practices will bring to the forefront an understanding of the education process leading to student achievement. Educational leadership practices help produce what students learn. Leithwood (2008) ascertains that research should support best practices on educational leadership for today's students and point in a direction of the "next practices" for student achievement.

Many have researched best practices. Educational leadership can take on many aspects from a building manager to a curriculum director. Research supports key practices that enable leaders to become effective within the educational organization. According to Stronge, Richard and Catano (2008), there are goals (building and sustaining a school vision, sharing leadership, leading a learning community, using data to make instructional decisions, and monitoring curriculum and instruction) for supporting best practices. To provide a clearer picture of best leadership practices, this section highlights accompanying best leadership practices to support these goals.

Building and Sustaining a School Vision

Setting goals for a clear school vision and providing direction for these goals motivates educational change. Many researchers have stressed essential elements for leaders to implore a school vision upon the educational organization, which include exploring, modeling and articulating the purpose of the vision (Burns, 2008; Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Yukl, 2006). Formal communication to the stakeholders is

important in channeling information expressed in the vision (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

At times, building a school vision comes from politically motivated expectations (Kahn, 1996). A vision statement may go through opposing forces from stakeholders. Through this process of differences from the stakeholders involved, it allows progression towards a school vision that is sustainable for the educational system (Carpenter & Kennedy, 1998).

To build a school vision, trust in leadership helps find a common ground and sustain the direction of the vision. Trustworthiness builds competence in educational leadership. Bolman and Deal (2008) emphasize building trust is a key to success of the vision. In a study by Handford and Leithwood (2012), twenty-four teachers were interviewed from three "high trust" schools and three "low trust" schools as deemed by a survey previously administered in nine states. After the survey was administered, administrators used a likert scale to determine "high trust" and "low trust" schools. The teachers volunteered to participate in the research. The purpose of this study was to determine leadership practices as interpreted by the teacher to be trustworthy and indicators of this trustworthiness. Findings showed a correlation to previous research of successful leaders presented by Bono, Hooper and Yoon (2012) where "big five personality traits" of competence, consistency & reliability, openness, respect and integrity prevailed and reinforces the findings by Handford and Leithwood (2012).

Sharing Leadership

Improving effectiveness with leadership is an important characteristic of educational organizations. A previously failed program along with its improvement efforts brought forth a study by Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) searching for leadership factors that improved school effectiveness. This research studied 17 surveys, 15 case or field studies, 2 combined survey and case study designs, 2 ethnographies, 2 pre-experiments and 1 conference. Even though a principal's role is complex, the results show important factors for improving effectiveness: shared based decision-making, work closely and regularly with teachers, build cooperative interpersonal relationships, gain support from all stakeholders, which shows the principal's role is crucial in improving effectiveness within an educational organization.

A meta-analysis study by Leithwood and Sun (2012) of 79 unpublished studies were compared to published transformational school leadership results, and the findings showed researchers should be more attuned to leadership practices instead of leadership results. The implication of this research also emphasizes narrowing in on "practice specific" in understanding how leadership influences student learning. The practices, which are included in transformational school leadership models, provide more emphasis on a shared vision/goal and provide individualized support. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found creating an organizational culture centers on sharing common meanings and values. Sharing these common meanings and values correlates with the

previous section of shared vision and goals to help promote school effectiveness (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000).

Leading a Learning Community

Instead of administrative matters within the educational organization, leaders are being attentive to building professional learning communities within the educational system to promote school effectiveness. "Leaders of PLCs [Professional Learning Communities] promote focus on results by using technology to provide all staff with timely, relevant, user-friendly information that enables individuals, teams, and the school at large to identify strengths and weaknesses in areas of student learning" (DuFour, Eaker, DuFour & Karhanek, 2005, p. 5). When teachers meet regularly, this provides opportunities to gain access to student information necessary for promoting student growth. Teachers within a professional learning community are able to learn together about the current student levels and approaches necessary for achievement according to Schmoker (2005).

Improving learning performance can also be seen through critical reflection and journal writing. A study by Msila (2013) focused on instructional leadership using writing as an important daily practice for teachers. Within this study a low-performing, impoverished school in a South African rural area, found "…journal writing strengthened the teachers because they learnt a number of aspects not only about themselves but about their learners as well" (p. 85). Overall, engagement or participation is critical for professional learning communities to work. Hoaglund, Birkenfeld and Box (2014) surveyed teacher

candidates before instruction, during instruction and at the end of the practice of professional learning communities. When these candidates were engaged and participated with the process of professional learning communities, they were more supportive of the group efforts. The Wallace Foundation (2013) emphasizes a key leadership practice is providing systems and structure support for teachers. It is important for leadership to create a supportive environment within the educational organization.

Using Data to Make Instructional Decisions

Student data helps teachers make informative decisions regarding the individual needs of their students. Research supports that monitoring student data has substantial results on student achievement (Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Day and Leithwood (2007) through their research showed, "Data-driven school improvement planning helped to stimulate collaborative dialogue, shared learning, the recognition of the importance of professional development, and the monitoring of progress towards achievement of shared goals" (p. 159). Fullan (2005) notes in his research that most schools will show progression when on-going learning or an "assessment for learning" is utilized for school improvement. Principals reflect on increasing academic achievement within their organization and find that focusing on assessment performance and setting aside time for data-driven planning, builds capacity for student achievement to prevail (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

Monitoring Curriculum and Instruction

To ensure the school's vision and goals are being met, administrators should evaluate instruction (Blase & Blase, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This evaluation should include meaningful feedback for teachers to improve curriculum and instruction. According to Bucker (2002) a responsibility of leadership is to coordinate the instructional program. Assisting coordination of instructional programming for teachers help show support and attentiveness to the classroom.

Murphy, Elliot, Goldring and Porter (2006) emphasize the need for educational leader assistance with aligning curriculum while providing the time and support necessary to accomplish both vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum. Part of monitoring curriculum and instruction includes support through professional development. This responsibility comes highly from educational organization leaders (Smith & Piele, 2006). Effective leadership needs to spend time in the classroom to ensure quality instruction is taught and provides feedback of strengths and weaknesses (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

Knowledge of instruction is important for leaders. "The principal also needs special capabilities for leadership; recruiting teachers loyal to the common task of teaching a specific group of children, knowing individual teachers well enough to suggest specific improvements, creating a culture in which deep knowledge of instruction serves as the foundation for an interdependent professional community" (Fink & Resnick, 2001, 600).

Table 1 Educational Leadership Practices

Leadership Goals	Leadership Practices	Research
Building and Sustaining a School Vision	Exploring, modeling and articulating the purpose of the vision Sorting through opposing forces Trustworthiness Shared vision & Communicating Shared Vision Competence, consistency & reliability, openness, respect and integrity	Burns (2008) Fullan (2003) Hargreaves & Fink (2005) Kouzes & Posner (2007) Yukl (2006) Carpenter & Kennedy (1988) Handford & Leithwood (2012) Bolman & Deal (2008) Bono, Hooper & Yoon (2012) Wallace Foundation (2013)
Sharing Leadership	Shared decision-making Cooperative interpersonal relationships Organizational Culture Improving Effectiveness Support from all stakeholders	Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) Leithwood & Sun (2012) Hallinger & Heck (1998) Leithwood & Jantzi (2000)
Leading a Learning Community	Professional learning communities Collaboration Reflection Participation Engagement Support	DuFour, Eaker, DuFour & Karhanek (2004) Msila (2013) Schmoker (2005) Hoaglund, Birkenfeld & Box (2014) Wallace Foundation (2013)
Using Data to Make Instructional Decisions	Progression monitoring Focus on assessment performance Data-driven planning	Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs (2005) Day & Leithwood (2007) Fullan (2005) Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline (2004)
Monitoring Curriculum and Instruction	Evaluate instruction Provide feedback Professional development Provide time and support Deep knowledge of instruction Time in the classroom	Blase & Blase (1998) Hallinger & Murphy (1985) Bucker (2002) Murphy, Elliot, Goldring & Porter (2006) Smith & Piele (2006) Fink & Resnick (2001)

Teachers' Experiences of Educational Reforms

Research on teachers' experiences of educational reform in the past has been lacking, but since an era of reform has surfaced, there have been new emergences of research looking at an understanding of what teachers' experiences are regarding educational reform. Emotions are at the forefront of teacher experiences of educational reform. "Emotions are understood as experiences that result from teachers' embeddedness in the interaction with their professional environment" (Kelchterman, 2005, p. 996). Through this review of literature, one would see how emotions are woven through the teachers' experiences with school reform initiatives. It makes a researcher ponder, "If emotions are woven through perceptions, are perceptions woven through emotions?"

When educational change happens, teachers' emotions are a central part of the instruction processes because the impact the education change process has on teachers tend to be brought forth through emotions. Saunders (2013) used a mixed methods approach in her study to better understand the emotions teachers face with a new instruction implementation. The main intentions of Saunders (2013) study were to grasp the emotional role of teachers' experiences with new practices and how professional development played into the role of new knowledge acquisition of the teachers. The study used a change process and a mixed methods approach to analyze teachers' emotions through professional development of instructional changes. Teachers first reported anxiety, tension and stress, but when they became more familiar and refocused, the teachers

experienced emotions of enjoyment and confidence. The study went further to show their emotions as recurring during the change process because their emotions of the change began with *apprehension* and *fear* and then flowed into *enthusiasm* and *excitement.* Teachers felt the professional development helped with the success and beliefs in the change process. The professional development programs played a critical role in the stages of instructional change. The findings of this research show the professional development needs to be informed based of teacher change, understand the interconnectedness of teacher emotions and change, emotions need to be acknowledged by policy makers and administrators and building relationships through the change process.

Because current research encompasses teachers in the heart of educational change, it is important to gain insightful knowledge of the lessons presented by Fullan regarding an educational change process. Educational change will accompany an educational reform initiative, and Fullan (1993) has formulated eight lessons of educational change that have appeared through the years of reform change to help understand what should happen through the educational change process.

Lesson 1*:* "You can't mandate what matters (The more complex the change, the less you can force it.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21). Force is such a strong word in any workforce mindset. Sometimes we forget educators are actually an integral part of the workforce within the educational system because educators have seamless capabilities of overshadowing the business-to-product mindset;

therefore, education is not normally viewed as a business. Mandate is a force to carry out a process and is predominately used as a verb within the educational context, which means the actual doing of something. With the complexity of educational reform, it is difficult to simply force or mandate change.

Lesson 2: "Change is a journey not a blueprint (Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty, and sometimes perverse.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21). This journey produces many variables throughout the change that affords a complex structure. Most of the time the journey includes an intended end goal or product, but how you get to the end of the journey will look differently for all the people involved. If there is a structured blueprint, which most reforms include, this creates chaos within the educational system.

Lesson 3: "Problems are our friends (Problems are inevitable, but the good news is that you can't learn or be successful without them.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21). Successfully working through challenges, help educators understand almost all of the facets or dynamics of the proverbial equation. The questioning also encourages an understanding of the professional self, utilizing retrospective and prospective indications of the teachers' knowledge and beliefs with an underlying insight of how leadership influenced teachers during educational reform.

Lesson 4: "Vision and strategic planning come later. (Premature visions and planning can blind.)" Fullan (1993, p. 21). The first phase of implementing the complexity of educational reform is the reflective process. This affords the opportunity to look at where reform has been, where is it now, and where it is

going. Then, collecting a shared vision provides inclusion of stakeholders and works together through the process.

Lesson 5: "Individualism and collectivism must have equal power. (There are not one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21). The individual perceptive and belief are important because compromises and judgments will supervene through the reform pathway. Collectively bringing these people together provides alternative insights and creating a shared vision. Isolative thinking provides reflective methods, but collective approaches without the inclusion of the groupthink mindset helps sharing solutions in a collaborative effort.

Lesson 6: "Neither centralization or decentralization works. (Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 22). Turnbull and Turnbull (2000) concluded that both of these approaches are necessary, and simply one approach will not be work effectively. Again, educational organization and educational reform are complex, and a top-down approach presents a control over the organization. Refer to Lesson 1.

Lesson 7: "Connection with the wider environment is critical. (The best organizations learn externally as well as internally.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 22). Effectiveness within the educational system rely on both teachers and the organization, but two things must happen: 'First, individual moral purpose must be linked to a larger social good.' This promotes working conditions that promote teacher effectiveness and student achievement. 'Second, to prosper, organization must be actively plugged into their environments responding to and

contributing to the issues of the day.' This provides a connectedness with both school and community.

Lesson 8: "Every Person is a change agent. (Change is too important to leave to the experts.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 22). Change is facilitated by an individual's internal drive to adjust their *environment.* Sergiovanni (2001) discussed the importance of understanding the self through routine and nonroutine inputs. It proposes that change can possibly exist from one's internal drive during the reform process.

Teacher emotions emphasized in school change were also studied using a social-psychological framework on emotions. A case study conducted by van Veen, Sleegers, & van de Ven (2005), a teacher welcomed the new strategy of building portfolios with each student within the curriculum because it aligned with the current teaching tasks and promoted career growth, but negative emotions were experienced with lack of time to implement strategies and lack of support from colleagues and administration. The amount of time it took creating and updating the portfolios caused dissention centered on frustration and isolation. These emotions presented personal concerns, moral concerns and social concerns about school initiatives. From the study, motivation, lack of self-esteem and lack of growth were included in the personal concerns. Moral concerns revolved around the student learning and type of teaching. Relationships with students, fellow teachers and administration played into the social concerns (van Veen, Sleegers, & van de Ven, 2005). These relationships provide a social aspect to the emotions teachers face within the environment of

educational reform.

A study conducted about understanding educational reforms applied threat rigidity to acceptance of educational reforms. Threat rigidity posed two ways of analysis in this study: a federal level, which gave a macro view of reform pressures and a local level, which initiated a micro view of analysis at Hawthorn High School. This threat rigidity forced teachers to adopt school reform through *administrative control* and forced *teacher conformity*. With this type of adoption process, teachers were not able to voice their concerns regarding the reform process and caused teacher hostility in this study. Contextual words used in the conclusion of this study showed the teachers perceptions on educational reform: *self-protection, fight-or-flight,* and *teacher resistance* are simply a few perceptions teachers faced with the implementation process (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). This also goes along with Rowan's study, but in his study there is an added element of commitment by the teacher within the organization. Rowan (1990) presents a study developing two models of systems: *control* and *commitment* within the organization structure. The control strategy is noted as a regulated classroom with *input, behavior,* and *output controls* the system places on the teacher to increase student achievement. The commitment strategy is teacher supported and discards the control of the system (Rowan, 1990).

In a study on teacher perceptions regarding curricular and instructional adaptations, collaboration is the *cornerstone* of good programs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). It is necessary to find the time to collaborate effectively with

other teachers and leaders. For teachers to be effective in the classroom, they must have the skills necessary to incorporate the curriculum and adapt to the changes. Incorporating and adapting these changes are enabled by collaboration and professional development.

Careers stages also have an effect on teachers' perceptions on educational reform. Hargreaves (2005) conducted a study regarding teachers in their early career stages, they seem to adapt to the generational changes through the *occupational* and *social environment* (Hargreaves, 2005). During the middle stages of career, teachers have mixed emotions on change because they are still young in their career to adapt better to change, but they are also resistant to change because of the years spent with educational reform initiatives within the school system. They have willingness but also hold back some of their enthusiasm towards the educational changes. Although the teachers facing retirement find that,

> "Towards the end of their careers, as their bodies begin to deteriorate, their experiences of repetitive educational change wear them down, and impending retirement weakens the grip that others have other them, most teachers become resistant to and resilient toward change efforts outside the classroom, and concentrate their remaining energies and rewards on a more relaxed sense of accomplishment within it" (p. 981).

Hargreaves (2005) also noted that teachers' emotions are seen with this study in the sense of how they should deal with the educational changes comparing positive and negative aspects to their current teaching practice. As determined

by Hargreaves (2005) work, career stages and emotions provide a look of teachers' perceptions during the process of educational reform implementation within the educational organization.

Impact of Reforms on Teacher Effectiveness

Teachers, principals and superintendents agree that when educational policy is changed, it tends to come from policy makers and not from the voice of the workers in the educational system. Discernment towards educational reforms without the teacher voice impacts the efficacy of teachers. "New relationships must be formed, new goals must be agreed upon and a new spirit of cooperation must come to characterize the work of all those who believe that a healthy and effective public education system is fundamental…" (Townsend, 1998, p. 42).

Transformative Professional Development (TPD) Model (Johnson & Marx, 2009) was used to guide a study of reform and analyzed the professional development on the effectivenss of teaching, the environments in the classroom and relationships between students and teachers. With the implementation of professional development constructed around teacher and student needs, most teachers improved their classroom practices, and some teachers showing the least improvement in teacher effectiveness were career teachers. The career teachers in the Johnson and Marx (2009) study patterned their teacher training, which they received prior to 1996 instead of current teaching practices. This study correlates with the study presented by Hargreaves (2004) where resistance to change is prevelent.

Occasionally teachers feel they are taking a risk when asked to make pedagogical changes. Le Fevre' (2014) conducted a study providing evidence that changing pedagogy with levels of high risk along with a hesitancy to take said risk posed an impediment for change. Changing the perception of risk, which includes fear, was key to implementing the new curriculum. The school administration and school district provided support necessary to change the perception of risk and enabled the curriculum changes. This empowered the teacher within this study to implement the new practice (Le Fevre', 2014).

Teacher effectiveness calls for instructional leadership in two capacities: *intellectual capital* and *social capital* (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Some instructional leaders may be better in one capacity than the other. This does not mean they are ineffective, but they should work to intertwine the skills together especially when facilitating professional development practices, which is key to the impact of reforms on teacher effectiveness.

Teachers react differently to reforms depending on the context in which it is adhered. Emotions go from a more general view to a more specific view the closer the reform gets to the actual classroom practice. The classroom posits the teachers' own principal purposes on what they believe are the basis for teaching and learning. According to a Schmidt and Datnow (2005) study, positive emotions include joy, enthusiasm, satisfaction, comfort, trust, confidence, validation, contentment and affirmation, but the negative emotions encompass guilt, self-doubt, worry, anxiety, stress, nervousness, boredom, resentment, frustration, unhappiness, apathy and uncertainty. These mixed-emotions vary

depending on the educational reform knowledge and the type of leadership that helps navigate the change. The findings of Schmidt and Datnow's (2005) study suggest a need for leaders to make sure teachers have the resources necessary to implement reform, understanding of the changes of pedagogy and emotional support. These will help promote teacher effectiveness through the change process and present the conditions necessary for a successful implementation of reform efforts.

Since emotion is woven through the teachers' perception on educational reforms, it is significant for leadership to understand the impact emotion causes through this change process. Hargreaves (2004) study on emotional responses in the educational change process presented four issues to consider when leading through reforms. First, when change is mandated, teachers demonstrate a negative response and resentment towards the change because of motives behind the reform and the pressures with the implementation process. Second, if change comes from the internal mechanism of self-initiated change, then teachers have a positive emotional response to the change. Third, *change-oriented teachers* are teachers' who usually carry a positive emotion with a mandated educational change. "These change-oriented teachers (in terms of legislated agendas) are more likely to be female, younger, in minority rather than mainstream subjects and in innovative rather than traditional schools" (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 305). Fourth, high school teachers focus more on how students benefit from the change while elementary teachers focus on the social aspect to improve their classroom practices for student learning.

Fullan (2001) noted that teachers tend to change their instructional practices during educational reform and an important component of this instructional change is professional development. “Network structures” (Rosenholtz, 1987) reinforce teacher improvement and commitment to the system. The Rosenholtz (1987) study rejects the control of the systems and allows the teachers autonomy with curriculum improvement strategies. Teachers incorporate routine instructional practices into their classroom through the leadership support within professional development and evaluation (Rowan, 1990).

Most educational initiatives are structured around a governance approach and motivated by political systems (Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013). To put the above findings into perceptive and analyze the impact of educational reforms on teacher effectiveness, it is better understood through *self*, *systems* and *support*. Each of these three will be discussed below.

Self

Teacher perceptions also known as the “self” go hand-in-hand with educational reform. Teacher perceptions are dynamic when conceptualizing how the profession interacts with educational reform. These concepts are seen as, “Emotion and cognition, self and context, ethical judgement and purposeful action: they are all intertwined in the complex reality of teaching. In times of educational reforms, aimed at changing teaching practices for the better, these complexities are brought to the light even more prominently” (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996). Teachers’ feelings are *vulnerable* and *uncertain* when there is an

immense amount of specialized learning in educational reform (Robinson, 2011). In the study by Saunders (2013) on teacher emotions to change, she found when teachers were interviewed to discover *self,* teachers were uncertain about the demands of the educational change. There are multiple levels of understanding teachers' perceptions in relation to educational reform. According to Le Fevre' (2014) some teachers perceive risk as an element to educational reform where uncertainty and possible loss come to light. Further, two meanings about educational reform came from the works of Bantwini (2010): teachers had negative concerns regarding a Revised National Curriculum Statement, and some did not lend support. Teachers implement change at varying degrees dependent upon the *individual* and *social processes of sense-making* (Marz & Kelchtermans, 2013).

A study on the teacher "self", which included moral and ethical dimensions both separated and interconnected, Santoro (2011) unveils how these can go hand-in-hand. If a teacher is unable to address the student needs due to reform measures in place, this issue possibly interferes with the moral rewards of the job. These constraits may influence teachers to leave the job when they experience moral and/or ethical reasonings. Santoro also suggests that further research is needed to explore if these reasonings cause teachers to leave the profession, but she also goes on to note it would be important to research if teachers are staying in the profession when moral rewards and ethics are brought into question due to reform measures placed upon the educational system.

Systems

Teachers perceive "systems" in terms of organizational expectations as emotions to educational reform. Hochschild (1993) performed a study on *emotional labor* where it showed teachers change their behaviors in order to mold the behaviors around organizational expectations. This research goes further to state the emotional labor is viewed negatively but necessary for teachers to have the emotional rewards of the organization through acceptance and security. Through Fullan's (1993) research his examples of understanding the *school as a learning organization*, he noted that "…top-down reform strategies have virtually no chance of reaching the core problems" (p. 51). Reforms commenced for increasing the organizational control over the teaching in the classroom. According to many scholars, teacher morale is in danger when these organizational controls take over (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1987; Rowan, 1990). Even more, while through the *management* discovery, teachers were concerned about the management of time, resources and logistics of the new reform, and *refocusing* showed teachers were seeking new ways of using the educational reform (Saunders, 2013).

Satisfaction with the system can be seen through job enrichment and goal setting. A study by Umstot, Bell, Jr., and Mitchell (1976) combining satisfaction with job performance presents the impact of job enrichment and goal setting. Job enrichment produced an impact on satisfaction but little on performance, while goal setting had more of an impact on performance than job satisfaction.

System controls pressure teachers to perform a specific way. Teachers become a more rote object instead of an instructional leader for the students. The self and system may interlock together through the social constructs, which are interpreted by teachers. This linking of the teacher's interpretation of self and system may also face contexts in *vulnerability* within "…(policy, environment, social and cultural climate in school, ets.) and is directly linked to teachers' identity" (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 997). Kelchtermans (2005) explains further that teachers face complexity with educational reforms, and this complexity leads to the influence of teachers' classroom practices. Something as simple as the educational system creating time within the day for teachers to plan, promotes effective teaming. Sometimes teachers are trying to navigate these logistics of complexity, but if the system creating a schedule affords planning, this would help the teachers' needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002).

Support

Educational reform brings about a demand for system support. Saunders (2013) research included descriptions of teachers' perceptions during the educational reform process. Teachers tend to change their instructional practices during educational reform and an important component of this instructional change is professional development (Fullan, 2011). Support structures (Rosenholtz, 1987) reinforce teacher improvement and commitment to the system. This study rejects the control of the systems and allows the teachers autonomy with curriculum improvement strategies. Teachers incorporate routine instructional practices into their classroom through the support of

competency-based programs, frequent evaluations, and intensive staff development efforts (Rowan, 1990).

Research Responses to Educational Reform

It is important to understand the need for educational reform and how it influences the educational system. Research about these responses guide this research study in providing insight of the underpinnings, whether it be political or organizational, the leaders and teachers face when a new initiative is infused in the school system. This section is going to discuss research evidence in support of critique of educational reform.

The RAND Corporation presented a study regarding educational change. McLaughlin (1989) a researcher in the RAND Corporation study analyzed what does and does not work in changing education through a Change Agent Study and the findings include:

> Change continues to be a problem of the smallest unit, policy cannot mandate what matters, local variability is the rules; uniformity is the exception, initial motivation is crucial, reliance on outside consultants dooms a project to failure, the structure most relevant to teachers is the policy structure, projects narrowly aimed at discrete aspect of the system are likely to fail, content matter as much as process, we need to look to teacher networks as sources of change, and removing constraints does not insure effective practices.

Despite these illuminating findings, policy makers still attempt to place controls upon the educational system.

Educational change is intended to increase student achievement. In a study by Wagner (2001), he questioned, "What motivates adults to want to do new and sometimes difficult things?" (p.379). Even though educational initiatives pose accountable goals, Fullan (1993, p. *viii*) states, "…change is a journey of unknown destination, where problems are friends, where seeking assistance is a sign of strength, where simultaneous top-down bottom-up initiatives merge…" Fullan (1993) notes that change is necessary for educational reform, but there may be obstacles that require system support for successful implementation. Educational reform is explicit to the changes of the world, and political motives sometimes are incorporated in this process. As seen in the literature educational change brings about curricular roadmaps, equity, accountability, time, test pressures and forced rigor. These changes present both negative and positive connotations on studies of teachers' experiences on educational reform. Change is necessary to keep up with the challenges of the world, but how the organization or policy proposes the implementation of change may need to be further investigated or current policies reinforced.

Effective Teaching

Teacher effectiveness is usually viewed through a linear dimension known as student achievement because the main goal of a teacher is to provide every child an opportunity to learn. Harris (2011) notes, "Over the years, many educational reforms have sought ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning" (p. 845). Further, reform initiatives rely on building teacher capacity for success of the implementation (Kaniuka, 2012). Sawchuck (2011) also

noted that a strong predictor of teacher effectiveness is indicated through the value-added model evaluation, which adds more dimensions in understanding effective teaching. Howes, James and Richie (2003) show through their study different pathways to effective teaching, which includes a quality teacher preparation education and support through mentorships and supervision.

Teachers are faced with many challenges due to the ever-changing educational climate, and maintaining teacher effectiveness is important through this evolving climate. Studies support the belief for teachers to promote cognitive thinking skills, and for effective teaching to occur it will need to include meeting the students' physical and emotional needs (Munoz, Scoskie, & French, 2013). Kelchtermans (2005) poses that self-understanding and vulnerability of commitment are important for implementation of educational change. Positive professional development experiences help teachers face these challenges and help support teacher effectiveness (Hamre, et al., 2013). *Self*, *system* and *support* are important for teacher effectiveness through an educational reform climate.

Literature Summary and Significance of this Study

Educational reform will continue to be a mainstay in the educational system because policy makers are continually seeking ways to improve student achievement, and teachers will continue to be a factor in the educational outcomes. Although reform is meant for the best intentions, multiple reforms and accountability pressures wreak havoc by creating immediate stressors on the educator trying to implement the reform with due diligence, while hoping for

positive student outcomes. It would be beneficial to attach the teachers' knowledge and expertise in the classroom to the discussions regarding educational reform (Spencer, 1996). Since there are multiple factors to teachers' experiences on education change especially noted through the lens of emotion and perceptions, it is important to understand teachers' experiences and leadership influences on these experiences with educational reform. From uncertainty, to lack of time, to being apprehensive of the risk, teachers want to do what is best for the students in their classroom. There are important ramifications in understanding teachers' experiences within the context of educational reform for the future success of further reform movements. Teachers' experiences on riding the roller coaster of education reform vary from embracing change to finding a loss of autonomy in the classroom (Sergiovanni, 2001). The teacher is an integral part of implementing the educational reform, and the reform is reliant upon the teacher to employ the changes for the students in the classroom. As the literature shows, school leadership helps navigate through both the occupational and social environment of educational reform. From professional development opportunities to support structures, school leaders can be influential in the educational reform process.

Through this review of literature it is important to understand how teachers perceive change through self (emotions), system (organization/leadership) and support (professional development) and will be focal points in the research of this study. Teachers need the assistance of leadership, to assist them in helping gain positive emotions or perceptions of

educational reform, forming support systems within the organizations, and providing professional development centered on the teacher and student needs. Leadership has evolved and understanding the key influential factors, which leads to student achievement is significant for school organizations. School organizations depend upon many factors to determine the success of their schools, but this study contributes to practice by going beyond the surface and tapping into the threads or motivations that connect leadership to effective teachers.

This empirical literature described in this chapter provides a basis of understanding the complexity of educational reform. Particularly, the significance of this study examines the influential factors leadership contributes to effective teaching. This dissertation will expand the findings of empirical studies about leadership practices specifically by contributing data from teachers' experiences through the current and recent web of educational reforms.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Prologue

As a qualitative researcher, I stayed attuned to the realities of the human experience in relation to the phenomena. Hermeneutic phenomenology best fits this type of study because it explored teachers' lived experiences related to a socio-political event, which in this case is educational reform. Max van Manen (2014) stated, "…a particular group may be studied for the understanding of a phenomenological theme-such as a gender phenomenon, a socio-political event, or the experience of a human disaster" (p. 350). This addressed phenomenological text, and hermeneutic phenomenology provided the methodology to unveil these experiences. The researcher used two levels of theme development. First, the researcher attended to the lived experiences of the teachers and coded and themed to find emergent themes. After the emergent themes were presented, the researcher used the Lifeworld Existential Guides to Reflection by van Manen (2014), which provided a framework and helped find superordinate themes that helped explain the phenomenon of how leadership assists teachers through the complexity of educational reform.

The researcher explains her personal involvement of educational reform from 2009-2014: My professional experience of educational reform during the 2009-2014 timeframe was quite involved. In 2011 Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Janet Barresi, requested school districts and higher education agencies for assistance in the promotion of the Common

Core State Standards (CCSS). My district opted to participate in promotion of these standards, and my school was chosen to lead thirteen districts with the unveiling of the CCSS. A co-worker and I participated in all trainings and led meetings with the thirteen school districts under our service. At times information was not forthcoming from the state department level and research was necessary to answer the questions posed by these districts. We even achieved state-level recognition for our communication efforts among the districts. Then a change ensued, and the state education agency took over the distribution of information to all districts, which changed how the standards were communicated. Some districts were not aware of this change and information was not streaming to each district. This caused confusion, and districts were still leaning on our leadership for information.

To gain more insight on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative, I accepted a position on Oklahoma's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness For College and Careers (PARCC) leadership team. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness For College and Careers along with Smarter Balance were the two companies in charge of creating the assessment for the CCSS. Oklahoma participated in the PARCC consortium and assisted PARCC with assessment formation. I traveled to Chicago on two occasions with the leadership team to gain insight from PARCC officials on the assessment and also to be a voice for our state. After returning I held meetings with our district and other districts presenting the information obtained from the PARCC meetings regarding CCSS assessments. News of these assessments was not

received well, and apprehension of the CCSS continued its trek. After some states decided to opt out of the PARCC assessment, in 2013, Oklahoma state Superintendent, Janet Barresi opted out of the common-core assessment developed by PARCC (Robelen, 2013).

Much animosity among teachers in my district and among other districts ensued after the change in communication of the CCSS transition and the change in assessment directions. While these changes were taking place, the Oklahoma legislature passed into law the measurements for teacher leader effectiveness. These measurements included a quantitative component worth fifty-percent of a teacher's evaluation aligned with the testing of the state standards (Lacireno-Paquet, Morgan, & Mello, 2014). Then in 2014, the legislature repealed the Common Core State Standards (Ross, 2014). With the standards and assessment in a flux, teachers have sought guidance from leadership, where leadership has been undermined by changes in educational measures.

My reflection on this reality aligns with the leadership aspect of implementing educational reform. I led teachers through the changing of standards to the CCSS. I also helped teachers gain insight on the assessment component of the proposed state testing. All of the time and effort spent leading teachers in the direction of Common Core went away when the state level agencies changed the direction before the complete transition of standards and assessment were implemented. I felt my leadership was being undermined with decisions that were out of my control, and once again, I had to cheer on my

teachers through the animosity of public education in the state of Oklahoma helping them keep the constructivist pedagogy in the classroom. Some teachers flourished through the complexity of education reform while maintaining a constructivist pedagogical approach. Since leadership has been weakened by the many changes taken place in a limited amount of time, some leaders have been able to help teachers with this complexity of issues.

Reflexivity of the research allowed self-questioning, self-understanding and how inquiry should proceed to acquire new knowledge of the phenomenon (Schwandt, 2007). In this qualitative research, the researcher is the principal accumulator of data collection and analysis within this study. It was crucial for the credibility of the research for the researcher to stay attuned to the context of the data. Like the participants, I, the researcher, am employed in the educational system and work in the capacity of leading and assisting teachers with the understanding of the educational reforms and the complexity of changes. I have also participated on state level and national level committees that provide a understanding of the vocabulary within reform initiatives and the demands placed upon the teachers, which provides an advantage to the research, but it was imperative that the analysis is not based on pre-conceived notions, which is a disadvantage to any study. Being mindful of both, the researcher employed van Manen's (2014) qualitative procedures for conducting research where "Scientific method…that is impartial, impersonal, and free from the idiosyncrasies or personal styles of the persons who employ such scientific method" (van Manen, 2014, p. 29).

Hindrances can arise if the insider does not attend to the researcher's role within the research. It was important to keep the ethical conduct within the research to minimize bias to the study. However, I did not participate in the role of a classroom teacher within the timeframe of 2009-2014; therefore, it allowed me to gain insight of teachers' experiences within this same timeframe and gain richer meaning to the researcher's own experiences of educational reform.

Since qualitative research is an interpretive research, the researcher included reflexivity within the methodology to attend to the importance of the researcher understanding their own background, culture and experiences. These components of the researcher "…hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they acribe to the data" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). Max van Manen (1990) also suggested being aware of the interpretative meaning of the participants' interviews with the researcher's personal experiences, and this interpretative meaning within this research was themed using van Manen's (2014) Lifeworld Existential Guides to Reflection.

My story provided a background to the underpinnings of the intricacy of educational reform in the state of Oklahoma. While the complexity is there, some leaders effectively assisted teachers throughout this process. This study unveiled the key leadership traits that assisted teachers to attain the constructivist pedagogical approach through teacher interviews using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

Introduction

Educators have experienced immense change in the educational system over the past several years. Educational reform has placed challenges of high stakes testing while lending minimal support on the national and state levels. The school districts, in turn, have scrambled to keep up with the complexity of changes placed before them. Leaders face the challenge of helping teachers with the complexity of educational reform while maintaining a constructivist pedagogical approach. For this research study, hermeneutic phenomenology provides the methodology to unveil the teachers' lived experiences faced during educational reform. This Chapter Three postulates historical background of phenomenology and van Manen's (2014) five existential methods as the guiding framework for this study. Issues of ethical considerations are also described in this chapter.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Qualitative Method

This study looked at phenomenology through the words of Husserl (as cited in Smith, 2013), Heidegger (1985), and Gademer (1998); and ultimately followed the process of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis as postulated by van Manen (2014). Husserl began his concept of phenomenology through his work, *Logical Investigations,* and introduced two different elements of theory: psychological theory and logical or semantic theory (as cited in Smith, 2013). Phenomenology seeks truth in lived experience and "…has its origins in the work of Edumuch Husserl, who framed it primarily in philosophical terms-specifically as study of 'essences,' of transcendental, ideal structures of

consciousness" (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012, p. 2). Husserl's motivation for interpreting phenomenology began with the philosophy of Franz Brentano (Dowling, 2007). Husserl believed the lived experiences themselves present themselves in a way they can be reflected upon as cited in van Manen (2007).

Heidegger's (1985) interpretivist approach to phenomenology is a state of being involved. "Knowing is a mode of being of in-being" (Heidegger, 1985, 161). Phenomenology is an insightful look of our in-being. In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger's "hermeneutical situation" is described as asking questions about ourselves and who we are and what we become in the nature of the situation (Heidegger, 1962, p. 275). Heiddegger (2000) refutes the practical use of phenomenology stating, "Nothing comes 'of it' and 'you can not do anything with it' (p. 13). Therefore, an insightful look at the self brings forth the nature of the situation.

Max van Manen (2007) shows the works of Gadamer (1998) through a practice vs. theory lens. Hans-Georg Gadamer incorporates a constructivist approach to hermeneutic phenomenology involving the praise of theory as praise of practice, and also contends that meaning in our lives may not point to a theory but to practice (van Manen, 2007). Gadamer (1998) notes that "being present' in the lovely double sense that means that the person is not only present but completely present" (p. 31). According to van Manen (2014, p. 33) Gadamer seeks the truth and is a "…major theme in the practice of phenomenological human science". The intention of the phenomenology method is to extract the truth with experiences in the life context.

The richness of the hermeneutic phenomenology approach of lived experiences was a starting place within this research to understand suggestions of leadership practice. The research used the best methodological approach for obtaining data from the proposed research question, which was a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach.

Phenomenological research provided a pathway for inquiry in the understanding of phenomena. *Phenomenology* is the study of experience, particularly as it is lived and as it is structured through consciousness (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012). Phenomonenology has transformed over the years. In its infancy state it began as a philosophy and has evolved into a research method (Dowling, 2007). Creswell described phenomenological research as the research investigating lived experiences of participants through the participants understanding of the events (Creswell, 2014). There are two major variations of phenomenology: transendental and hermeneutic style, which deals more with the participants' complex experiences and internalization of a given phenomenon.

Philosophical Assumptions of Qualitative Inquiry

It was important to understand the philosophical assumptions of qualitative inquiry for the researcher to inform this research. Qualitative research explores and develops meaning from the individuals or groups within the problem (Creswell, 2014). Philosophical assumptions for inquiry included ontology, epistemology, axiology, and praxeology. Ontology plays a key philosophical role in qualitative research because it is concerned with the beliefs about their (participants) world and questions: "Whether or not social reality

exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a common, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and whether or not social behaviours is governed by 'laws' that can be seen as immutable or generalisable" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 12). Key ontological stances center on the nature of the world and what we know about: realism, materialism, subtle realism/critical realism, idealism, subtle idealism, and relativism. The reality of the external world is independent of our beliefs or understanding of the way the world encompasses the ontological stance of realism. Materialism continues with the independence of external world and beliefs but centers around the material or physical world as a 'real' component of the external world. Subtle realism adds the socially constructed meanings to the beliefs and understandings independent of the external reality. There is no external reality independent of beliefs and understanding, and the reality is through the human mind and social constructs. Subtle idealism adds to idealism with shared meanings and collective or objective mind. Relativism exists when reality is only known through socially constructed meanings, and there is no collective mind (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Ontology.

Ontologically, hermeneutic phenomenology presumes a relativist approach, the qualitative method was used in this study to investigate the research question because this type of research has the ability to provide the descriptions of complex issues surrounding teachers' experiences with educational reform and explores the lived experiences of the population within

the study. This research study used the hermeneutic style where the research questions allowed the subjects to give descriptions of their own insights or story about the phenomena. This was the best approach for this study because this research sought to understand the teachers' lived experience during the implementation of educational reforms. With these experiences this study gained insight on the teacher's self, system and support surrounding these reforms within the timeframe 2009-2014.

Epistemology.

Epistemology focused mainly on the true knowledge and included objectifying the conceptual experience (van Manen, 2014). Since theming the living experiences was resolute within the study, epistemology extracted the belief or knowledge of the issues within the lived experience straying away from opinions of the experience. Within the epistemological part of philosophy, "Epistemology has been primarily concerned with propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge that such-and-such is true, rather than other forms of knowledge, for example, knowledge how to such-and-such" (Klein, 2005, p. 1). Epistemology helped to concentrate on the knowledge of the lived experience and kept focus on the reality that the lived world stays in line with the validity of the study.

Axiology.

Axiology is also known as value theory where value is surrounding the nature of the experience and relation to moral categories (Schroeder, 2012). Axiology has two main significances within this study, which include "in the

considerable expansion that it has given to the meaning of the term values, and in the unification that is has provided for the study of a variety of questions-economic, moral, aesthetic, and even logical-that had often been considered in relative isolation" (axiology, 2014, para. 1).

Praxeology.

Thoughts around the writings of Karl Marx sparked a philosophy and an action theory known as praxiology (as noted in Ronnby, 1992). This action theory studies how humans conduct themselves through decisive behavior. "Praxiology builds on 'praxis thinking', i.e. thinking around the concept and phenomenon *praxis*. Praxis is *not* interchangeable with practice" (Ronnby, 1992, p. 317).

Interpretive Philosophical Paradigm

Using a framework is important for research studies because it guides the questioning, helps with the collection and analysis of data, and directs the intention for change (Creswell, 2014). A framework is intended to assist in solving problems within the field of study and intended to perform two purposes: one, provide a pathway for future research and two, give direction to the professional practice (Simonson & Thompson, 1997).

The employment of teacher commitment to the organization and how they respond to leadership helped build an understanding of how teachers reflect upon their experiences of educational reform and impact teacher effectiveness of educational reform. It combined a description, examination, reflection and applicable meaning to the situation. While reviewing the participants'

reflections and determining a meaning of the experiences, van Manen's (2014) thematic analysis was applied to data, and the researcher in this study utilized a selective reading approach. Following van Manen's (2014) selective reading approach the researcher carried out analyzing the statement(s) or phrase(s) that revealed a particular aspect of the experience from each participant. These statement(s) and/or phrase(s) were coded and themed, which presented meanings to the participants' experiences and emergent themes were unveiled. Using the selective reading approach helped the researcher use the phrases for developing and writing the phenomenological text abstracted from the participant data collected as per van Manen's (2014) approaches to thematic analysis. The threads of themes that emerged from the lived experiences across participants in this study were then applied according to Max van Manen's (2014) five existential life-worlds: temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body), relationality (lived self-other), spatiality (lived space), and materiality (lived things). The framework assisted the researcher in finding superordinate themes for this research. This process involved determining and theming essential experiences, where an essential experience affects the meaning of the phenomenon, and the researcher employed this experience as an important component to the research.

Max van Manen's (2014) five existential life-worlds assisted in understanding the research question centered around how leaders face the challenges of helping teachers with teaching to the high stakes test and mandates of a reform, while at the same time without losing the extemperaneous and

constructive pedagogy. Using van Manen's (2014) work as the guiding framework for this study provided relevance to the design and analysis of the research unveiling influential leadership aspects, which occurred during educational reform. Key aspects that influence teacher effectiveness help leaders understand what standards are needed to promote teacher effectiveness and incorporate these key standards into their leadership.

Research Question

Through the reform process, leaders face the challenge of helping teachers with teaching to the high stakes test and other mandates of reform, while maintaining a constructivist pedagogical approach. Thus, the complexity of leadership increases when educational reform happens. The primary research question for this study is: What are select, high performing teachers' experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? This question allowed "…an element of wonder: discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary" (van Manen, 2014, p. 298).

Leading to the understanding of a phenomenological study, this research incorporated two analytical elements: the phenomenological question and the experiential quality of the data (van Manen, 2014). To question whether teachers are effective through educational reform and if leadership support was included or needed during the reform process, this qualitative study integrated interview questioning to explore the teacher experiences. The development of a question(s) and the understanding of the question(s) were the preliminary concerns before determining the research method (van Manen, 1990).

Beginning the questioning phase of any research, the researcher pinpointed the true emphasis of the study. This study sought a clarification of how school leadership helps teachers continue teaching effectiveness during an educational reform process. Therefore, gaining insight within the school context teachers navigated the channels of change helps leaders see the struggles, challenges, and circumstances teachers faced and how leadership helped teachers navigate through those challenges during the educational reform cycle. By using a hermeneutic approach to this study and van Manen's (2014) thematic analysis, the common themes that emerged from the data are embedded within the dialogue of the research findings in Chapter 4 that show key influences of leadership during the educational reform.

Teachers within this study provided responses to the research question and their experiences with leadership offered insightfulness, which is significant to this study. These understandings through their lived experiences brought forth this type of study. Hermeneutic phenomenology guided the research question because it extracted the experiential process of leading and teaching during an educational reform measure. Accentuating the organizational and social experiences teachers faced during complex times provided more depth to the research question.

Focus of Study

This study focused on how educators were affected by educational reforms and how leadership supported or hindered the reform process. It reviewed the years from 2009-2014; wherein, a number of reform policies were

promulgated in the United States to improve public education. This focus within the educational context explored teachers' experiences and described the essence of their lived experiences of educational reform. These teachers' lived experience and the focus of this study related these experiences to leadership supports within the school system.

Sample Selection

Participants

This study used a purposeful (Merriam, 1998) sample group for an in-depth look of what teachers' experienced during an education reform. The researcher had a sample of five possible participants who obtained Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year during the timeframe of 2009-2014. The researcher reached out to all possible five participants, and three teachers volunteered for inclusion/participation for this study. This inclusion fit the scope of the study and provided significant insight to the research question given their work experiences aligned to the participant category of this study: effective teaching distinguished through the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year program and the educational reform initiatives within the state during the 2009-2014 timeframe. Hence, purposeful sampling led to narrowing down the possible list of participants, helped inform practice by exploring the meanings of leadership practices where participants lend an embodied manner in relation to leadership and educational reform for this research context. Further teacher background was noted for each participant in the following chapter including the basis for district teacher of the year, years taught and awards received.

This study procured three participants: three state teachers of the year that taught a state tested content area, taught in rural, suburban, and/or urban schools, and taught in elementary and secondary locations to provide an all-encompassing look at experiences with educational reform and leadership support or lack of support during the 2009-2014 timeframe. These teachers of the year were identified for possible participants because they excelled in the classroom during the time of educational reform. This purposive sample lends insight to this hermeneutic phenomenological study rather than to conduct a random sample because the research focus was defined to examine the lived experiences of teachers during a specified timeframe working during educational reform.

All teachers selected taught during the time of heightened educational reform and went through a rigorous process in becoming the state teacher of the year. These participants' stories bring to life their experiences with leadership practices during the complexity of educational reform and tell their exemplary pedagogical practices in the classroom. The participants' lived experiences within the phenomenon of this research reverberated with my own experiences with leadership-teacher relationships during educational reform measures. The participants' stories in this study provide a rich understanding of the leadership-teacher relationship and provide insights to the leadership-teacher experiences within education.

Description of Teacher of the Year Program

The Oklahoma State Department of Education's Teacher of the Year Program presents general qualifications for the state-level Teacher of the Year. Classroom teachers in grades Pre-Kindergarten to 12 in an Oklahoma accredited school may be nominated. The nominee should be a classroom teacher dedicated to a "group of students" with the pursuit of academic achievement for all students. The selection process includes a local education agency announcing their local Teacher of the Year. Each local education agency has their own criteria, and the general procedures are included within the sample collection. The local Teachers of the Year then compile a portfolio for the six regional selection committees, which will choose twelve finalists. After the twelve finalists are selected, each finalist will go through the state selection process including an interview and submitting a DVD of their classroom instruction. The recommendation of the state selection committee will then be presented to the Oklahoma State Superintendent. The announcement of the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year is then made in September of each year (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2014).

Description of Data Collection

Data was collected through personal, in-depth, interviews with each of the three participants. All of the teachers taught a state tested content area. This study became hermeneutic when the researcher gained insight of the challenges leaders faced of helping teachers with teaching to the high stakes test, while at the same time without losing the extemperaneous and constructive pedagogy

through the teachers' lived experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology analyzed the participants' *situation in the world* (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012). The interview questions were open-ended and did not lead to any assumption of the phenomenological study. The main ideas behind the questioning process that followed the phenomenological methodology, which asked for the true experiences of each participant in terms of the phenomena teacher-leadership where leadership practices influence teacher effectiveness during educational reform and the contexts that affected the experiences of the phenomena.

In-depth Interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews were essential to this research and helped explain the meanings and illuminate themes among the lived experiences of the participants. It was important for the researcher to grasp the meaning of what the interviewee said (Kvale, 1996). The research stayed attuned to van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology because the interview questions asked each participant about their lived experiences, which provided the conversational aspect of the interviews where the researcher was able to learn more about the participants through their real world experiences.

The researcher used IRB approved questioning for an in-depth exploration of meanings from the participants' reflection narrative of experiences that occurred during the timeframe 2009-2014, where their educational system experienced educational reform initiatives (see Appendix A for Interview Protocol). The data for this research study was derived from transcripts of the audio-based interviews from three state teachers of the year.

Each interview was conducted in the time and place set forth by each participant, and the questions within the interview encouraged a conversational reflection of experiences attained during the educational reform. All participants were forthright in their reflections, and the researcher attained meaning through their explanation of experiences, observations of body language and intonation of voice. van Manen (2014) states, "The phenomenological interview is used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential material" (p. 314).

The interviews explored five main areas in regards to the main research question, "What are select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with their school leaders during near recent educational reform?" These five main areas are focused on van Manen's (2014) existential methods: temporality-lived time, corporeality-lived body, relationality-lived self, spatiality-lived space, and materiality-lived things. The responses to these interviews were transcribed, were verified by the participants and notations made of the interview data according to van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological approach to synthesize data, which encompassed three processes: thematic analysis, Lifeworld Existentials as Guides to Reflection, and hermeneutic phenomenological writing. A preface of each interview began with an introductory conversation and handshake to gain an impression of each participant and to establish rapport and human connection with each participant.

Data Analysis Strategies

Theming

The use of "theme" in this study referred to a component frequently occurring within text. "Theme analysis" was a process the researcher used to uncover the themes or strands of themes, which were evolved from the contextual meanings of the teachers' lived experiences. Max van Manen (1990) described these phenomenological themes as an effort to unearth the structures that make up the experiences. He also stated that lived experiences are an applicable source for discovery of thematic traits.

There are three approaches of isolating narrative transcriptions for theming suggested by van Manen (2014), which include: wholistic reading approach, selective reading approach or detailed reading approach. The wholistic or sententious approach attends to the main significance of the text as a whole. The selective reading approach attends to statements or phrases that unveil the experience being described in the study. The detailed reading approach looks at every sentence or cluster and asked what is being described in the experience. These approaches are then applied to the transcribed text.

A selective reading approach was utilized by the researcher in this study according to van Manen's (2014) thematic process, in which the researcher analyzed the statement(s) or phrase(s) from participant data that revealed a particular aspect of the experience as it related to the research question. The researcher used two levels of theme development. First, the researcher attended to the teachers' lived experiences and coded and themed the experiences to find

emergent themes. Once the emergent themes presented themselves the researcher maintained an orientation to the relation of the experiences and moved from the parts of the experience to the whole of the experience using van Manen's (1990) methodical structures in the hermeneutic writing. After the emergent themes were presented, the researcher used the Lifeworld Existential Guides to Reflection by van Manen (2014), which provided a framework and helped find superordinate themes that helped explain the phenomenon of how leadership assists teachers through the complexity of educational reform. The research became clear and findings via superordinate themes of *support*, *communication* and *inclusion* are noted leadership practices for teacher effectiveness during an educational reform.

Lifeworld Existentials as Guides to Reflection

Existential methods by van Manen (2014) gave guidance to existential inquiry within this research. Relationality-lived self-other gave insight to how the self relates to the phenomenon in the study. Corporeality-lived body showed the awareness of the body to the phenomenon. This included awareness of desires, fears, cheerfulness, and anxiety of the phenomenon. Spatiality-lived space pertained to the experiences of space faced within the phenomenon. Temporality-lived time allowed insight to the time placed within the phenomenon including objective and subjective time, clock time, and phenomenological time. Materiality-lived things included the "things" experienced within the participants' lives and how they contribute meaning to the experience of the phenomenon. The researcher applied the coded meanings

to this guiding framework and attended to hermeneutic phenomenological writing for this study.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing

Within the hermeneutic phenomenological writing, the researcher attended to the spoken language. This writing attended to the research and remained with the content of the interviewed participants' text. This allowed the researcher to convey in writing the information obtained through the research. van Manen (1990) connects writing and reflection together in hermeneutic writing, "Yet for the human sciences, and specifically for hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself" (p. 125). It was important for the researcher to maintain attentiveness to teachers' meanings of their lived experiences.

Hermeneutic Circle

A key strategy from hermeneutic phenomenology is the hermeneutic circle, and "The hermeneutic circle is a metaphor for understanding and interpretations, which is viewed as a movement between parts (data) and whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), each giving meaning to the other such that understanding is circular and iterative" (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, 622). This circle allowed the researcher to stay open through questioning process and the study of the phenomenon. The researcher created text from the data collected from the participants and field notes. Allowing the *text to speak* provided an emergence of understanding through the process. Interpretation of the participants' data created an overall picture as the data moved from the parts

of the experience to the whole of the experience. The hermeneutic circle provided an analysis of the depth of the lived experience (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Collecting data from teachers' lived experiences of educational reform from 2009-2014 and utilizing the hermeneutic circle through this process allowed the research to collect the parts of the experience, including leadership influence, to the whole experience, including teacher effectiveness in light of van Manen's (2014) lifeworld existentials.

Max van Manen's Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Methodology

Max van Manen (2014) describes hermeneutic phenomenology as a method to capture the lived experience of the phenomena. Hermeneutic prompted the reflection of the experience of this phenomenon, which is presented through consciousness and provided insight for interpretation. Hermeneutic is also called an "interpretive-descriptive phenomenology" (p. 26). The consciousness provided an association to the lived world experience.

There are six "methodical structures" in the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology by van Manen (1990). This research study followed these six structures. The structures provided research actions to gain insight from the consciousness through the lifeworld experiences. The six research activities included (van Manen, pp. 30-34):

1. Turning to the nature of lived experience.
2. Investigating experiences as we live it.
3. Reflecting on essential themes.
4. The art of writing and rewriting.

5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation.
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

Turning to the nature of lived experience.

Max van Manen (2014) noted that some experiences cause us to ponder and reflect on something that happened in our lifeworld. These everyday experiences, when given time to reflect upon them, generated meaning of a phenomenon and provided responses to the research question. This allowed an overall view, looking at the whole moving from the parts of the experience to the whole of the experience, which was teachers working with their school leader during near recent educational reform. The researcher analyzed the experiential material for reflection by using the selective reading approach, which highlighted words and phrases. The researcher then used a pre-set code of theming using the data. Themes emerged through this process, which the researcher reflected upon. After themes emerged the researcher adhered to van Manen's (2014) guided existential inquiry of relationality, corporeality, spatiality, temporality and materiality to find superordinate themes for this study. This provided an overlay for the hermeneutic writing, which kept the movement of parts of the experiences to the whole of the experience and stayed attuned to the true meaning of the teacher experiences.

Investigating experiences as we live it.

Our everyday world brings about experiences. Within this phenomenological research, the researcher grasped the meaning of an experience related to the phenomenon. Through the understanding of Merleau-

Ponty (1962, xvi-xvii), lived experiences postulates, "The world is not what I think, but what I live through…If one wants to study the world as lived through, one has to start with a direct description of our experience as it is" (van Manen, 2014, p. 385). van Manen (1990) further explained for the researcher to gain better insight they should break away from their own beliefs to ensure the, "study of the essential structures of the world" (p. 175). As noted in the Prologue to this chapter, the researcher explains her personal involvement of educational reform from 2009-2014. The researcher stayed attuned to breaking away from her own beliefs throughout this study, and the analysis was free of any pre-conceived notions.

Reflecting on essential themes.

Existential methods by van Manen (2014) gave guidance to existential inquiry. This process involved the researcher adhering to the research question, looking at the data of teachers' lived experiences for coding and theming to find emergent themes, applying the experiences to van Manen's (2014) five existentials as guides for reflection: temporality, corporeality, relationality, spatiality and materiality to uncover the findings via superordinate themes of this research. Following the qualitative methodology, the researcher used the selective reading approach by highlighting words and phrases that were stated numerous times. These in turn presented emergent themes through the text where the researcher found commonalities in the text and applied a beginning list of preset codes, which organized the data. After these commonalities were applied to the preset codes, the researcher refined some of the codes where the

codes were expanded to revise the category. The coding and theming provided an illustration of factors influencing teacher effectiveness. This emergence of themes can be linked back to the data and is described further in Chapter 4.

van Manen (1990) refers to the use of theming in qualitative research. The process of theming, according to van Manen regularly used a mechanical purpose of coding terms in transcripts according to the frequency counts as he notes:

> Making something of a text or lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning. Phenomenological themes may be understood as structures of experience. (p. 79)

The text brought sources of meaning to the whole story, the separate paragraph, and in the sentence, phrase, expression, or single word (van Manen, 2014). Discovering themes provided insight to the phenomenon within this research. Van Manen used five existentials as guides for reflection in which the data for this research followed these five after the data was coded and themed.

1. Temporality (lived time) allows insight to time placed within the phenomenon including objective and subjective time, clock time, and phenomenological time. Time looks differently when the participant is actively involved in the situation (pp. 305-306).

2. Corporeality (lived body) shows the awareness of the body to the phenomenon. This may include awareness of desires, fears, cheerfulness, and anxiety of the phenomenon. The whole body takes on meaning as it reacts to the phenomenon (p. 304).
3. Relationality (lived relation) gives insight to how the self relates to the phenomenon in the study. van Manen (2014) asks questions to explore the relational aspects of the phenomenon and may ask questions, i.e. "How are people or things connected?" (p. 303).
4. Spatiality (lived space) pertains to the experiences of space faced within the phenomenon. This takes into account both the inner world and outer world experiences of the participant (p. 305).
5. Materiality (lived things) includes the "things" experienced within the participants' lives and how they contribute meaning to the experience of the phenomenon. These things create a "material thing like reality" (pp. 306-307).

The art of writing and rewriting.

When transitioning from the consciousness to the lived experiences, van Manen (1990) suggested writing to uncover meaning through the language brought forth from the lived experiences. van Manen (2014) posed, "Some phenomenological research texts are written by the systematic exploration of placing the phenomenon in the context of existentials such as temporality, corporeality, relationality, spatiality, and materiality" (pp. 389-390). Writing and rewriting activities were performed by the researcher to reflect and rethink

because it helped the researcher go back and forth between the parts to the whole, which provided the meaning of the lived experience as this process is supported by van Manen (1990). Writing brought forth a reflective and research practice to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. This allowed the researcher to go back and forth within the lived experience data of the participants and reflect upon the participants' meanings to uncover essential themes for this research.

Maintaining a strong and oriented relation.

Staying attuned to the fundamental research question helped the researcher develop an understanding of the phenomenon and maintain a strong and oriented relation to the research. van Manen (2014) states, "The validity of a phenomenological study has to be sought in the appraisal of the originality of insights and the soundness of interpretive processes demonstrated in the study" (p. 348). The researcher was fully concerned with the study, which prompted the insights and soundness of interpretive processes that van Manen suggested for the phenomenological study. van Manen (1990) further suggested the rereading and rewriting of the themes to help the research stay attuned true experiences of the participants as it relates to the research question. The researcher reread and rewrote the themes to stay attuned to the participants' true experiences.

Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

In phenomenological writing van Manen (2014) encouraged to look at the *experiential description* as parts and whole to find themes or theme strands.

In this study, this process was adhered to and kept the researcher from losing focus of the phenomenon being explored. It was important to keep the bigger picture in focus at all times. van Manen (2009) claimed "it is easy to get so buried in writing that one no longer knows where to go" (p.33), maintaining there should be a semblance of the whole to keep the research in perspective. Maintaining the strong and orientated relation allowed the researcher to move from the parts to the whole and ensure the research stayed true to the phenomenological study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher attended the University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) 2014 Spring Graduate Student Training, which provided insight to information regarding conducting research. Before commencing this study, the researcher gained the University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval before conducting any research on human subjects. All code of ethics was considered in this study. IRB approval provided research conduct guidelines necessary for this qualitative research study to ensure the safety of all participants.

In addition to gaining permission from the University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board, it was necessary to obtain informed consent forms from participants agreeing to the requirements of the study before the data was collected. According to Sarantakos (2005) there are several key elements that go into an informed consent form that are similar to the University of

Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board's consent form and were used for this study. These include:

- Identification of the researcher
- Identification of the sponsoring institution
- Information about the research
- Identification of the purpose of the study
- Identification of the benefits for participating
- Identification of the level and type of participant involvement
- Notation of risks to the participant
- Guarantee of confidentiality to the participant
- Assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time
- Provision of names of persons to contact if questions arise

The researcher examined the information to ensure a thorough and descriptive informed consent was used in this study. Other forms for research approval included recruitment email and approval of interview questions. Anonymity of study participants and confidentiality in data was procured by masking identity by using "Participant One, Participant Two, Participant Three…".

Validation Criteria

The validation criteria presumed *an informed and scholarly competence on the part of the reader and reviewer of the phenomenological study and text* and provided clarity in examining the phenomenological text (van Manen, 2014, p. 347). For this particular research study, the researcher adhered to van

Manen's (2014) approach to validation, which is structured in and around the phenomenological question, the particular group within the study, experiential accounts, the study rooted in scholarly phenomenological literature, and avoided using a validation criteria from other methodologies. The researcher used van Manen's (2014) series of questions (p. 350) to adhere to the validation of this research study as a phenomenologically sound study.

1. *Is this study based on a valid phenomenological question?* Yes, this study's question supports a phenomenological inquiry where it posits: What are select, high performing teachers' experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform?
2. *Does the particular individual or group being studied for the understanding of a phenomenological theme relate to a gender phenomenon, a socio-political event, or the experience of a human disaster?* Yes, in this study the researcher included a socio-political event, educational school reform, during the 2009-2014 timeframe.
3. *Is analysis performed on experientially descriptive accounts, transcripts?* Yes, the data for this research study is derived from transcripts of the audio-based interviews from three state teachers of the year descriptive accounts of the experience. The interviews explored five main areas in regards to the research question: What are select, high performing teachers' experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? These five

main areas were focused on van Manen's (2014) existential methods: temporality-lived time, corporeality-lived body, relationality-lived self, spatiality-lived space, and materiality-lived things.

4. *Is the study properly rooted in primary and scholarly phenomenological literature?*

   Yes, to grasp an overall understanding of what the teacher faces within a reform context, this study's literature review begins with a descriptive analysis of school reform then moves to discussing the empirical research pertaining to teachers' experiences on educational reforms, and the impact of reforms on teacher effectiveness.

5. *Does the study avoid trying to legitimate itself with validation criteria derived from sources that are concerned with other (non-phenomenological) methodologies?*

   Yes, this study adhered to the van Manen's (2014) validation criteria in reviewing the phenomenological text and was guided by van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology.

Minimizing Researcher Bias

In this qualitative research, the researcher is the principal accumulator of data collection and solely analyzed the data for this study. It was crucial for the credibility of the research for the researcher to stay attuned to the context of the data. Unleuer (2012) reiterates the importance of the researcher understanding the role in the study, "It is crucial for social researchers to clarify their researchers' roles especially for those utilizing qualitative methodology to make

their research credible" (Unluer, 2012, p.1).

Like the participants, the researcher is employed in the educational system and works in the capacity of assisting teachers with the understanding of the educational reforms and the complexity of changes. The researcher also has participated on state level and national level committees that provided a understanding of the vocabulary within reform initiatives and the demands placed upon the teachers, which provided an advantage to the research, but it was imperative that the analysis was not based on pre-conceived notions, which would be a disadvantage to the study. Being mindful of both, the researcher employed van Manen's (2014) qualitative procedures for conducting research where "Scientific method…that is impartial, impersonal, and free from the idiosyncrasies or personal styles of the persons who employ such scientific method" (van Manen, 2014, p. 29).

Hindrances could arise if the insider did not attend to the researcher's role within the research. It was important to keep the ethical conduct within the research to eliminate bias to the study. Familiarity within the study could lead to a loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012). However, the researcher of this study did not participate in the role of a classroom teacher within the timeframe of 2009-2014; therefore, it allowed the researcher to gain insight of teachers' experiences within this same timeframe and allowed richer meaning to the researcher's own experiences of educational reform. As Gadamer posits in van Manen (2014), "…prejudices are not only unavoidable, they are necessary, as long as they are self-reflectively aware" (p. 354).

Chapter Summary

The interpretive philosophical paradigm of this study provided a basis for this hermeneutic phenomenological research in describing lived experiences attaining to the question: What are select, high performing teachers' experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? Phenomenological research is designed to describe lived experiences about a phenomenon. This methodology and questioning were important to this particular type of qualitative research. The participants selected for this study were teachers who have experienced success through an educational reform experience. Data collection and analysis data was coded and themed following the selective reading approach to find emergent themes, and the researcher attended the theming to van Manen's (2014) Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection to obtain superordinate themes for the findings. Researcher reflexivity was also utilized in this study providing an insightful, ethnographical look positioning the researcher around the study while staying attuned to the validation criteria. Hermeneutic phenomenology provided a circle of interpretative meaning, which takes into consideration the parts and the whole of the lived experience and was utilized for this study to meet the goals of understanding how leadership influenced teachers through educational reform reviewing the years 2009-2014.

CHAPTER FOUR

Phenomenological Narratives: Presentation of Findings

Introduction

The chapter unveils the everyday lived experiences of three teachers, who were state teachers of the year and who experienced educational reform during the timeframe 2009-2014. These study findings are presented following van Manen's (2014) method of phenomenology practice and are presented through van Manen's (2014) five Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection: temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body), relationality (lived other), spatiality (lived space) and materiality (lived things) as a guiding framework to gain insight on how leadership influences teacher effectiveness in response to educational reform, which was our guiding question for this research. While reviewing the participants' reflections via transcribed and audio-recorded data, and determining a meaning of the experiences, the researcher referred to van Manen's (2014) thematic analysis as noted in Chapter Three. This analysis entails: "Grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning that is driven by the epoche' and the reduction" (p. 320). As described in Chapter 3, the analysis of the data across participants led to the identification of four overarching themes. These emergent themes are: (a)strategies, (b)states-experience/support, (c)participation/interactions and (d)consequences pertaining to the participants experiences with reform and the support/no support from their respective school leader. In this chapter, these themes are italicized in the phenomenological

narrative as they occur in the reflections of the participants. The superordinate themes are presented in more detail in Chapter 5.

Phenomenological Narrative: Uncovering the Lifeworlds

The phenomenological narrative provides the uncovering of van Manen's (2014) five Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection. Each participant's data/findings and themes in this section are applied to the framework to the findings of this research. Within each participant's phenomenological narrative, the researcher related the detailed narratives to a preset list of codes and applied the particular aspect of the participant's experience to temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body), relationality (lived other), spatiality (lived space) and materiality (lived things) to gain insight of the research question of how leadership influences teacher effectiveness in response to educational reform.

Participant One

Participant One has been in education twenty-one years and has received numerous teaching awards including the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science and the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year. This participant teaches a state content tested subject, which has seen the effects of educational reform.

This teacher within this study was nominated as teacher of the year for the school site, in which the qualification process for obtaining site level teacher of the year is that the teacher has been in teaching for three years. Since Participant One has taught for at least three years at the site, the participant's

name automatically went on the ballot, and staff at the school site voted this participant teacher of the year. Once Participant One obtained the site level teacher of the year, the participant's name was submitted to the district level. To qualify for district level teacher of the year, Participant One had to complete a level one portfolio with five basic parts and submit it to a committee comprised of educators with excelling achievements. During this phase, Participant One's portfolio was evaluated with a rubric, and the participant qualified in the top 12 to advance to the second level of the district's procedure. Participant One completed a committee interview and submitted a classroom video for the second level of the competition. After completing all stages, Participant One was awarded the district level teacher of the year. Since Participant One achieved district level teacher of the year, the participant qualified for participation in Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year competition. The process to become Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year is identified in Chapter Three's Description of Teacher of the Year Program. Succeeding in all elements of this system, this participant was awarded Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year between the timeframe 2009-2014.

Participant One had three different leaders during the aforementioned timeframe. Each leader contributed a different experience within some of the lifeworld reflections. These findings will discuss all three leadership phases this teacher experienced during the timeframe, and the leaders are so noted as leadership one, leadership two, and leadership three, as linked to the participant's experiences with such leadership. The thematic threads of

strategies, states-experience/support, participation/interactions and consequences are italicized as they appear in the narrative pertaining to Participant One.

Temporality (lived time).

Time in which it is lived replicates our chronological way of being in the world (van Manen, 1990). The effective teacher within this study experienced leadership through educational reform initiatives from 2009-2014. Participant One talks about public education during the near end of *No Child Left Behind* and the *states of experiences* to attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) being experienced with leadership one. Not only did *No Child Left Behind* come into play but also charter schools were on the rise, which made a big impact on this teacher's school. Participant One recalled the pressures the reforms put forth:

> We were always highly ranked, but as soon as *No Child Left Behind* really kicked in, and we started nearing that 2014 the *pressure* was really on. Our school site is the only school that is not a charter, middle school on the north side; we got everybody that charter school didn't take. So we got them.

With leadership one, this participant experienced time in the classroom as an important factor this leadership gave the teachers to alleviate these *pressures* of educational reform and provide *support.* Participant One described the classroom experiences with leadership one and the evaluations as such:

> She was very *protective* of her teachers. She recognized our most essential work was in the classroom. She did everything she could to take care of that *time*. Not waste our *time*. We didn't have staff

> meetings if we didn't need it. She really knew what leadership was about. She understood leadership, understood reform, [and] understood the need to close the achievement gap.

This statement of experience provides emphasis to van Manen's (2014) lifeworld reflection on Temporality in that Participant One valued time in the classroom. Giving teachers time to work in the classroom links to an emergent theme of a strategy within the participant data. This emergent theme unveils a finding of a key leadership practice of support. If the leadership allowed the time in the classroom and did not waste time, this was important for Participant One's effectiveness in the classroom.

As previously mentioned, Participant One had three different leaders during the 2009-2014 timeframe. The third leader this participant experienced made educational reform the complete focus and eliminated the time to build relationships with the kids. This presented *constraints* during the educational reform. Participant One recalled an experience where the end of the year state test was all that mattered in the third leader's practices. The push-and-pull of leadership and educational reform caused this participant to experience a negative connotation of leadership due to the lack of support given, and the primary emphasis of leadership stemmed around reform measures but not the people (teachers and students).

> We have been told, 'The test is your boss.' We have been told, 'Every minute counts. Instruction is the only focus.' It's like she pulled us away

from what we were, [from] what was really good for the kids. It doesn't matter as long as they do well on the test. That has been her focus.

This narrative with regards to van Manen's (2014) Temporality of the experiences with the third leader contradicts the aforementioned issues with time in that Participant One was not allotted time in the classroom, but the third leader insisted upon teaching the test and nothing else.

In relation to van Manen's (2014) approach on Temporality, time was important to Participant One because it provided a classroom support the participant needed through the pressures and complexity of the educational reform. Participant One experienced time with leadership one in the classroom to be helpful in being an effective classroom teacher because when time was not afforded by the third leader, the participant experienced constraints within the classroom. This captures the significance of leadership providing time in the classroom as a practice of support from leadership and leads to a finding within the study of support being a key leadership factor of helping teachers become effective in the classroom during educational reform.

Corporeality (lived body).

The lived body poses, "Participation of the sensing, feeling and perceptive body is required to make sense of one's everyday life" (Shapiro, 1999, 38). van Manen (2014) asks, "How do our desires, fears, cheerfulness, anxieties incarnate themselves in the world in which we dwell? How is the phenomenon we study perceived, sensed, touched by the body?" (p. 304). Participant One spoke using particular words, and the shaking of head while

waving hands along with voice inflection emphasized the *difficulties* and *helplessness* accompanying the narrative. What it does not reveal is how many times during the interview Participant One's story returned to a *helpless* situation within the *interaction* experienced with the third school principal, leadership three, during the 2009-2014 timeframe regarding the teacher evaluation, which included Participant One's students' test scores. In the conversation about the pressures of mandating the reform measures presented by leadership three, Participant One kept returning to this *helpless* situation in the description about the evaluation Participant One received and the pressures of testing. Twenty-seven percent of the students at the school site were on an individualized educational plan during a time when modified state testing was still in place. What this teacher experienced and did not know at the time was only 5% of students taking modified tests could contribute to scores. The rest simply scored a zero for the value added model of the teacher's evaluative overall score. This experience centered on an evaluation received by leadership three and begins with the evaluation given to Participant One from the leadership three. As the participant noted:

> I was questioning [seeking explanation] about an evaluation. She said, [leadership three] 'I am not allowed to give highly effective. I've been told that if you are a D school, you do not have highly effective teachers. It *broke my heart*. I told her, 'I am so *sad* to hear you say that. In the fact that you believe it, it just *breaks my heart*.'

Participant One had trouble understanding why leadership three already had a preconceived notion regarding the evaluation process and also noted issues with the VAM [Value Added Model].

> A few days later I got my VAM [Value Added Model] score, which was from the previous year. I taught 8th grade Algebra and pre-Algebra. The first page [included] my Algebra kids. A hundred percent of my Algebra kids passed [the state test]. More than half [of my students] scored advanced, but my VAM score was a one. As a math teacher I was *dumb-founded.* I can't do better than a 100% proficient. I could probably get 50% more advanced, but how *unfair* is it to me, that in three more years, [and] if the legislation doesn't change, I would be fired for these scores.

Participant One's narrative as it pertains to van Manen's (2014), Corporeality is significant because it shows a sense of *helplessness* and *unfairness* through a specific experience with this participant's evaluation where a teacher did the best they could do in the classroom and all the students actually showed proficiency of the state test, but it was not enough according to guidelines of the educational measures and not enough according to leadership three. This experience lends itself to the emergent theme of *States-Experiences/Support* where the lack of support from the leadership during the educational reform provides an experience of this participant that is helpful in leading to the findings of support being a key factor in leadership practice.

As the state teacher of the year, Participant One had a voice that reached to the national level. Participant One wanted to advocate for this *helplessness*

experienced with the testing score and evaluation results. In the retelling of a discussion with Arnie Duncan, United States Secretary of Education, this participant was certain Mr. Duncan would listen to a discrepancy in the educational system where only 5% of students on an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) within an educational organization are allowed to take the alternative tests also known as OMAAP. Participant One's students consisted of 27% students on an IEP. Even if the students scored proficient, every student above the 5% automatically scored a 0 for the value added measurement, which is counted towards a teacher's value added model score.

> I actually went all the way to Arnie Duncan with that one because I had the opportunity. I had the voice. I had the opportunity that year. I said, 'Here is this [her VAM situation].' He said, 'Oh, that's not true.' He didn't believe me, and so I couldn't even get through to him, and he would have been the one person to see it change.

Participant One thought there was a way to make a difference in the way teachers were being evaluated. Participant One was willing to lead this charge, but when the participant's voice was heard on a national level, efforts were halted because Arnie Duncan, United States Secretary of Education did not believe it was true. Participant One experienced a lack of voice with leadership three, and this is significant to leadership practices of providing communication as a practice during educational reform. The experience of interacting with a national official as told by Participant One unveiled an emergent theme of *States-Experiences/Support*, which in turn shows a finding of inclusion, which is

a key leadership finding as it relates to practice during educational reform. Participant One wanted the teacher voice to be heard and a part of the reform process, but leadership did not openly accept the participant's inclusion.

Relationality (lived self-other).

Reflection on lived self-other is an important relational aspect, and van Manen (2014) states, "The existential theme of relationality may guide our reflection to ask how self and others are experienced with respect to the phenomenon being studied. To explore relational aspects of a phenomenon is to ask: How are people or things connected? What meaning of community? What ethics of being together?" (van Manen, 2014, p. 303). The teacher experienced a relationship with the first school leader within the prescribed timeframe of this research, being a close friend and also actively recruited by this leader. This also evolved into a system of *support* through the educational reform process and questioned the educational reform. Participant One discussed the relationship with the leadership one as such:

> She was just so *respectful* and *supportive*. Anything we needed. Anything. As a staff, [she] really *helped* provide us *professional development support* that we needed to really *help* every kid.

Participant One wanted every child to succeed in the classroom. It was important for this participant that the leadership helped foster this same notion. This participant found the system of support as beneficial for ensuring student success in the classroom, which helped teacher effectiveness during the educational reform.

> I was only there three years, but I had taken on a lot of leadership roles. I think she wanted to *encourage* me to grow in that area. She was always a *cheerleader*, and that caused me to grow. She wanted that for everybody, and she also said, 'I want you to *model* for others.' I'm the teacher I am because of what I learned at this school.

Participant One personally had *ethical questions* about the profession and concerns about educational reform within the school site. This led to discussions with the participant's first school leaders, and from this narrative account, *Participation/Interactions* emerged as a theme within van Manen's (2014) Rationality. For Participant One, the leadership one provided a pathway for communication of a complexity of the educational reform. As Participant One explained:

> For several years I remember having these *ethical conundrums.* Do we really spend the majority of the time with those bubble kids, who are so close, because that will push us faster? Or, do we really help every kid? Well, what about those kids who came after October 10th because they are not going to count on our scores? Do we really worry about them? How horrible is that?

This participant's experiences of the educational reform brought forth questions about the reform process. Participant One was able to have these discussions with the leadership and together made decisions together based upon what was best for student success.

> Those kind of *unethical conversations* that we had to have. We did have, and we all decided that it's unethical, and the reform efforts are pushing us to be unethical. We are not doing it, so we push back. No, we are going to meet the needs of all our kids because they are all here for an education. Life put them here, and we are here to *help* them. That's been our philosophy. It's what it should be.

Participant One experienced varying leadership practices from three school leaders within this research. When the *educational reform* happened during the timeframe 2009-2014, teachers within Participant One's school system started retiring due to the pressures and lack of support experienced with leadership three.

> And the fact that we kept losing teachers. [Our school] had a solid…more than half the teachers at [my school] had taught 25+ years so they are eligible for retirement. They started retiring as soon as reforms kicked in, and now again this year, four of the teachers leaving are retiring because they can't…they would stick with it if they had a different leader. If [leadership one] was there, they wouldn't be leaving because they are so passionate about their work. That is really hard with that type of *pressure.*

Participant One's retelling of the pressures of the educational reform and the pressures from the leadership within the timeframe 2009-2014 are viewed with van Manen's (2014) Relationality, which is relative to the relationships with leadership. Support was emphasized many times with this participant.

Participant One even felt *helpless* when leadership support was not available. The researcher was able to view both sides of support with this participant since this participant had three different leaders during the educational reform. These experiences were supportive of the emergent theme of *Participation/Interaction* and led to the finding that leadership support is essential for teacher effectiveness during an educational reform.

Spatiality (lived space).

Sharing a space within the school site are leaders, teachers and students while sharing a space in the classroom are teachers and students. Space within this narrative also shows how this school system is situated among charter schools in the vicinity of the school system. van Manen (2014) states, "How do we shape interiorities differently from exteriorities?" (p. 305). For Participant One, the *space* entails the school building, which is located within a community that houses charter schools and presents *difficulties* with educational reform, especially the evaluative systems because these charter schools normally chose the students with higher levels of achievement. This teacher experienced *helplessness* through the 2009-2014 timeframe through this reflection of leadership, and this *helplessness* was due to the testing pressures, teacher evaluation measures, and charter schools taking most of the higher achievement students from Participant One's school system.

> The pressure, especially at [school site], and it was so *frustrating* because our score would be published in the paper. People would say, 'I can't believe you serve the same kids as the charter schools.' I would

> say, 'Really? Have you visited the charter schools? Have you seen [a charter school]?' I started asking people, 'How do you think the charter schools gets their students?' They [public] just think it is an attendance zone. They don't recognize that it is a selection process. They don't realize the lottery, in and of itself, automatically segregates kids. They don't understand that whole process, that *pressure* to compete when it was apples to oranges.

In considering the story from Participant One, van Manen's (2014) Spatiality can be linked to the story about how this participant experienced a school system situated in a location surrounded by charter schools, and it was important to this participant because charter schools had the resources and higher achieving students. Participant One expressed frustration because the public and community did not seem to understand the dynamics of a charter and how it relates to public education. Communication with the educational organization and community would have been helpful in gaining more insight of the situation but since lack of communication existed in this experience, the *Consequences* were the public not understanding what they do in the public educational system and the charter school selection process.

Materiality (lived things).

The significance of "things" plays a role in the experiences of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). The meanings of "things" may also contribute to the phenomenon. This effective teacher experienced *support* through this educational reform from leadership one.

> If I came back from a conference and said I saw this great technology, she would say, 'How much is it? Ok. I'll get it for you.'

This is important to note in van Manen's (2014) Materiality because when Participant One experienced classroom support by obtaining the materials necessary for improving the curriculum, this support was helpful during the educational reform process for this participant.

With the infusion of charter schools, *helplessness* prevailed with this teacher in that the resources were not available to her school system. Participant One experienced a competition with the charter school because of the classroom resources available for that particular school setting versus Participant One's school system where educational resources were not as readily available.

> There was no way we would ever be competing because we need so many more resources to even have a remotely level playing field. With the folks [students] whose parents wake them up and drive them to school and drop them off. Make sure they have everything ready. It's just not even reality for us to compete. That was huge *pressure* on our staff, and our teachers got *frustrated* when the score would come out.

In unpacking the experiences from Participant One, there is a clear connection to the importance of lived things. Particularly, Participant One reflected that there is not a level playing field in charter school vs. public education due to lack of material support. This was a real concern for Participant One and clearly resounds an emphasis of *Consequences* because of the charter schools within the school district, which caused parents to choose a

charter school system due to the availability of resources, surrounded this public school.

Participant Two

Participant Two has taught for over twenty years. This participant has taught fourth grade and received teacher of the year in the district. Criterions for obtaining teacher of the year for the district was simply you have to be an employee for at least one year. After meeting this qualification, Participant Two was voted on by peers to receive district teacher of the year. Participant Two completed the state portfolio, interview process and classroom teaching video requirements as prescribed by the state level requirements and was awarded the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year award.

During the early years of the educational reform timeframe, this participant gained positive insight on the changes necessary for the new reform measures. In the beginning of the educational reform period 2009-2014, this participant experienced school leadership that extended a loose leash on learning about the educational reform and sharing insight with other teachers. As time went by and the complexity of the reform was divulged, complications unraveled through the state educational agency and state legislature causing great animosity from educators throughout the state and in Participant Two's school system towards the reform. When it came to the true integration process of the reform measures within the participant's school system, leadership did not include Participant Two in the process even though this participant had background knowledge of the educational reform. The thematic threads of

Participation/Interactions, States-Experiences/Support, and Consequences emerged from Participant Two's story and rich descriptions of these issues are linked to the themes, which are italicized as they appear in the teacher's narrative.

Temporality (lived time).

Participant Two reflected upon the beginning of Common Core, an educational reform initiative, when asked about the work-life experiences in education during the 2009-2014 timeframe. Leadership provided Participant Two professional development opportunities and described how national workshops provided opportunities to build a better understanding the Common Core initiative.

> It was kind of the beginning of Common Core, and one of my—the main experience I had is that my administration would send select teachers out to national workshops.

During the discussion with this participant, Participant Two noted that the Common Core presented a *division* among teachers within the school system because of the educational reforms that has come and gone. Some of these teachers have not witnessed the end results of previous educational reform measures. With the complexity of the reform and the animosity with the state educational agency, some teachers did not know what to believe. Participant Two experienced comments from other teachers regarding the reform measures and where teachers did not have total buy-in of the process.

> I do remember hearing comments like it'll be here today, gone tomorrow. It's just another reform. Especially some of the elderly teachers or even administrators would spout off the names of different reforms we had. So the buy-in was about *50/50*.

Allowing *time* to process the educational reform of integrating the Common Core standards was also discussed with Participant Two, which relates to van Manen's (2014) Temporality. Since *time* was presented in the participant's data and was noted as support of the integration of the educational reform, this information led to an emergent theme of Strategies that were helpful in teacher effectiveness within the classroom. Participant Two even stated an experience twice on how important *time* was to the integration process, and this *time* shows a finding of support as a leadership practice during educational reform.

> *Time* is a big deal. *Tim*e is a big deal. Because we have these ideas we want to try these new things. However, sometimes it's hard to implement it, the *time* to get it implemented.

van Manen's (2014) Temporality helped the researcher see that Participant Two finds *time* is important for understanding the reform measures to help reveal the truth behind the intentions of the reform as a leadership support. *Time* lends to an element of support within the leadership practice, which this participant longed for this type of support to fully grasp the complexities of the educational reform.

Corporeality (lived body).

Participant Two's passion about the teaching experiences comes through in a raised volume level when reflecting on the experiences and injects itself into van Manen's (2014) Corporeality where the emergent theme of Participation/Interactions is seen through the educational reform. During the conversations with Participant Two, there were intervals noted about the experience of the Common Core reform measures being *difficult* or *frustrating*. As the story was being told about the experiences with Common Core, Participant Two's demeanor changes by shaking the head back-and-forth, frowning, and shoulders slouching as if sinking into the participant's self. The experience with Common Core was further described as:

> We started to research it [Common Core]. And, you know, we were just given the go ahead to do what we wanted to do with that with *no real direction* [from leadership]. They were trying to figure it [Common Core] out. We were trying to figure it [Common Core] out. But I'm happy that my administration did *send us to those workshops* because that's where we started getting information about Common Core and direction about Common Core that we brought back to the leadership, and they listened.

Participant Two was grateful the leadership afforded these professional development experiences. Participant Two experienced a freedom to explore and gain insight of the educational reform. This also helped the participant gain a better understanding of the complexities of the reform.

> No one really was acting on Common Core yet. I think they were letting the teachers kind of feel the way. But as far as digging in and getting a game plan and a district level plan, that didn't happen.

As Participant Two traveled across the state through the role of Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, the participant began to notice a shift among the teachers and leaders of the state in the mindset behind the educational reform. This shift was moving away from Common Core. Since the participant believed in the Common Core measures during the timeframe 2009-2014 and spent time growing professionally trying to help others understand the measures, this shift caused *frustration* for Participant Two because the participant spent time analyzing and understanding the measures within Common Core.

> When I started traveling around [during the reign of Oklahoma Teacher of the Year], I realized that all of the newspapers and all of the information that was filtering out to educators in Oklahoma that everybody seemed to be mad about—I'm using everybody loosely, but people seem to be mad about it [Common Core]. Really. Other states were already doing it.

Participant Two did not want the leaders of the state, which were pushing the Common Core Standards, to change the pathway of this educational initiative.

> It was already being implemented, and it was—I'm not saying everything was working, but things were in place. There was a system, and it was working. Then it was *frustrating* to me because when you

would come back and you would see everybody's just really wound up over nothing.

Throughout the conversations with Participant Two, it was evident from the physical expressions to know whether the experience being described was pleasant or was unsettling. When Participant Two was pleased about the experience being described, the face presented a huge smile, the eyes were grander and arms were open through the conversation. Enthusiasm was witnessed when stating the recollection of the experience of the educational reform as is evident in this very vivid description of Participant Two's experience with the educational reform and the desire to share all of the participant's experiences with leadership.

> I was *bought in*. I'm *bought in*. I'm still *bought in*. But, you know, I think that—you know it was the same people that always kind of are the negative ones so I didn't take it too serious. You tried to *share* your ideas. You try to *model* that and show that things are working.

In the beginning of the educational reform timeframe 2009-2014, Participant Two had a positive experience with the reform measures with Common Core and wanted to share this with others. Through van Manen's (2014) Relationality, the participant provided insight that this participant wanted to be included in the educational reform process and share ideas, which leads to the inclusion as a key leadership practice. This inclusion is described further through Relationality and Spatiality of the Participant Two's experiences.

Relationality (lived other).

For Participant Two, the teacher-leader relationship began with the leader allowing teacher autonomy within the classroom. Leadership prompted professional development opportunities to proven teacher leaders for growth in Common Core. This provided *enthusiasm* for this participant to explore the Common Core, and Participant Two played an integral part with the district's understanding of the educational reform.

> My administration would send select teachers out to national workshops. We were given the green light to start trying kind of, you know, just playing with Common Core a little bit. But I'm *happy* that my administration did send us to those *workshops* because that's where we started getting information about Common Core and direction about Common Core that we brought back to the leadership, and they listened.

Since the leadership provided professional development opportunities for this participant, Participant Two was able to grasp an understanding of the Common Core educational reform measures. In the beginning this participant was able to share the understandings and help other teachers through the infusion of the Common Core initiatives. Participant Two's reflective experience with the leadership and guidance for the Common Core related to van Manen's (2014) Relationality in the interactions with leadership through the timeframe 2009-2014. Specifically, the participant's description of the experience with leadership and Common Core shows the *professional development* is connected to leadership and shows support through the Common

Core process. With this support presented in the discussion with Participant Two, an emergent theme of States-Experiences/Support was derived from the data. This helped lead to the finding of leadership support that promotes teacher effectiveness during an educational reform. Participant Two experienced Relationality through *professional development* opportunities provided by the leadership.

> The biggest influence is that my administration provided me a *vehicle*—not a literal vehicle but an *avenue* to go and learn from different [places] like in Austin and in San Francisco, and they were not afraid to send us out. But it was always a limited group. It was your go-getters. And that put a division in the school as well. Then the administrators were like, well, do I send my person that's not going to do anything?

Even though this division was created, Participant Two was thankful to be sent to the *professional development* workshops because it provided support necessary to understand the educational reform. Participant Two also was willing to share information with other teachers and leadership within the educational system.

> Their *trust* in what I did, you know, helped me. I was allowed to try new things. I was never bound or tied to a test. I mean, I taught a tested subject, fourth grade. But I never felt any pressure because I guess maybe the end results were always there.

Along with professional development opportunities, Participant Two experienced key elements of leadership practices of allowing this participant

classroom autonomy, and Participant Two experienced professional growth, which in turn the participant wanted to help other teachers and wanted to be a voice within the school system.

Participant Two's *enthusiasm* then turned to *difficulties*, and through the interactions with leadership, her views changed when the state began turning their back on Common Core. The state government began looking at getting rid of the Common Core measures, and leaders and teacher began spending less and less time on Common Core. Participant Two tried to explain to the leadership that it is working on a national level so why turn their back on Common Core. Participant Two experienced Relationality with leadership through this changing process of Common Core, where Participation/Interaction occurred. This Participant/Interaction is noted as Participant Two's voice not being heard or included in decision-making within the educational system by leadership.

> Everybody else is doing this too. They're ahead of us. This isn't just an Oklahoma thing. So that was *frustrating* when I would try to, you know, communicate with my administrators about that. And definitely they're they *boss*, they're the *authority*.

Participant Two recognized the leaders both site level and district level were the ones that made the decisions. This participant wanted to assist in this decision-making because of the background knowledge obtained through professional development opportunities given by leadership. The leadership drew the hypothetical line in the sand and began excluding the participant when

it came to decisions regarding the educational reform integration within the school system.

> I found a little tension there. Not because my voice didn't matter but because I now am having these experiences on a national level and getting these experiences where I was sent nationally before teacher of the year, but after teacher of the year—administrators seem to get sometimes *defensive* or a little pit *paranoid* that they might not—not that I knew more than they did but had different experiences than they did. So that [Common Core] was *stifled.*

When this participant became Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, Participant Two's district's leadership started showing signs of discord with the participant, and interactions changed along with practices within the district after obtaining Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. Again, the hypothetical line in the sand was still there even when the participant received state recognition of effective classroom teaching. Participant Two's experience gave a clear image of Relationality because of how of the leadership interacted with the participant after being named Oklahoma Teacher of the Year.

> Everything's good prior to when you get out of the classroom, that year when Oklahoma takes you out of the classroom. And then your experiences start giving you wider scope, global view and a bigger picture and then things kind of start getting a little shaky as far as administration and teacher. Not bad, just a little bit.

This participant faced an experience where leadership viewed Participant Two differently after becoming Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. Since this participant was from a rural area, the participant gained a global view of education when Participant Two took the reign of state teacher of the year, and the relations became shaky and indifferent between the participant and the leadership. As Participant Two reflected on how the school district changed the district level requirement for teacher of the year.

> Prior to me being Oklahoma Teacher of the Year—no one's ever been Oklahoma Teacher of the Year [in my district]. They made you. It was a requirement. If you were going to hold the title for the local level, you had to fill out the Oklahoma portfolio. So years and years and years people did. And the year after my tenure as Oklahoma teacher of the year, *they no longer want teachers to fill out the—[portfolio for state level competition]*.

The changes made within this participant's educational organization to the district teacher of the qualifications reinforced the change in relations between the participant and the leadership. van Manen's (2014) Relationality showed how this participant was supported by the leadership at the beginning of the educational reform. When Participant Two gained background knowledge of the reform and gained state level recognition of effective teaching in the classroom, leadership support dissipated and halted participant inclusion of decisions made within the educational organization.

Spatiality (lived space).

Participant Two's space is predominantly comprised in the classroom, a classroom in a small school set in a small town. This small town setting emphasizes van Manen's (2014) Spatiality in that small towns do not always afford opportunities of a state or national level understanding, but this participant grasped an understanding of state level and national level experiences by becoming Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. Spatiality fits this experience as Participant Two expresses:

> We were just *isolated* in our little small town. We kind of were starting to hear buzz words of common core, but no one really knew what it was.

Difficulties were experienced in the classroom due to *lack of direction* from the administration and total administrative decision-making. The administration prompted professional growth through professional development opportunities. They also allowed the participant to lead other teachers through the understanding of the educational reform, but when it came down to the true implementation process of the reform, the administration did not attend to the voice of Participant Two. With this exclusion of voice, Participant Two experienced lack of inclusion because this participant wanted to provide input for professional development opportunities during the educational reform.

> The administration kind of sat back and said you all do it, but *we're not jumping in full two feet in the water* yet. She [administrator] would delegate different teachers to be on like the professional development committee, and she would allow us opportunities to have an input on

what professional development we wanted to see in our district. That was one way we worked together. *Overall they had the final say about what professional development [we used]*. The [leadership] model somehow has gotten a little *top heavy*. The people [teachers] that have the biggest impact sometimes don't have the biggest say and the most input.

When asked about recommendations to school leaders when guiding and mentoring teachers during educational reform as it related to practice and teacher effectiveness, the participant strongly encouraged *sharing governance* within the space of the school system, which goes with van Manen's Spatiality.

Well, *shared governance*. I'm big on *shared governance*. Empowering your teachers.

Within the space of the school setting, this participant believes the top-down approach needs to be combined with the bottom-up approach to leadership. This is consistent with transformational leadership as discussed in Chapter One.

Materiality (lived things).

For Participant Two, the description in reference to purchasing professional development clearly indicates an importance, and definitely signifies that the 'lived things' pertaining to preparation for the Common Core reform initiative was important to this participant. The participant described that participating in professional development workshops on a national level and purchasing Common Core materials helped provide knowledge of Common

Core for a district seeking an understanding of these new standards being pushed by educational reform within the timeframe 2009-2014.

> She [administrator] would give---she did buy us a membership to the commoncore.org where we could print off like folders of lessons, unit lessons. She [administrator] purchased Common Core [materials] from Lake Shore and the different companies that were starting to catch on to the Common Core [including] literacy packs.

van Manen's (2014) Materiality shows the importance of purchasing materials helpful for the curricular changes in which the Common Core educational measures bring forth. Leadership provided the support for effective teaching through the purchase of materials necessary to gain more insight of the educational reform and access curricular support during the educational reform.

Participant Three

Participant Three has taught for over 22 years. This participant was voted district level teacher of the year through the school district colleague voting due to the participant's leadership in helping teachers and students along with leading professional development for the district. Requirements for participation in voting for teacher of the year in this district included being a certified teacher. Participant Three completed the state level requirements and attained the state level Oklahoma Teacher of the Year recognition during educational reform within the timeframe 2009-2014. Participant Three teaches state tested math subjects in the secondary. The thematic threads of Strategies, States-Experiences/Support and Participations/Interactions emerged from

Participant Three's story and rich descriptions of these issues are linked to the themes, which are italicized as they appear in the teacher's narrative.

Temporality (lived time).

Participant Three discusses the experiences of educational reform during the timeframe 2009-2014. van Manen's (2014) Temporality shows *time* to understand and implement the educational reform measures as important to this participant. This participant's experiences of educational reform show *time* as allowing student teachers *time* to grow, *time* in fostering student engagement the minute they walk inside the classroom, and *time* for teacher collaboration as benefits for the district.

> Sometimes we give them [student teachers] too much too fast and then wonder why they're not effective. We'll lose at least 50 percent. I think that comes back to getting our students engaged from the minute that they come into class, finding ways to get them engaged. They don't want to learn the same way that we learn.

Participant Three emphasizes the need for more *time* to gain understanding in the classroom. Through this participant's experiences, students have changed, and there are curricular changes brought about by educational reform. Within the discussion, Participant Three noted that *time* for teacher collaboration to help better understand curricular needs and *time* given to the needs of the students would be helpful for teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

> *Authentic learning* is what most of them want now, and that can't come out of a textbook. And, you know, it's so difficult because that takes more time. I mean if I teach five preps basically in five hours, I mean, I could spend an entire prep time getting ready for---I could spend the same equivalent amount of time getting ready or more for that class. So then that means another five hours outside of class. It just becomes almost impossible for a young teacher because they just—they start getting overwhelmed. That's where *shared resources* would come into place.

Again, Participant Three further explains the need for collaboration *time* among teachers to establish more cohesion throughout the district.

> We have had very little time to *work together* as teams, and I feel like if we were given more time to *work together* as teams that we could accomplish more in terms of being *cohesive* in that way.

Participant Three's experience of needing *time* was coded as a Strategies. The researcher coded *time* as Strategies because if leadership supported *time* throughout the educational reform process, it would help teachers become effective in the classroom. This particular example is specific to the system of supports by the leadership include giving the student teachers *time* to grow, fostering student engagement the minute they walk inside the classroom and *time* for teacher collaboration within the educational system. Participant Three finds these important for teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

Corporeality (lived body).

Participant Three indicates the interactions experienced with leaders and the influences they had on *supporting* effective teaching in the classroom, which show awareness of the body to the phenomenon and is situated in van Manen's Corporeality guide to reflection. This participant experienced a two-fold leadership with the predominate leadership being the educational site principal. Participant Three also is *aware* of the pressures some leaders present during educational reform, which is experienced from the district level leadership.

> I've been really grateful that my principal here has *embraced*—helped me *embrace* basically ways in which to reach the students. They like the use of application, technology, manipulatives in the classroom, collaborative environments.

Reaching all students in the classroom is important for Participant Three. When this participant experienced support and assistance from leadership in the classroom to foster this notion, the self, system and support as discussed in Chapter Two came together for Participant Three to promote effective teaching in the classroom.

> They understand that classrooms are not meant to be quiet necessarily, that students talking and interacting is a huge part of their learning. As we've kind of *embraced* new curriculum, new standards and un-standarding those and then trying to makeshift the year again, they understand that it's a messy process with all of that.

The participant's experience adheres to van Manen's (2014) Corporeality where Participant Three's interaction with leaders had a States-Experiences/Support, an emergent theme, with a leadership practice that provided support seen as embracing the participant's classroom methods and providing positive feedback for the classroom curriculum. This relates to the research question regarding leadership support and teacher effectiveness during educational reform.

> One of the best feelings as a teacher I think because we know what our strength and weaknesses are for sure, but is being able to sit down with an administrator after you have worked really hard at a particular lesson or trying to do something, and they *recognized* it.

Within the discussion with Participant Three, the participant notes that teacher recognition in the classroom by the school leader helps foster student achievement. This correlates with the discussion of Self in Chapter One and Chapter Two where self and system come together.

> They said, 'You know, I'm so proud of you'. They give you a higher score on that particular area of your evaluation, something that you're really working hard towards, and they *recognized* that. I think that's *positive feedback*, and, you know, really *recognizing* that because I don't think that most teachers want a compliment if it's a false one. I mean, sometimes you feel *validated*.

When asked to describe any pressures, if any, this participant has experienced with the educational reform, Participant Three uses outstretched

hands and becomes wide-eyed when stating the pressures that occur during educational reform. Participant Three emphatically expressed:

> I just wish sometimes that the bug—the *testing bug* would kind of go away, you know. There's a lot of *pressure*. I think that while [my principal] is very supportive that sometimes as teachers we feel like we're on our own.

Teachers faced many challenges during the educational reform from the increase of rigor within the standards and changes to the teacher evaluation system. These changes combined caused teachers to experience pressures during the implementation of the educational reform.

> Definitely teaching to a test, teaching using test questions on a daily basis and getting prepared for the test. I mean benchmarking has just become part of our culture obviously and the state driven instruction has I feel like driving a lot of teachers away from the profession. The *pressures of testing*, you know, I think if the first thing that stands out in my mind as pressure.

Participant Three experienced the pressures of the state testing, which included rigorous standards due to the educational reform. This participant had a States/Experiences/Support, which the support was actually lacking and Participant Three experienced being alone in the process.

Relationality (lived other).

Participant Three spoke of student interactions. This is a strong indicator of the presence of 'lived other' as the participant made sense of working during the educational reform measures of Common Core. The participant had

experienced teaching effectiveness through teacher-student *interactions* and the influence on student achievement. This participant described the experiences while talking about state testing.

> I feel like the best way [for remediation] would be for that student to get *one-on-one help*. I feel like *making a connection* with that student on a consistent basis is the best way that student can overcome whatever is blocking them from being successful.

Not only teaching the curricular content but building connections to students were important facets to this participant's experiences within the educational system.

> I would be lying if I said it didn't discourage me a lot because the reason why I became a teacher was to *create these relationships* where I believed in the students, the student believed in me. We created a *team environment* where they felt confident in approaching a program. If they didn't know, we could figure it out *together*, and it feels—the students I know feel like they are just a number. They start feeling like they're not *valued as a whole person*, as a *whole child*.

For Participant Three, the participant described a 'lived other' experience where the teacher-leader *interactions* with leadership are *supported* at the site level but not necessarily supported at the district level. This participant's experiences of pressures with reform were brought forth from district leadership. This district leadership found doing better on the state test meant a higher-grade for the district. Participant Three recalled:

> So far as a true classroom approach I have—feel like I've had a lot of *support* from all of my administrators. Initially 2009 would have been the tail end of the more traditional environment and working to kind of convert [to Common Core]. I think my new principal really understands that. Sometimes I feel like our administration above that does not necessarily understand that the test scores or the achievement level of students—you can't always have everything and that by focusing on test scores that has, in terms, I feel like has hurt my classroom. I think everyone has to agree, and I feel like sometimes we're *not all on the same page* about all of that because *overall appearance* sometimes it what's most important to them.

Participant Three's experienced lack of inclusion or being listened to during collaboration, which also coincides with 'lived other', and this participant would like to help with input on some of the decision-making process.

> I feel like there is collaboration, but that sometimes, you know, input is *not listened* to. They[district leadership] still make the decisions. So it's made to be—to have an appearance that there is collaboration and input, but in the end still it is a decision that's based on money, based on what's most efficient in some ways, and not necessarily what would be ideal.

van Manen's (2014) Relationality helped show the relationships with the leadership and presented an emergent theme of Participation/Interactions. These interactions with the site leadership provided the practice of support helping the participant with autonomy in the classroom.

Spatiality (lived space).

The setting of this participant is predominantly a rural, classroom setting. Participant Three grasped an understanding of state level and national level experiences by becoming Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. The classroom setting of Participant Three has *evolved* from the rural setting into a national level experience, and Participant Three included descriptions of classroom strategies educational reform presented. Participant Three's classroom approaches happened within the 'lived space'.

> I think there's a lot of collaboration that occurs. I've been fortunate that [most] principals that I have had here have been math teachers. They understand both *traditional approaches* to math and basically I would say *newer approaches* to math. We worked really hard to *blend* those together, in particular for a small school that has teachers who are—that have taught for a very long period of time, they're not as open minded to change.

Participant Three described experiencing a sense of *isolation* in a small school setting. The school district is located in a small town where it does not afford opportunities for state or national level collaboration as articulated by the participant.

> Sometimes at a small school you are the math department. There isn't another math teacher. You might even be able to see another teacher's classroom, whether it be English, math or science or something different than what you teach, and you could learn something from that.

The use of van Manen's (2014) Spatiality guide helped the researcher look from Participant Three data and see the participant is longing for the support of seeing how other teachers are effective in the classroom during the reform. The notion of support from others and isolation of state network opportunities clearly illuminates that leadership practice is needed for teachers teaching within a rural community and that opportunities and encouragement for States/Experiences/Support, which is requested by this participant.

Materiality (lived things).

Technology, 'lived thing', is presented by Participant Three as a *constraint* within Participant Three's district. The participant experiences technology as a supportive teaching tool but sees technology taking the place of the teacher during remediation taking away the one-on-one connection with students.

> I feel like there's been a lot of *pressure* for these schools to adopt all these technologies and spend their money in that way, yet that environment may not be best for every child.

Again, Participant Three's discussion is centered on what is best for every child in the classroom, which maintains the effective teaching in the classroom.

> We're looking at it [technology] as a solution to all of our, you know, educational issues, in particular with remediation. You know, they have all this money for remediation. They're told to spend that in some way.

> Well, I feel like the best way would be for that student to get one-on-one help.

Participant Three sees money spent in *supporting* professional development would be more *beneficial* for teacher effectiveness. Since this participant is situated in the small town as mentioned earlier, this participant believes gaining insight through professional development opportunities to see outside the four classroom walls would be helpful in supporting teachers in the rural school setting.

> I would ask principals and superintendents to provide enough money where a teacher could go see other classrooms, other teachers who are high performing, teachers who are highly effective. [This] allows teachers to go shadow them to make those connections and to be able to see how other teachers do things.

Participant Three explains the importance of supportive efforts by leadership to help teachers connect to the outside world, and professional development opportunities would help effective teaching in the classroom especially during educational reform where there is a complexity surrounding curricular changes.

> Because typically—and I can only really speak mostly for the math classroom, but we typically do things the way that we were taught. We're a generation of teachers who are teaching kids completely different than the way that they were taught.

As with van Manen's (2014) Spatiality, the small town situation is also noted in Materiality because the small town resources are not as readily available as some of the urban or suburban communities. The concept of professional development opportunities clearly illuminates that leadership practice is needed for teachers teaching within a rural community. Since the Consequence of smaller communities means they are sometimes limited on resources, professional development is a supportive leadership practice.

Aggregate Analysis of the Existential Life-worlds

After each participant data was analyzed individually to van Manen's (2014) five existentials, the data was combined across each participant in terms of van Manen's (2014) five existentials of Temporality (lived time), Corporeality (lived body), Relationality (lived others), Spatiality (lived space), and Materiality (lived things). van Manen states, "We all experience our world and our reality through these existentials" (p. 303). After the researcher used the selective reading approach, the words and phrases were applied to a preset list of codes for theming and then the researcher used this lens to aggregate the data. The lifeworld existentials helped the researcher in the reflective inquiry process and helped unveil the findings as it provides meaning of the lived experiences across and between each of the participants as it pertains to understanding wholistically their experiences related to leadership and school reform.

Temporality (lived time)

In the description of time two main spools of thought are woven through all three participant's descriptions: the 2009-2014 educational reform timeframe

and time for teachers. For one, the timeframe of 2009-2014 presents a time when *educational reform* occurs in the state of Oklahoma. This first perception offers insight to the testing pressures two of the participants experienced while the other participant experienced autonomy in the classroom but lost a collaborative or shared experience with the leadership.

Secondly, needing *time* to understand and collaborate with others was important for all three participants. Through the infusion of the Common Core standards, which were warranted in this educational reform timeframe, these teachers experienced a lack of time to integrate these standards into their curriculum. The common core standards presented an increased rigor and a change in assessment. The three participants wished for more time to explore and disseminate the new standards the educational reform recommended.

van Manen's (2014) Temporality helped the researcher analyze the importance of the timeframe of education reform and teacher time within this study. An emergent theme of Strategies, which showed time as an operative strategy for teacher effectiveness, presented itself through the data, and showed time being an important aspect of educational reform. When the researcher applied van Manen's five existentials as the framework, the data showed support as a superordinate theme for leadership practice to increase teacher effectiveness during educational reform as it relates to the timeframe needed to address the educational reform.

Corporeality (lived body)

Helplessness or experiencing *unimportance* was expressed as the 'lived body' experiences from the three participants. Participant One experienced these conceptions through the third leadership. This leadership did not deem Participant One worthy of an effective evaluation, and when the value added model score was presented, Participant One expressed experiencing *helplessness* because the participant was an effective teacher. Yet, leadership did not acknowledge it. When Participant Two brought back important information to help with understanding the educational reform, the leadership listened, but in the end, the leadership made all the decisions regarding the integration of the new state standards. Participant Three experienced the testing pertaining to the reform being the main focus of the school district, and the teachers experienced the pressure of the test with little response to effective teaching.

Leadership *support* was permeated through all three participants in some form. All acknowledged a support, and the desire of that support was seen through their mannerisms in describing these experiences. When these teachers experienced the support, they also experienced autonomy within their classroom, almost like a freedom to choose, and each wanted to share their experiences with other teachers. Participants simply wanted to make the connection with their students and help their colleagues without the experience of *unimportance* or *not being wanted* by their leadership.

van Manen's (2014) Corporeality helped analyze the importance of the teachers' senses and perception of the educational reform within this study.

These are seen as helplessness, lack of support and the teachers wanting a voice through the process. An emergent theme of State-Experiences/Support presented itself through the data, and the data showed that a key leadership practices for teacher effectiveness during educational reform are support and inclusion.

Relationality (lived others)

The positive *relationships* with these participants' leaders helped them traverse through implementation of the educational reform. Participant One spoke volumes about the first leader. Participant One experienced support, guidance, and somewhat a "whole" teacher, which is who the participant wanted to be and learned to flourish. The leadership within participant two's experience fostered growth through professional development opportunities and endorsed exploration of the new standards in which the educational reform demanded. This encouraged a teacher leader experience, one to help others and share knowledge and resources. Participant Three experienced a leadership supportive of changing the traditional classroom and allowed the participant to grow to become an effective teacher and build relationships for student growth.

Relationships woven through these participants' experiences were not always positive in the leadership aspect. Participant One experienced three different types of leaders with the last one hindering growth and support due to a school turnaround and testing focus. Participant Two was allowed to grow and experience a relationship with the leadership cultivating that notion, but when it came down to decision-making regarding professional development and implementing Common Core, the participant was not allowed to share in the

final process. Even though Participant Three had a positive aspect with the site leadership, the participant had experiences where the district leadership did not share the same understanding. The school appearance, which included state test results and school report cards, was the priority of the district leadership for Participant Three.

van Manen's (2014) Relationality helped the researcher analyze the participants' data to examine importance the positive relationships, guided leadership and professional development support had on these participants during the educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014 within this study. Emergent themes of State-Experiences/Support and Participation/Interactions presented itself through the data, and the data showed that key leadership practices for teacher effectiveness during educational reform are *support* also seen as professional development and classroom support, *communication* with the leadership about problematic areas of the educational reform and *inclusion* throughout the educational reform process.

Spatiality (lived space)

Space was an important factor for all three participants as they navigated the process of educational reform in their respective school settings. Participant One's school setting was an urban public school situated among charter schools. This had a bearing on the experience and speaks volumes as to the type of students housed within the participant's classroom. Participant One recalled:

> Our school site is the only school that is not a charter, middle school on the north side; we got everybody that charter school didn't take. So we got them.

Participant Two and Participant Three experienced a rural setting where the space fostered teachers as leaders within their district. These teachers led through professional development opportunities, sharing resources with other teachers, and leading within their departments. This setting also caused leadership to focus more on day-to-day functions of the job instead of teacher support. Being in the rural area also fostered a totalitarian type of leadership where their voice sometimes does not matter for both participants.

van Manen's (2014) Spatiality helped the researcher analyze the importance of leadership support within the 'lived space' of the rural setting during the educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014. Emergent themes of State-Experiences/Support, Participation/Interactions, and Consequences presented itself through the data, and the data showed that key leadership practices for teacher effectiveness during educational reform are support, communication and inclusion.

Materiality (lived things)

From classroom resources to technology to professional development opportunities on a national level, these factors contributed meaning to each of the three participant's experience with their leadership during Common Core. All participants had a positive experience with these factors, but a Participant One also noted a negative side to them. Participant One had a leadership in the

beginning of the 2009-2014 timeframe that supported new and methods. When Participant One went to a workshop and found something helpful for the classroom, leadership supported and encouraged by purchasing the materials needed. While Participant Two experienced technology as helpful in the classroom but presented a negative side to infusing technology within the district. Participant Two experienced technology being a "babysitter" during remediation of subject areas. Participant Two experienced technology supplanting the teacher relationship within the classroom. The national level professional development was extremely helping in navigating the education reform of Common Core between 2009-2014 for Participant Three. Participant Three experienced *support* from leadership in exploring the common core standards through the national professional development opportunities and the purchasing of materials to help foster the understanding.

van Manen's (2014) Materiality helped the researcher analyze the importance of the technology and professional development as expressed by all three participants about emphasis of Common Core during the educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014. An emergent theme of Consequences presented itself through the data as a need for the leadership practice of support was evident for all three participants during educational reform.

Key Understandings of Guided Existential Inquiry

Four key understandings were illuminated through the examination of the participants' interviews through guided existential inquiry. The researcher attained these four key understandings of the data across participants by using

the selective reading approach to all three of the participants' data. After key words and phrases were highlighted, a preset code of themes were used, and then some themes were combined to illuminate the emergent themes particular to the combined experiences of all three participants. These emergent themes of Strategies, States-Experiences/Support, Participation/Interactions and Consequences as it relates Relationality, Corporeality, Spatiality, Temporality, and Materiality are within van Manen's (2014) Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection.

Strategies are components provided by organizational leadership with an effect or outcome as seen within this research. States-experiences/support produced by organizational leadership and the results of the states-experiences/support are viewed as perceptions experienced by the teachers through the educational reform. Varying levels of participation/interaction occurred in the research through professional development, community or teachers-student interactions. The organizational leadership impacted teachers both in positive and negative ways and is seen through the consequences. As a result of this impact, teacher reactions are seen within their experiences of the educational reform. These emergent themes came from van Manen's (2014) Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection and the subsequent paragraphs provide a deeper view of the teacher experiences.

Strategies

The researcher identifies providing time, and providing professional development opportunities as helpful leadership practices for effective teaching.

Incorporating time in the day for teachers to plan is essential for student achievement (Murphy, Elliot, Goldring & Porter, 2006). When there is an educational reform presented within the educational system, it essential to provide teachers the time necessary to unpack the components of the reform for implementation in the classroom (van Veen, Sleegers & van de Ven, 2005). Participant One experienced a leader who noted time as an important component of teaching.

> She recognized our most essential work was in the classroom. She did everything she could to take care of that time. Not waste our time. We didn't have staff meetings if we didn't need it.

With the reiteration of time being a *big deal,* Participant Two finds time is important in trying new strategies the educational reform presents.

> Time is a big deal. Time is a big deal. Because we have these ideas we want to try these new things. However, sometimes it's hard to implement it, the time to get it implemented.

The responsibility of professional development predominately hails from educational leaders (Smith & Piele, 2006). Most educators need to gain insight and understanding of the mechanisms of the educational reform. To gain insight and understanding, teachers need guidance through professional development. Professional development plays a role in the acquisition of new knowledge presented by the educational reform (Saunders, 2013).

Professional development played a crucial role in Participant Two's experiences of the educational reform. Participant Two gained an empowerment

to help others with the understanding of the common core standards, and the participant also wanted to assist leadership in the decision-making process.

> But I'm happy that my administration did send us to those workshops because that's where we started getting information about common core and direction about common core that we brought back to the leadership, and they listened.

Even though Participant Three has not experienced an influx of professional development opportunities, she speaks of ways leaders could foster teacher growth in a rural school setting.

> I would ask principals and superintendents to provide enough money where a teacher could go see other classrooms, other teachers who are high performing, teachers who are highly effective.

A highlight of Participant Three's leadership support was allowing authentic learning as an effective strategy for student achievement. Hargreaves (2004) notes that change oriented teachers utilize innovative strategies rather than the traditional strategies that have been in place.

> Authentic learning is what most of them want now, and that can't come out of a textbook. And, you know, it's so difficult because that takes more time.
>
> So far as a true classroom approach I have—feel like I've had a lot of support from all of my administrators. Initially 2009 would have been the tail end of the more traditional environment and working to kind of

convert [to common core]. I think my new principal really understands that.

States-Experiences/Support

Chapter One of this study discussed the historical perspective of educational reforms: *Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, and *Race to the Top* to prepare the setting of this study. This study brings an understanding of leadership support within an educational reform. Chapter Two discussed the importance of system support during the educational reform process. Rosenholtz (1987) emphasizes support structured for teacher commitment of educational reform measures. Educational reform corresponds with supports within the educational system Support is seen in two facets through this study: lack of support and encouraging support. Within this study both aspects provide an insight to the key leadership practices that influence teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

The teachers experience lack of support with time, curricular support, and professional development. These common experiences were identified across all three participants. The experiences of pressures, frustration, helplessness and lack of participatory voice about Common Core implementation and professional development are unveiled through the teacher interviews. The researcher included and illuminated these experiences to present an understanding of what causes discernment through the educational reform. By showing the side of discernment, leaders may see the causes and prevent future use of these identifiable rudiments within leadership practices.

Participant One experienced lack of support with leadership three at the school site. After experiencing a positive experience with leadership one in the school, Participant One longed for that positive experience again because the pressures posed by leadership three turned into frustrations and the eventual quitting of the participant's job in the district. Olsen and Sexton (2009) notes that teachers will fight leadership or leave the system when administrative controls and forced teacher may possibly occur conformity during an educational reform process. The following emphasizing the need for support.

> There was no way we would ever be competing because we need so many more resources to even have a remotely level playing field. With the folks [students] whose parents wake them up and drive them to school and drop them off. Make sure they have everything ready. It's just not even reality for us to compete. That was huge pressure on our staff, and our teachers got frustrated when the score would come out. The pressure, especially at [school site], and it was so frustrating because our score would be published in the paper. People would say, 'I can't believe you serve the same kids as the charter schools.'
>
> They don't understand that whole process, that pressure to compete when it was apples to oranges.

Participant Three mirrored the same pressures of teaching to a test that related to school reform and accountability as Participant One, and the demeanor changed to dread when discussing the testing pressure brought forth by leadership.

> I just wish sometimes that the bug—the testing bug would kind of go away, you know. There's a lot of pressure. I think that while [my principal] is very supportive that sometimes as teachers we feel like we're on our own.

Sergiovanni (2001) emphasizes the importance of keeping the autonomy in the classroom through the changes of educational reform. Rowan (1990) noted there is more commitment from teachers if they do not feel the pressure of the control of the system.

Participant One's experience with Leadership One set the stage for effective teaching with this participant. Participant One experienced support, which presented a positive influence on the participant's career.

> She was just so respectful and supportive. Anything we needed. Anything. As a staff, [she] really helped provide us professional development support that we needed to really help every kid.
>
> I think she wanted to encourage me to grow in that area. She was always a cheerleader, and that caused me to grow. She wanted that for everybody, and she also said, 'I want you to model for others.' I'm the teacher I am because of what I learned at this school.

Through the desperate sounding voice was expressed in the conversation with this participant, this participant longed for this type of supportive leadership again in the school.

Participant Two experienced autonomy in the classroom while Participant Three experienced autonomy and recognition/validation of effective

teaching as positive leadership practices during the educational reform. Participant Two noted: "Their trust in what I did, you know, helped me. I was allowed to try new things. I was never bound or tied to a test." Participant Three had similar support experience and noted:

> I've been really grateful that my principal here has embraced—helped me embrace basically ways in which to reach the students. I feel like, however, I've gotten freer reign probably after being named teacher of the year. I feel like that I have the confidence to try something new, which may mean falling all over my face.

Participant three emphasized the importance of receiving validation in the classroom.

> They said, 'You know, I'm so proud of you'. They give you a higher score on that particular area of your evaluation, something that you're really working hard towards, and they recognized that. I think that's positive feedback, and, you know, really recognizing that because I don't think that most teachers want a compliment if it's a false one. I mean, sometimes you feel validated.

The support of autonomy in the classroom was important for Participants Two and Three and was expressed as a validation of their teaching in the classroom during the reform. Support within the classroom is a key leadership practice according to the participants, which is important to promote teacher effectiveness.

Participation/Interactions

Participation/Interaction came out an important emergent theme across all three participants because each participated noted interactions from their leadership, students and national leadership. From participating in beneficial professional development activities to classroom interactions, which fostered learning, these participants expressed these experiences as an important aspect of being an effective classroom teacher, and when leadership provided or supported these facets, the participants valued this in their leadership.

Encouraging professional growth and teacher leadership were important experiences of the leadership interaction of Participant One who noted:

> I was only there three years, but I had taken on a lot of leadership roles. I think she wanted to encourage me to grow in that area. She was always a cheerleader, and that caused me to grow. She wanted that for everybody, and she also said, 'I want you to model for others.' I'm the teacher I am because of what I learned at this school.

For Participant Two, participation in national level professional development helped Participant Two gain insight to the Common Core standards, which this educational reform prescribed. Saunders (2013) stated in her study that professional development played a key role in the acquisition of knew knowledge. Hereafter, the researcher explains the consequences of providing professional development opportunities to Participant Two.

> But I'm happy that my administration did send us to those workshops because that's where we started getting information about common core

and direction about common core that we brought back to the leadership and they listened.

For Participant Three: the interactions with students were essential and encouraged the school leaders to not use technology to replace the teacher in the classroom. van Vleen, Sleegers and van de Ven (2005) reported the importance of the social aspect of building relationships with students, fellow teachers and administration during educational. With technology highlighted in educational reform, Participant Three reminded leaders that the one-on-one relationships with students are still influential in promoting achievement and not only relying on technology in the classroom.

> I feel like the best way [for remediation] would be for that student to get one-on-one help. I feel like making a connection with that student on a consistent basis is the best way that student can overcome whatever is blocking them from being successful.

This participant found the one-on-one help between teacher and student and making these connections with students helped in becoming an effective teacher in the classroom. Participant Three noted that through experiences, student connections have been the most beneficial for Participant Three's students.

> I would be lying if I said it didn't discourage me a lot because the reason why I became a teacher was to create these relationships where I believed in the students, the student believed in me. We created a team environment where they felt confident in approaching a program. If they

didn't' know, we could figure it out together, and it feels—the students I know feel like they are just a number. They start feeling like they're not valued as a whole person, as a whole child.

Participant Three was disconcerted with the fact that the educational reform measures looked at students and schools as simply a number or a grade. The apathy towards this notion was seen in this participant's facial expression during our conservations when it was described that the school leadership noted that Participant Three was making a difference through these interactions, this participant experienced support from her school leader.

Consequences

Leadership had an impact on Participant One although there were three school leaders during the Common Core educational reform. Participant One experienced an influential, supportive leader who encouraged professional growth as described earlier. Weaving the way through two subsequent leaders during the 2009-2014 timeframe, Participant One gave the other two leaders a chance while continuing effectiveness in the classroom but was met with demise each time. This resulted in the participant quitting the job at this school district, the district where the participant received the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year award. Teachers decided to leave Participant One's district as a result of leadership.

And the fact that we kept losing teachers. [Our school] had a solid…more than half the teachers at [my school] had taught 25+ years so they are eligible for retirement. They started retiring as soon as

> reforms kicked in, and now again this year, four of the teacher leaving are retiring because they can't…they would stick with it if they had a different leader. If [leadership one] was there, they wouldn't be leaving because they are so passionate about their work. That is really hard with that type of *pressure.*

Leadership for Participant Two provided professional development opportunities that in turn prompted this participant to become a teacher leader. The enthusiasm gained from these experiences promoted a sharing of resources and determination for shared governance. Sharing a common meaning and sharing vision and goals promote school effectiveness (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000). With this participant's knowledge base of the educational reform, which expanded from the professional development experiences, this participant had key aspects to share with other to assistance the transition of the reform measures. Day and Leithwood (2007) recognize the importance of professional development for school improvement.

> The biggest influence is that my administration provided me a vehicle—not a literal vehicle but an avenue to go and learn from different [places] like in Austin and in San Francisco, and they were not afraid to send us out.

Participant Two's knowledge of Common Core through the professional development opportunities provided clarity and insight for this participant, which caused support of Common Core.

> I was bought in. I'm bought in. I'm still bought in. But, you know, I think that—you know it was the same people that always kind of are the negative ones so I didn't take it too serious. You tried to share your ideas. You try to model that and show that things are working.
>
> Their trust in what I did, you know, helped me. I was allowed to try new things. I was never bound or tied to a test. I mean, I taught a tested subject, fourth grade. But I never felt any pressure because I guess maybe the end results were always there.

Participant Two also experienced a lack of voice, this prompted a longing for inclusion of the implementation of the Common Core educational reform. This participant wanted to be included in part of the decision-making process because of the previous experiences with professional development opportunities this participant received regarding Common Core.

> She [administrator] would delegate different teachers to be on like the professional development committee, and she would allow us opportunities to have an input on what professional development we wanted to see in our district. That was one way we worked together. Overall they had the final say about what professional development [we used].

As a consequence of leadership supporting autonomy in the classroom and provided assistance in the participant's direction of educational reform measures, Participant Two found these approaches promote student growth, and Participant Three received meaningful feedback from the site leadership. Fink

and Resnick (2001) show that when leaders spend time in the classroom and present constructive feedback for teachers, this is effective leadership. Participant Three particularly notes:

> So far as a true classroom approach I have—feel like I've had a lot of support from all of my administrators.
>
> They understand both traditional approaches to math and basically I would say newer approaches to math. We worked really hard to blend those together…

Participant Three's description of the experiences of classroom support presented a leadership practice that helped through the Common Core educational reform. In turn, this participant has become an effective teacher, and through these experiences, the participant wants to note the importance of supporting the autonomy in the classroom and directly noting effective teaching in the classroom.

From lack of teacher voice to the need for professional development, these participants' experiences provided insight to the Consequences emergent theme. When participants were provided professional development support, the participants found these experiences supported them during the Common Core reform process. Also, participants noted the lack of inclusion in the Common Core implementation process, and the participants stated they had something to contribute to the process. Leadership would not afford them this opportunity.

Findings via Superordinate Themes as Presented Across Participants

Through van Manen's (2014) framework, superordinate themes emerged while using the framework as a means to further analyze the participant data. Table 2 provides key descriptors from the participant data, which helped to illuminate emergent themes and superordinate themes. Applying van Manen's framework to the data, the guided existentials that were expressed the most across all three participants were their lived experiences with their school leaders pertaining to Relationality and Spatiality, while the guides of Corporality and Materiality did provide reflective analysis for the researcher to find key leadership factors related to practice of support and inclusion as expressed by the participants. Deeper reflective analysis of the emergent themes led to the identification of superordinate themes as follows: *support*, which was evident in all three participants' experiences with professional development, time and classroom support; *communication*, which was warranted by all three participants in open communications with leaders and a voice in the process; and *inclusion*, which was predominantly requested by Participant One and Participant Two to be included in the reform process. The following table explains the process the researcher used in applying van Manen's (2014) Guided Existentials to the participant data where the emergent themes of strategies, states-experiences/support, participation/interactions and consequences were illuminated and led to the findings via superordinate themes of support, communication and inclusion.

Table 2 Finding Superordinate Themes

van Manen's (2014) Guided Existentials	Participant Data	Emergent Themes	Findings via Superordinate Themes
Temporality	Timeframe 2009-2014 Time to work in the classroom	Strategies	Support
Corporeality	Helplessness Unimportance Classroom support and lack of leadership support	States-Experiences/Support Participation/Interactions	Support Inclusion
Relationality	Positive relationships from leadership to promote teacher growth Guided leadership to create the "whole" teacher. Support through professional development	States-Experiences/Support Participation/Interactions	Support Communication Inclusion
Spatiality	School type (urban or rural) Lack of leadership support due to totalitarian type of leadership Lack of Voice	State-Experiences/Support Participation/Interactions Consequences	Support Communication Inclusion
Materiality	Technology Professional development	Consequences	Support

Chapter Summary

All participants' experiences in this chapter were analyzed using van Manen's (2014) Lifeworld Existentials Guides to Reflection then data was coded and themed according to the selective reading approach. The emergent themes came to light through the theming and coding of the reflection of the

participants' data, and they are presented as follows: Strategies, States-Experiences/Support, Participations/ Interactions and Consequences. The emergent themes can be traced back to the participants' lived experiences of effective teaching during an educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014. Once the emergent themes presented themselves the researcher maintained an orientation to the relation of the experiences and moved from the parts of the experience to the whole of the experience using van Manen's (1990) methodical structures in the hermeneutic writing. After the emergent themes were presented, the researcher used the Lifeworld Existential Guides to Reflection by van Manen (2014), which provided a framework and helped find superordinate themes that helped explain the phenomenon of how leadership assists teachers through the complexity of educational reform. The research became clear and findings via superordinate themes of *support*, *communication* and *inclusion* are noted leadership practices for teacher effectiveness during an educational reform and are discussed further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Introduction

My findings from this inquiry respond to this study's research question and to reemphasize, this study questions the leadership practices that help teachers become effective in the classroom during educational reform. It does not seek to solve the problems the educational reform may present but questions the meaning of factors that encourage teacher effectiveness through aspects of leadership practices. This questioning goes along with this study and stays true to the following: "Phenomenology is more a method of questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meanings of lived meaning" (van Manen, 2014, p. 27). The teachers that were interviewed provided insight to the research question of this study: What are select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? In Chapter Four the researcher used a reflective inquiry process using van Manen's (2014) existential methods to find superordinate themes. By using van Manen's (2014) inquiry process, superordinate themes were illuminated and subsequently the research findings emerged from these themes, which can be traced back to the data. From the teachers' experiences within this study, it was found that support, communication and inclusion are shown to be important factors of leadership practice promoting teacher effectiveness and providing answers to the research question.

This study's findings of leadership practices of support, communication and inclusion that promote teacher effectiveness during educational change relates to Fullan's (1993) lessons of educational change where he notes, "Every Person is a change agent. (Change is too important to leave to the experts.)" (p. 22). In this chapter, the research findings are presented and linked back to the empirical literature that confirms the leadership practices needed to encourage and promote teacher/teaching effectiveness during educational reform.

Support

As seen in Chapter One of this study, educational reform has many complexities surrounding the initiative itself. Le Fevre' (2014) states within educational change, there are barriers that must be navigated. Empirical evidence shows that leadership support, in a variety of methods, assists teachers through these barriers. Rosenholtz's (1987) study focuses on support structures to reinforce teacher improvement and commitment while Fullan's (2011) study emphasizes professional development. These factors can be seen in the practices of quality professional development, assistance with curriculum, and promotion of growth. Within the findings of this research, leaders need to provide support through these barriers so that effective change is more likely to take place. Support was important for teachers in the leadership-teacher relationship during educational reform measures during the 2009-2014 timeframe. Leadership support is complex, and has multiple factors of leadership support as seen in the literature.

Through the superordinate findings in Chapter Four, professional development is the main support noted among the participants within this research. This was the main factor participants expressed was most helpful during the educational reform timeframe 2009-2014. As seen in the data, Participant One stated, "As a staff, [she] really *helped* provide us *professional development support* that we needed to really *help* every kid."

Participant Two noted in the experiences of educational reform, "The biggest influence is that my administration provided me a *vehicle*—not a literal vehicle but an *avenue* to go and learn from different [places] like in Austin and in San Francisco, and they were not afraid to send us out." While teaching, teachers are living among four walls, teaching students day-in and day-out. It helps to step outside those walls and witness the bigger picture. Participant Three emphasized professional development would be more beneficial for teacher effectiveness. These findings relate to Fullan's (2001) study where professional development helps instruction through educational change. Quality professional development is informative, provides helpful strategies and tools to assist teachers during the change process.

To further connect the literature with the findings, Fullan (1993) emphasizes the importance of seeing the outer world beyond the walls of the classroom in his eight lessons of educational change. Specifically in lesson seven Fullan notes a "Connection with the wider environment is critical. (The best organizations learn externally as well as internally.)" (p.22). From the data, this connection is seen especially with Participant Two and the connection of the

professional development opportunities that the leadership afforded. Through the discussion with Participant Three, the participant stated seeing other teachers teaching the same content area outside the rural area would be helpful for effective teaching. All three participants expressed a connection with the wider environment through the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year platform. Each of the participants expressed an understanding of the educational reform and wanted to share the knowledge they gained through the process.

Literature shows the importance of quality professional development for teachers when undergoing or responding to an educational reform process. Hamre, et al. (2013) noted that professional development helps the teachers face the challenges of the complexity of the educational reform. As seen through Participant Two's experience:

> But I'm *happy* that my administration did send us to those *workshops* because that's where we started getting information about common core and direction about common core that we brought back to the leadership, and they listened.

Also, curriculum support through professional development assists teachers in understanding the dynamics of the changes the reform authorizes (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Murphy, Eliot, Goldring & Porter, 2006). When the professional development is constructed around the teacher and students needs, teachers will gain access to necessary information regarding the educational reform (Johnson & Mark, 2009), and this promotion of instructional change from the educational reform warrants professional development (Fullan, 2001).

Saunders (2013) even states the professional development is important for teachers through the acquisition of new knowledge.

In this study, the findings indicate that assistance with curriculum and promotion of growth from each of the participants/respective school leaders providing a system of support was also eminent among the participants. As Rosenholtz's (1987) study emphasizes that leadership support structures reinforce teacher commitment to the educational system. Smith and Piele (2016) further delineate the importance of leadership practices noting that: monitoring curriculum and instruction while providing support tools necessary to engage in effective teaching and learning practices are important leadership qualities that are helpful for teachers working through complex issues such as educational reform. To take it a step further, meaningful feedback helps improve curriculum and instruction (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). As this study data shows, each of the participants welcomed feedback, and when these supportive practices were realized, the teachers had positive reactions to the educational reform measures. Specifically for Participant One, this participant expressed a connection with leadership one, a connection where there was support and attentiveness. When Participant One was embodied with this support, this led to positive interactions with the educational reform experience. For Participant Three, when the leadership specifically pointed out an area Participant Three was doing well in, this participant expressed the experience of affirmative association with curriculum support from the school leader. Participant Three's experience included a validation in positive feedback,

"I think that's *positive feedback*, and, you know, really *recognizing* that because I don't think that most teachers want a compliment if it's a false one. I mean, sometimes you feel *validated*."

Within this research, participants described both welcoming and longing for their school leaders' support through the educational reform. When support from the respective school leader was experienced through the educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014, each of the teacher participants had positive attitudes even through the difficulty of the reform. Also, the teachers within this study wanted to help or lead others. Specifically, the three participants knew the importance of support they received from their respective school leader, and they wanted to lend that system of support to other teachers within the educational system.

This finding shows how support is needed for teacher effectiveness and illustrates that perhaps more training is needed. A plausible solution would be to add more practicum within the leader training. Sometimes leaders need to understand the difference between effective professional development and simple in-service training to promote teacher effectiveness during educational reform. If leaders were given more guidance and actual practice during their leader training, this would be helpful to promote teacher effectiveness.

Communication

When a new educational reform occurs, there is a complexity to understanding and communicating the reform. The literature states, complexity of educational reform needs to be informed-based for educators to understand the changes needed for the initiative (Saunders, 2013). This information includes communicating the history of the reform initiative, intentions of the reform, implementation of the reform, and expectations of the reform. Formal communication to the teachers is important in disseminating information expressed with the vision (Wallace Foundation, 2013). This study informs us that leadership should provide teachers access to the communication received regarding the educational reform and allow teachers to "unpack" this reform together. This is also seen in the research where Participant One states communicating *ethical conundrums* with the school leader was helpful in deciding issues with the educational reform measures.

Open communication encourages a voice from the teachers, provides a means to explore unanswered questions, and helps prevent false threads of communication. Participant Three stated this but was met with challenges from leadership in her experience, "You tried to *share* your ideas. You try to *model* that and show that things are working." Teachers simply want to be "in-the-know" when changes occur. This relates to the empirical literature where research showed a prevailing leadership trait included openness within the educational system (Bono, Hooper and Yoon, 2012).

It can be seen from the teachers' experiences within this study that two-way communication during the educational reform is needed. Most leadership give teachers morsels of information and makes the changes necessary within the educational system to meet the educational reform measures without a teacher voice through the whole process. Participant One wanted to communicate with the school leadership but was met with a leader emphasizing mandates of the educational reform: "We have been told, 'The test is your boss.' We have been told, 'Every minute counts. Instruction is the only focus.'" Animosity and lack of support seem to occur when there is a breakdown in the communication process.

Findings show communication is a key leadership component occurring during an educational reform to alleviate or dispense any misunderstanding within the educational organization. Participant Two and Three mention the willingness to communicate with their school leaders about issues the educational reform presents, and how it would be helpful to their organizational system.

With this study, the data revealed that there were little communicative steps in the planning process from the school leadership with the participants. Fullan (1993) emphasizes in lesson four of his lessons on educational change that, "Vision and strategic planning come later. (Premature visions and planning can blind.)" (p. 21). Two of the three participants emphasized visions and planning. Even though Fullan encourages this later, Participant Two and Three experienced ways of expressing their concern, but in the end both did not

experience a sense of worth with any of the planning process due to the leadership control and limiting the teacher voice over the educational reform process. This discouraged both participants.

The findings indicate that the frequency of communication is not sufficient or adequate during the educational reform process. As noted at the beginning of this study, leadership is supported by educational leadership policy standards, which provide direction for leadership to promote the success of every student. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). It would be helpful if leadership standards included specific ways of including communicative efforts instead of using overarching words of collaboration and sharing a vision.

Inclusion

This study tells us that not many teachers are included within the decision-making efforts incorporating the educational reform measures within the school system even when teachers have a knowledge base of the educational reform. The glaring results of this study show if leadership would involve teachers during the educational reform process, this would foster teacher buy-in, encourage teacher-leaders, and provide a positive voice for change. When an educational reform has simply landed on leadership's desk, leaders sometimes lead the changes of the reform on their own because this is what leaders usually do…lead. Effective leadership should not obstruct assistance from others but should build other leaders to disseminate information, and help/encourage others to be a voice through the process. With the enormity of paperwork, policy

procedures, and day-to-day school workings at an all-time increase due to state mandates, leadership should not tackle a new educational reform initiative on their own. Today's time calls for a "teaming" and inclusion of teachers. Participant One noted that leadership one included all teachers during the educational reform, "We were such a tight community. That was huge." This relates to the literature in that neither centralization or decentralization leadership work (Fullan, 1993). Sharing in the decision-making helps through complex issues within the educational system because educators can bring existing knowledge and insight (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982).

Participant Two had information helpful for the educational reform, but leadership stifled the participant's voice, "Overall they had the final say about what professional development [we used]. The [leadership] model somehow has gotten a little top heavy. The people [teachers] that have the biggest impact sometimes don't have the biggest say and the most input." The literature shows, "Both top-down and bottom-up are necessary; neither alone is sufficient." (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000, p. 232). This reinforces the findings of including the teacher voice for teacher effectiveness during an educational reform.

It is important for leadership to stop looking at the teacher as their student but as a team member within the educational system. From the literature on effective leadership, we see the opposite side of inclusion. Instead the literature notes a system of control. Teachers perceive "systems" in terms of organizational expectations as emotions to educational reform. In Hochschild's (1993) study it showed teachers change their behaviors in order to mold the

behaviors around organizational expectations. Many scholars note that teacher morale is in danger when these organizational controls take over (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1987; Rowan, 1990). System controls pressure teachers to perform a specific way, and teachers become a more conditioned object instead of an instructional leader for the students or a teacher leader for the educational organization. The self and system may interlock together through the social constructs, which are interpreted by teachers.

Included in the literature referencing control, three of Fullan's eight lessons of educational change applies to some sort of system contol. Fullan's lesson one states, "You can't mandate what matters (The more complex the change, the less you can force it.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21). Participant One and Participant Three both experienced the reform as being mandated and this caused pressures and frustrations through the integration of the educational reform. Participant Two experienced a freedom of exploring the reform and was supported with professional development opportunities.

Lesson five is strong at supporting inclusion: "Individualism and collectivism must have equal power. (There are not one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink.)" (Fullan, 1993, p. 21). Autonomy in the classroom is noted throughout this study. Participants wanted the freedom to explore the new standards, but not only did they want the autonomy in the classroom, they wanted to share with others. The participants wanted to help teachers and their leadership by sharing their experiences through professional development

opportunities and helpful elements within the classroom that supported student achievement.

Finally, Fullan's (1993) lesson eight voices, "Every Person is a change agent. (Change is too important to leave to the experts.)" All three participants gained experiences through their professional career, and especially during the participation of the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year. One would think these experiences would be shared among their colleagues and leaders when returning to the district. This was not the case, especially with Participant One and two. They both were not accepted as true leaders and were valued very little upon returning to the classroom. Participant Three received the recognition within her district, but the overall testing pressure has caused her to view district leadership differently. The Wallace Foundation (2013) notes that distributed leadership is a key leadership practice for creating a *hospitable* climate in education. All participants wanted to be the change agent, be included, but leadership has/did not foster that perception.

All participants expressed wanting to be included in the change process. Schmoker (2005) noted teachers learn together through professional learning communities and assist in student achievement. The respective school leaders for each participant squashed collectivism, and as the data revealed, each of the three participants' attitudes turned to demise when discussing being a part of collective efforts through the reform. Leadership has evolved over the last few decades, but some leadership practices still house a utilitarian or top-down approach. Again, Participant Two states, "The [leadership] model somehow has

gotten a little top heavy." As educational reform expects the educational organization to change, sometimes teachers are not included in the change process.

Leadership support encompasses multiple factors, but the literature does not present inclusion in this same light. In the review of the literature on effective school leadership, there is little information about inclusion of teachers within the organizational system during changes within the school system. The participants in this study expressed that being included in the unfolding or decision-making of education practices during reform by their respective school leader is helpful in effective teaching because the participants gained knowledge of the educational reform and wanted to share with leaders and teachers. This important finding indicates that studies about effective leadership with an impact on teacher practices need to include the teacher voice. These findings also lead to the idea that leadership should set aside time for teacher inclusion and build teams, which include teachers, when it comes to educational reform integration decision-making process. This would promote teacher effectiveness during educational reform measures.

Leadership Practices as it Relates to Educational Reform

Leadership practices in today's time contain many descriptions. Leithwood (2008) ascertains that research should support best practices on educational leadership to point in a direction of the "next practices" for student achievement. The purpose of this study was to understand and present key leadership practices that assisted the teacher participants as it relates to the

effective teaching during educational reform. Since educational reform brings about complexities and change, it is crucial to find the leadership practices that help promote teacher effectiveness during these trying times. Fullan (1993) notes, "Change is a journey not a blueprint…" (p. 21). The state and national education agencies usually provide some type of blueprint, but if leadership tackled the educational reform as a journey, one traveled by many, reform measures would not be such an exclusive process. As seen within this study, the findings from the responses of teachers' experiences with leadership during educational reform include support, communication and inclusion. All of the leadership practices have varied layers within the practice itself and should be addressed during the change process. For example, the participants exemplify the key finding of support as noted in this study in multiple factors of given time in the classroom, beneficial professional development experiences, and acknowledgement of teaching effectiveness in the classroom. As noted in the following analogy, leadership practices during educational reform are similar to building a house.

The support encompasses the foundation, which is comparable to the footing, trusses and joists to the house. Key leadership practices found to be helpful in building the foundational and continual support of infusing an educational reform measure include quality professional development, assistance with curriculum, and promotion of growth through targeted constructive appraisal. Part of monitoring curriculum and instruction includes support through professional development, and this responsibility comes highly

from educational organization leaders (Smith & Piele, 2006). Support is not simply one stop shopping. It is continual and leads to teacher efficacy within the educational organization. Murphy, Elliot, Goldring and Porter (2006) emphasize the need for assistance from educational leaders by providing the time and support within curriculum. When an educational reform measure is brought forth within the system, this support helps teachers through the complexity the reform presents. If support happens during the educational reform process, a more solid foundation is in place for teachers to become effective in the classroom.

Communication is similar to the wiring throughout a house. For instance the electrical pole outside the house needs to "speak" to the light switch or outlet within the house to provide electrical components for appliances to work inside the home. Leadership is similar to the electrical pole. If teachers do not receive the communication from leadership, connections are lost and confusion sets into the fold of educational reform. Leithwood and Janzi (2000) have found in their research sharing common meaning helps promote school effectiveness.

Teachers want to feel connected to leadership where concerns can be voiced, questions can be answered, and an openness of two-way communication is fostered throughout the reform process. A key leadership practice is providing systems and structure support for teachers (Wallace Foundation, 2013). It is important for leadership to create a supportive environment within the educational organization. Leadership should be transparent when communicating the intentions of the educational reform.

Inclusion works as the light bulb within the building of the home. The light illuminates the room and lends a pathway. If leadership is effective, the inclusion should be effortless and illuminate the room encompassing all within it. Just as teachers within an educational organization should be encompassed or included when educational reform weaves its way through the educational system.

The focus of inclusion is important for teacher buy-in of educational reform measures and occurs in different layers. These layers include teacher collectivism, teacher-leaders, and a positive voice for change. Teacher collectivism provides a teaming effort and not a top-down approach to infusing the educational reform within the system. The Wallace Foundation (2013) even notes a key practice of effective school leadership is cultivating leadership in others. When teachers feel included in the process, they tend to want to help others through the complexity of the reform. This was evident from the participant responses about their respective experience working with their school leader. This process of cultivating leadership among others builds teacher-leaders and helps the overall leadership within the educational system. Finally, when teachers are included throughout the unveiling of the reform, there is a deeper understanding of the reform, and teachers are allowed to ask important questions regarding the intention of the educational reform. Participant Two notes, "We were trying to figure it [common core] out. But I'm happy that my administration did send us to those workshops because that's where we started getting information about common core and direction about

common core that we brought back to the leadership and they listened." When teachers have these opportunities of inclusion, there seems to be a more positive influence on the changes within the educational system.

At times, Participant One was included in the educational reform process of helping others and states, "She wanted that for everybody, and she also said, 'I want you to *model* for others.'" Even though literature shows inclusion as sharing leadership, leadership already makes most decisions before teachers are included in the process. Inclusion throughout the process is a new key leadership trait brought to light through this study and should be included in leadership practices as it related to educational reform.

Implications of Educational Practice for School Leadership Effectiveness: Contribution to Research

The focus of this research aimed to illuminate teachers' experiences working with their school leader during the context of the educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014. The guiding research question for this study asked: *What are select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform?* This study used a purposeful sample to obtain data from high performing teachers. Three effective classroom teachers that were named Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year during the timeframe 2009-2014 were used in this research. The researcher attended to the participants' spoken language to find the meanings of their lived experiences of working with their school leader, and these meanings provided implications of educational practice for school leadership effectiveness. The results of this

study clearly showed that support, communication and inclusion helped with teacher effectiveness during educational reform.

As seen in the literature, previous assertions of leadership goals have been made in the scholarly literature for building and sustaining a school vision, sharing leadership, leading a learning community, using data to make instructional decisions, and monitoring curriculum and instruction, and these goals provide leadership practices as seen in Chapter Two of this study. The findings of this study confirm key assertions of leadership practices regarding support and communication.

Support: Support is reinforced by scholarly literature through Le Fevre (2014) and states support is needed for teachers to accept change. Supporting resources are also necessary for change (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). Through the teacher experiences within this study, all three participants made reference to supporting structures during educational reform and the need for this support because of the complexity the reform brought forth.

As the data revealed, it is essential for leadership to provide support through professional development, instructional coaching and even morale boosting. Reinforcing support structures help with teacher improvement and commitment to the system (Rosenholtz, 1987). Hallinger (2003) emphasizes skillful instructional leadership influences school effectiveness. Teachers really need leadership support because there is so much to the reform measures that teachers need to understand. Besides evidence of frustrations and pressures from

the participants during the educational reform, this study specifically showed that support would help alleviate these frustrations and pressures.

We see leadership support as expressed by Participant Two and Three. Participant Two was given professional development opportunities to investigate the educational reform, to bring back the learned knowledge into the classroom for application of such practices, and to help other teachers through the process. Participant Two was an effective teacher through this support, became a teacher-leader, and eventually became Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year. Participant Three is effective in the classroom through building and connecting relationships with the students and fostering authentic learning for students. Participant Three found support of building level leadership through positive feedback from school leadership regarding instructional practices and professional development.

There is a need for support for teachers within the leadership practice. Leadership trainings should include models for support so leadership will have ideas of what support looks like within the educational system. Models of support should include finding professional development beneficial for the needs of the teachers, instructional support, and a network of support throughout the educational system. Leadership skills are not always ingrained and showing potential leaders through models of support within the training will give help build this leadership practice.

The scholarly literature supporting communication shows that changes need to be informed based for teachers to understand the change process

(Saunders, 2013). All three participants made reference to the need of communication within the educational system.

Communication: The scholarly literature supporting communication show that changes need to be informed based for teachers to understand the change process (Saunders, 2013). All three participants made reference to the need of communication within the educational system.

Within this research we see the importance of communication and teacher efficacy. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found sharing common meanings and values creates a positive organizational culture. Participant One had an open line of communication with leadership one. This communication line prompted teacher efficacy and teacher leadership within the educational system. The teacher experienced a sense of belonging and professionalism, which led to Participant One awarded the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. Participant Two and Participant Three wanted to communicate to their leadership about their knowledge of the new standards of the educational reform and provide input for implementing the educational reform.

Through this research the frequency of communication is not sufficient or is inadequate within most of the teachers' experiences. There is a need for communication in both top-down and bottom-up approaches of leading an educational organization because teachers long for all facets the information pertaining to educational reform, and also, the teachers would like a say or a communicative push to hear their voice when implementing the educational reform initiative. Through the participants, the study shows that teachers may

have important information on how the reform is integrated within the school system. The open communication is needed during this time of complexity. Leadership standards should include specific ways of including communicative efforts instead of using overarching words of collaboration and sharing a vision.

Inclusion: New facets emerge from the meaning of inclusion as a leadership practice during educational reform. Most of the literature surrounding inclusion is based on sharing a vision and sharing decision-making within the educational organization. The teachers within this research presented inclusion as wanting to be a part of the decision-making process when it came to implementing the reform measures into the school system. Through professional development opportunities and Oklahoma Teacher of the Year opportunities, the participants had information pertaining to the educational reform that would help leadership during the decision-making process.

Including teachers during educational reform is seen in the findings and connects with research by Leithwood and Montgomery (1982), which emphasized the importance of sharing decision-making and gaining support from all stakeholders. Inclusion is further noted in Leithwood and Sun's (2012) and Hallinger and Heck's (1998) research of sharing common meanings and sharing the vision. All three participants voiced a heightened experience of inclusion or lack of inclusion. When Participant One had a voice and was listened to by the school leadership, Participant One wanted to be an effective teacher within the system. The morale was high. When other leadership came into the system and did not foster that voice, in fact even turning the teacher

voice away, Participant One expressed being deflated and not a part of the educational organization. Participant Two was an effective teacher, but when Participant Two's voice would have been a helpful component of the educational system, the leadership did not include the participant when the participant had ideas for professional development opportunities. After Participant Two's effectiveness in the school system and lack of inclusion in leadership decisions, this teacher left this educational system. Setting aside time for teacher inclusion is important for the educational system. Allowing teams for decision-making would help teachers experience the process of integrating the educational reform.

Summary of Research to Practice Connection

So how do school leadership support, communication and inclusion of teachers in response to educational reform prompt school effectiveness? As this study revealed, teachers will do almost anything for the educational system and becoming effective teachers if they experience support, communication and inclusion. All participants noted support through professional development and positive feedback were helpful in the teacher effectiveness. Participants One and Two wanted to communicate their voice to leadership with regards to insight of the educational reform measures, and all participants expressed being included during the educational reform process is helpful understanding the multiple factors included within the reform measures. It provides a positive morale and leaves teachers with the notion they are valued as professionals in the educational system.

Teachers within this research pose an experiential snapshot of what was experienced during an educational reform measure. Was it the measure itself that posed the experience? Not necessarily the reform itself, but how the educational reform was unveiled through school leadership.

Leadership support through professional development and instructional guidance helps teachers become effective by experiencing guidance through a trying process such as educational reform. When leadership communicates information such as the intentions of the educational reform measures, teachers have a better understanding and do not experience being left out of the equation. Inclusion provides a key leadership factor in teacher effectiveness because teachers become a part of the process instead of simply the product, which in turn create teacher buy-in.

This research contributes to the larger understanding of practice as it relates teacher effectiveness specific to working through educational reform in that leadership practices are helpful to teachers and increasing student achievement during an educational reform. Although research from Fullan (2001) has shown that teachers need support through the implementation process, and Leithwood and Janzi (2000) note sharing a common meaning is important, teachers are still facing leadership from the top down without the inclusion of the teacher in the decision-making process for educational reform. Hence, there is a concretive effort to keep teachers out of the decision-making process in regard to educational reform. Teachers are seen as *pawns in political schemes* instead of respected as key components of educational reform

(Edwards, 2011). These teacher-leader relationships are important within the educational realm because it presents an unscripted insight to leadership influences on teacher effectiveness.

The implications of educational practice for school leadership effectiveness and contributions to research show when leaders utilize a two-way communication, provide professional development and instructional feedback support, and actively include teachers throughout the phases of integrating educational reform helps promote teacher effectiveness in the educational system. This research shows leadership practices provide direct and indirect influential actions on teachers and relate with supervision of instruction for school effectiveness and student achievement. Since the teacher has a central understanding of their work, it is necessary for teacher input within the discussions of educational reform (Spencer, 1996; Hargreaves, 1996). It is critical to include teachers' voices in the decision-making process regarding educational reform. This study shows the inclusion of teachers' voice is still an issue for teachers, and emphasizes the need for teachers' voices in the decision-making process for practice of leadership support for promoting teacher effectiveness because teachers become a part of the process instead of simply the product, which in turn create teacher buy-in. As Leithwood and Janzi (2000) stress that sharing common meanings and values help promote a share vision and goals for the school to promote school effectiveness.

In conclusion, this research finds there is a need for including supportive models in leaders' trainings with more practicum experiences, ensuring

leadership standards speak of specific ways of communicative efforts, and for building teams for teacher inclusion in the decision-making process to promote teacher effectiveness during educational reform.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol
for
Sherri Pankhurst's Dissertation Research Study

This hermeneutic interview seeks to ascertain the participants' lived experiences of educational reform within the timeframe 2009-2014 using van Manen's (2014) lifeworld existentials guides to reflection. The interview will be approximately 90 minutes in length. The interview will begin with a demographic background. After the background information is obtained, the hermeneutic interview will use guided open-ended questions for inquiry of the research question: What are select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform? If needed, there will be possible follow-up questions to gain more insight to the research question.

Background Information

- Name:
- Number of years teaching:
- What year did you receive teacher of the year in your district (if site level, include)?
- In what district (if site level, include) did you obtain teacher of the year?
- What is the criterion for obtaining the teacher of the year recognition in your district?
- What grade level and content area were you teaching at the time of receiving this recognition?
- What year did you receive Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year?

Research Question

What are select, high performing teachers' lived experiences working with their school leader during near recent educational reform?

Research Focus: My research aims to illuminate teachers' experiences working with their school leader during the context of the educational reform timeframe of 2009-2014.



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Guided open-ended questions

1. What were your experiences working with your school leader with educational reform during the timeframe 2009-2014?
2. Please elaborate [Note: researcher will ask only if participant did not address this in item 1 above], how would you describe your experience working with your school leader, clarify who is your school leader, in order to carry out educational reform as it relates to your practice?

Further probing questions:

1. Describe any pressures you may have experienced from educational reform that began in 2009?
2. Describe any influences from the school leader or district leadership that may have helped or hindered your experience with educational reform beginning in 2009?
3. In relation to your teaching practice, describe an experience when school leadership made an impact on your teaching effectiveness.
4. What advice would you recommend to school leaders when guiding and mentoring teachers during educational reform as it relates to practice and teacher effectiveness?

Possible follow-up questions:

1. Describe how the school leader influenced your attainment of teacher of the year?
2. What are you experiences with other teachers in regards to educational reform?
3. Describe if the influence from the school leader has changed your pedagogical approach in the classroom.

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