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Teachers Leading Teachers:

The Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit's Facilitator Community

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Introduction

Situated amid international benchmarking comparisons like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment and broader neo-liberal agendas of accountability, the quality of teachers and teaching has been the focus of much educational reform over the past 30 years (Darling-Hammond & Burns, 2017). Widespread acknowledgement that the quality of teaching impacts student success (Hattie, 2009) draws attention to the importance of teacher learning (Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011). However, as Lieberman, Campbell, and Yashkina (2017) point out:

In practice, the emphasis on teachers at the center of educational improvement has proven to be a mixed blessing with divergent views on whether teachers should be the subjects of external change - for example, with the imposition of teacher performance measurement and evaluations - or the agents of change with opportunities for teachers themselves to develop and exercise their collective judgment. (p. 11)

Indeed, tensions around teacher as agent and teacher as subject have long plagued debates over who should be in control of teacher professional learning (Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner, & Hobbs-Johnson, 2016; 2017; Lieberman et al., 2017). The debates have traditionally been rooted in the knowledge of outside experts rather than the expertise of teachers themselves. Recent calls have been made to Flip the System (Evers & Kneyber, 2016) from a top-down approach to educational improvement and policy making, and to build the professional capital of the teaching profession (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These calls have drawn attention to the need for a more-balanced approach to educational change; one rooted in teacher leadership in which teacher professional learning increasingly becomes the purview of the profession itself.

A recent report on professional learning in Canada (Campbell et al., 2016; 2017) found that, as in most educational jurisdictions, the appropriate balance of system-directed and self-directed professional learning for teachers in Canada is complex and contested. However, the report also highlights several promising practices across Canadian jurisdictions that utilize the leadership capacity of teachers in determining their own learning needs and leading the professional learning of their peers. The research team also found that, by and large, Canadian teachers' federations are considered a trusted source of professional learning "by

teachers, for teachers” (Osmond-Johnson, Campbell, and Faubert, forthcoming). Moreover, teacher choice and voice are vital to the organizations; self-directed learning is considered important, as well as opportunities for teachers to expand their development and networks beyond their own school and/or school district, and there is a rejection of the notion of a “one size fits all” approach to professional learning. These are all elements which the existing research literature identifies as features of high-quality professional learning (CUREE, 2012; Cordingley et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; and Timperley, 2008; 2011).

Within this context, the purpose of this study was twofold. Firstly, the project aimed to explore the value-added component of communities of practice within the teaching profession by examining the SPDU’s Facilitator Community as an example of a network of teachers leading teachers. An initiative of the professional development branch of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, SPDU’s Facilitator Community supports the growth and development of teacher facilitators who design and lead professional learning for teachers. Drawing on interview and survey data from over 20 Community members, the project aimed to highlight the positive impact involvement in this network has had on its members in terms of the development of their professional capital, which Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) position as being imperative to the future of the teaching profession. They also note that building the collective capacity of the teaching profession to collaboratively examine problems of practice is a significant focus in many of the world’s most educationally successful countries.

Secondly, by highlighting an innovative teacher leadership network housed within a teacher federation, the project also aims to create a counter-narrative to the notion that such organizations are only concerned with salaries and benefits. Drawing attention to the professional aspects of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation and its professional development agenda is particularly important considering the recent establishment of the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board. Teacher federations in Ontario, one of only two other Canadian provinces to have teacher regulatory boards, recently criticized the overreach of its regulatory board into other professional matters including professional development (OTF, 2014). In an age of union-bashing and neo-liberal assaults on education, it is imperative that teacher federations continue to advance and promote their professional mandate.

The paper begins with an overview of the professional learning literature and the movement towards teacher-led professional learning, followed by an exploration of the international and Canadian literature on the work of teacher organizations in this area. The construct of professional capital is then described as the conceptual framework for the study. This is followed by a description of the Facilitator Community and an overview of the study - its purpose, research questions, and design methods. Key findings around the impact of the program on the development of professional capital within its members is outlined, after which the report concludes with a discussion of the power of leading professional learning for developing professional capital and the important role teacher organizations play in promoting and advocating for professionally led professional learning.

Literature Review: Professional Development and the Movement Toward Professionally Led Professional Learning

Professional Development or Professional Learning?

In light of evidence that teachers and teaching are central to school effectiveness and improvement (RAND, 2012), for some time now, educational jurisdictions have been wrestling with the implementation of myriad reforms and policies aimed at improving teacher quality (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Germane to the issue of teacher quality, however, is an acknowledgment of the value of teachers and teaching and the ongoing development of the teaching profession as a learning profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Indeed, some of the highest performing countries in the world have highly developed teaching professions, with robust opportunities for teacher leadership and collaborative professional learning (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). Yet, in many jurisdictions, teachers do not readily have access to the kinds of active learning experiences that hones their skills to better support the diverse needs of their students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Rather, teacher learning opportunities have traditionally taken the form of one-stop, sit-and-get workshops and training modules that are often depersonalized and devoid of valuable teacher expertise. As Little (1993) pointed out some two decades ago, these kinds of experiences, in isolation, are inadequate for developing the kinds of teaching practices required in contemporary schools, and their impact on teaching and learning is arguably minimal.

The notion that teacher learning should center around the day-to-day work of teaching began emerging in the late 1990s and researchers began to propose a new vision rooted in a view of schools as “not only places where teachers work . . . but . . . as places where they learn” (Smylie, 1995, p. 95). With a focus on transforming the design, delivery, and content of traditional teacher learning, authors began to describe examples of job-embedded collaborations that strengthened teachers’ skills and enabled schools to function as learning communities (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). From this body of research, much was gleaned about meaningful and effective professional learning for teachers and the positive impacts of such learning on teacher practice and student learning.

It was around the same time that some scholars began to distinguish between “professional development”, where teachers are the recipients of externally designed workshops and courses, and “professional learning” as “an internal process in which individuals create professional knowledge through interaction with this information in a way that challenges previous assumptions and creates new meanings (Timperly, 2011, p. 5). A scan of current literature reveals that the delineation between these terms, however, is much more complex than these definitions suggest, with both terms often used interchangeably by scholars, governments, and practitioners alike. For instance, according to the OECD (2014):

Professional development activities are those that are designed to develop an individual’s skills, knowledge and expertise as a teacher (or more generally, a professional). These activities are formal and could refer to different activities such as courses and workshops, but also to formalised teacher collaboration and participation in professional networks (p.526).

Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) recently proposed that it’s the overlap between learning something new that is potentially of value (professional learning) and the growth that happens once learning occurs (professional development) that is critical, which they refer to as professional learning and development. While this important discussion in the literature and in the education sector itself is acknowledged, this report adopts professional learning as an encompassing term for the types of learning and development described by OECD, Timperly, Fullan and others.

Teacher Leadership and Leading Professional Learning

Like professional learning, the concept of teacher leadership is also not well-defined (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), often used as an umbrella term that encompasses a host of formal and informal roles in which teachers engage in and outside of the classroom. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), for instance, declared in general terms that “teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others towards improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 17).

According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), there have been three waves of teacher leadership, each of them conceptualizing the work of teachers in leading professional learning in a slightly different manner. In wave one, teacher leadership was envisioned as formal leadership roles such as department head or lead teacher. Viewed as a form of distributed leadership, such teacher leadership was at the purview of principals who assigned these roles at their discretion, restricting the idea that ALL teachers can engage in teacher leadership (Bangs & Frost, 2016).

The second wave of teacher leadership saw teachers taking on informal leadership roles as mentors for new teachers and leaders of teacher learning within their schools. Often, however, the learning they led was prescribed - initiatives that were required by the school district - rather than learning designed by the teacher leaders themselves. In wave three, teacher leaders began collaborating with their peers on self-led learning in what became

known as Professional Learning Communities (Dufour, 2004). However, as Hargreaves (1994) pointed out, PLCs in many schools became sites of “contrived collegiality” as the micropolitics around control turned collaboration into coercion to achieve specific district or ministry-determined goals.

Recently Berry, Zeichner, and Evans (2016) suggest that it is time for the fourth wave of teacher leadership, one where teachers are both classroom practitioners and what they refer to as “teacherpreneurs”:

In wave four, teachers will serve in a variety of formal and informal roles, defined most prominently on the basis of their knowledge of students and communities. They will be producers of solutions rather than just implementers of someone else’s ... we believe that in Wave 4, teachers, some with positional power, but many without it, will lead to the de-isolation of their profession, and drive the collective expertise of the colleagues in the best interests of students. (p. 211)

Some evidence of the fourth wave of teacher leadership already exists in the works of scholars like Frost (Frost, 2011; Frost & Harris, 2003) and Lieberman (Lieberman et al., 2017; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007; Lieberman & Miller, 2007), both of whom study teachers as leaders of professional learning. In Canada, for instance, Lieberman and her colleagues have most recently studied the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program in Ontario (Lieberman et al., 2017). Established in 2007, the TLLP is a partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Education and Ontario Teachers’ Federation to support experienced teachers in undertaking self-directed professional learning projects aimed at developing leadership skills and knowledge exchange of exemplary practices. On the international front, Frost (2011) reported on the International Teacher Leadership program, which supports teacher-led professional learning programs in 15 countries across Europe. A strong proponent of teacher leadership and extended roles for teachers, Frost commented:

Teachers who lead development work are embracing extended professionalism in which they share responsibility for the goals of the learning community to which they belong, engage in knowledge creation and transfer and act ethically in the pursuit of the interests of their students. (p. 42)

Teachers, however, have not traditionally led professional learning. Rather, decades of research suggest that, in much of the industrialized world, such opportunities have traditionally taken the form of workshops and training modules delivered by outside experts (Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1993; Walker, 2013; Wilson & Berne, 1999). According to Wilson and Berne (1999), however, “teachers are loathe to participate in anything that smacks of one-day workshops offered by outside “experts” who know (and care) little about the particular and specific contexts of a given school” (p. 197). In some jurisdictions, the failure of such initiatives has been used as a justification to invest resources in what Fullan (2011) has referred to as the “wrong drivers” of educational reform, including stringent accountability frameworks and student testing regimes. Conversely, Timperly, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) suggest that

professional learning programs need to view teachers “as self-regulating professionals who, if given sufficient time and resources, are able to construct their own learning experiences and develop a more effective reality for their students through their collective expertise” (p. XXV). As detailed in the following section, this aligns well with the vision of professional learning embraced by teachers’ organizations across Canada.

Teachers’ Organizations as Sites of Professional Learning

Operating in a policy environment characterized by accountability measures and an increased role of the state in educational decision making (Compton & Weiner, 2009), teachers’ organizations have often resorted to traditional tactics of adversarial collective bargaining and labour action (Bascia, 2009). Occurring on an international scale from England (Carter, et al., 2010) to New Zealand (Codd, 2005), this policy environment has been particularly evident in the United States where high profile disputes between teachers’ organizations and state educational authorities have recently occurred in Chicago (Ashby & Bruno, 2016), Wisconsin (Swalwell, et al., 2015), and Washington D.C. (Ravitch, 2010), to name a few. As a consequence of such disputes, teacher organizations have often been portrayed as militant, unprofessional, and selfishly concerned with “bread and butter” issues of salary and benefits (for examples see Antonucci, 2010; Brimelow, 2004; Lieberman, 2009; & Moe, 2011).

While Canadian teachers’ organizations have not experienced the kinds of stringent accountability measures found in the United States or England (there are no value-added measures of teacher quality and teachers are not removed from their position based on poor student results), they have not been immune to conflict with government. In 2012, when contract talks between the Ontario Ministry of Education and the teachers’ federations reached a stalemate, government passed Bill 115, giving the Ministry the power to legislate a new contract that removed teachers’ right to strike, reduced sick benefits by half, and imposed a two-year wage freeze. Teachers’ organizations responded with a series of one day rotating strikes and work-to-rule action before signing new contracts in June of 2013 (Skorbach, 2012). In British Columbia, the teachers’ federation has been embroiled in a long-standing dispute with the Ministry of Education over legislated contracts that removed their right to strike and limited their ability to negotiate class size and workload issues (Judd, 2016). Most recently, in 2017, the Nova Scotia government legislated an imposed contract after teachers rejected the third tentative agreement in an 18-month period (Gorman, 2017). Issues in their dispute included class size caps and teacher workload issues. A similar situation unfolded in Saskatchewan in 2014, with two tentative agreements being voted down before a deal was finally reached (Maharaj and Giles, 2014). In the media, teachers’ organizations have been referred to as promoting “policies that serve their particular interests rather than those of students, parents, and the general public” (Zwaagstra, Clifton, & Long, 2007, p.2) and making out like “bandits” (Wente, 2015) with respect to salary increases.

There is a growing body of research, however, that paints a picture of teachers’ organizations as committed to improving the quality of education and broadening the scope of their influence to include professional agendas framed around teacher learning and leadership (Bangs & Frost, 2012; Bangs & MacBeath, 2013; Clarke, 2001; Kerchner & Koppich, 1993; Murray, 2004; Pringle, 2010; Rottman, 2008; Urban, 2004). Bascia, for instance, has written extensively on the contributions of teachers’ organizations to several areas of educational reform (1994; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2000; 2003; 2005; 2008a; 2008b; 2009), recently, presently four

cases studies of teachers' organizations which have, at various times, developed positive working arrangements with their governments (Bascia and Osmond, 2013). While it was noted that these relationships are fragile and subject to change, the authors concluded, "collaborative working relationships between teacher unions and governments occur in a number of jurisdictions around the world" (p. 40).

Research has also focused on the ways in which teacher organizations have gone about establishing themselves as sites of meaningful professional learning for current and incoming members - stepping in to provide learning experiences for their members when funding for government-sponsored professional learning has been reduced or cut, collaborating with colleges of teacher education to develop initial teacher preparation programs, and sponsoring conferences and symposia and other networking opportunities where teachers and academics share educational ideas and strategies. For instance, Bascia (2003) highlighted the "Teacher Center", an initiative undertaken by the United Federation of Teachers in New York City to assist teachers in the development of comprehensive curriculum and place them in low-performing schools to support teaching improvement projects. She has also written about the National Education Association's Learning Lab initiative, which engaged members across many locals through the 1990s (Bascia, et al., 1997). In a similar vein, Murray (2004), has profiled several innovative teacher organization initiatives in the United States including the Toledo Career Development Plan for the Professionalization of Teaching where teachers apply to work on district projects relating to curriculum, leadership, or other self-identified areas of interest. In Canada, Naylor (2005) also chronicled several professional development partnership projects sponsored by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation including a federally funded multi-literacies project and a tri-district partnership that oversees a mentoring and support group program for new Special Education and ESL teachers. Moreover, as noted earlier, Osmond-Johnson, Campbell, and Faubert (forthcoming) suggest that teacher organizations in Canada are heavily involved in supporting teacher professional learning. This support has taken many forms, including provisions for guaranteed professional learning funding secured through the collective bargaining process, in addition to the development of both their own professional learning programs as well as collaborative partnerships with school boards and provincial ministries.

Thus, while some literature suggests that teacher organizations have struggled with dichotomy of the "conflicting missions" of their dual mandate of professionalism and unionism (Loveless, 2000), there is research that suggests that some teacher organizations have thrived; partnering with school districts and government departments on a variety of mentoring programs and collaborative models of peer review and teacher evaluation as well as undertaking numerous professional learning initiatives on their own. Taken collectively, a more progressive view of teacher organizations is presented, one that portrays them as having the capacity to engage teachers in quality professional experiences that facilitates the continued growth of professional capital within the teaching profession. Comprised of human (the skills and strengths of individuals), social (the capacity of the collective) and decisional capital (the ability of professionals to make autonomous, discretionary judgments), professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) is predicated on the notion that great teaching is a shared accomplishment that involves continuous improvement informed by collaborative experience and collective knowledge. The concept of professional capital and its relationship to teacher learning and leadership is the focus of the section that follows.

What is Professional Capital?

As noted earlier, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) denote three inter-related components that comprise professional capital. The first, human capital, is about individual talent; “having and developing the requisite knowledge and skills. It is about knowing your subject and knowing how to teach it, knowing children and understanding how they learn” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 89). Within the context of this study, the concept of human capital is expanded to include the growth of individual Community members as teacher leaders acting in the capacities of mentors, coaches, learning facilitators, and lead learners.

While the skills of individual teachers are important to the students in one classroom, it is the skills of the collective that will lead schools and districts in supporting the learning of all students and teachers. Consequently, teachers learning or leading in isolation will not suffice. Rather, opportunities to develop collective talent and collaborative professional work are vital. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue:

. . . you cannot increase human capital just by focusing on it in isolation. Some of the most powerful, underutilized strategies in all of education involve the deliberate use of teamwork - enabling teachers to learn from each other within and across schools - and building cultures and networks of communication, learning, trust, and collaboration around the team as well. (p. 89)

This is what they refer to as social capital - collaborative and collegial relationships among people and the resource and information sharing that occurs because of these relationships: social capital increases your knowledge - it gives you access to other people’s human capital. It expands your networks of influence and opportunity, and it develops your resilience when you know there are people to go to who can give you advice and be your advocates. (p. 90) Professional capital is not simply developing and sharing knowledge and practices, however, it is establishing, cultivating, and valuing opportunities for informed professional judgment, decisions, and actions. This is decisional capital; “capital that enables them [teachers] to make wise judgments in circumstances where there is no fixed rule or piece of incontrovertible

evidence to guide them” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 94). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest, in fact, that exercising decisional capital is what defines a skilled professional: “The pros do this all the time. They come to have competence, judgment, insight, inspiration, and the capacity for improvisation as they strive for exceptional performance” (p. 5). Moreover, just as social capital allows access to another person’s human capital, social capital is also the key to decisional capital, which is enhanced over time through practice and reflection on practice in collaboration with colleagues.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) position professional capital in the teaching profession as a critical component of “improving as an individual, raising the performance of the team, and increasing quality across the whole profession” (p. 23). Within this view of teaching, teachers are the drivers of improvement of the system and they use their collective wealth of expertise to learn from one another and make important decisions about the future of teaching and learning. Consequently, teacher leadership constitutes a critical opportunity for developing teacher professional capital, particularly if it occurs within a collaborative learning environment that values and respects the expertise that experienced teachers bring to the table. In that vein, this study sought to examine the extent to which SPDU’s Facilitator Community served to build the human, social, and decisional capital of its teacher leaders.

Teachers Leading Teachers: The SPDU's Facilitator Community

Established in 1987, SPDU has been the professional development branch of the STF for 30 years. Designing and delivering a large variety of professional learning series and workshops at the provincial level, SPDU additionally works with a variety of school boards and other educational stakeholders around their professional learning needs (SPDU, 2016). Originally, professional learning through SPDU was the sole responsibility of hired staff within the department. However, as demand for professional learning around the province grew, the need for learning facilitators also increased. In response, SPDU began to recruit a group of teachers from around the province who would deliver predesigned SPDU workshops. However, as SPDU Executive Director Terry Johanson explains, over time the unit began to realize that they were not fully capitalizing on the leadership capacity of their teacher facilitators to design and lead professional learning:

My conversation with our senior leadership here at that time was, how do we ensure quality? Because our reputation for high-quality professional learning is very important in the province for many reasons, including the fact that teacher time is too important to waste with bad professional development. How do we ensure that the facilitators feel confident and competent, and why are we bothering with them having any expertise at all if we're just giving them a workshop that they are going to facilitate, a "pull a binder" kind of image was in my head, so I said I think we can do this as more of a capacity building model.

Reimagined in 2014 as the Facilitator Community, teachers within the current structure are involved in all aspects of workshop preparation, from design to delivery, through a model of mentored gradual release. In this model, new community members begin by co-leading a workshop with an experienced community member who is the lead. Together they tweak existing workshops that had previously been developed and/or delivered by the lead. Once new members have co-led one or two workshops, they are invited to be a lead on that

workshop and begin to engage in the development of new workshops in collaboration with SPDU staff and other experienced community members. Community members are also required to complete the Facilitator Series, a set of six workshops specifically designed to support and enhance their skills as facilitators of adult learning.

In 2015, the Community began to develop cohorts, smaller groupings of community members that have common interests. The first cohort focused on Early Learning, and by 2017 new cohorts had formed in the areas of accreditation, literacy, numeracy, and science. Cohort members met in the spring of each year to map out and determine the learning needs of teachers in that area for the coming school year. The Executive Director explained:

When we have a cohort, we don't tell them what their work is, they tell us what their work is and what teachers need and they are really empowered to lead and direct the work and the development. We bring in information from various places including the Ministry, but it's ultimately teachers that lead it. And so, there is never going to be just a binder on the shelf that they're given and told to do, they are the ones that create the need, the moral imperative why, create the workshops as well as facilitate them and mentor each other as colleagues as well.

As of 2015-16, 85 teachers from 18 different school divisions were a part of the Facilitator Community (SPDU, 2016) and in the 2016-2017 school year, the Community planned and delivered almost 200 professional learning sessions. The program is predicated on the SPDU's commitment to the development and provision of "consultative and capacity building services to those who plan and deliver professional development" (SPDU, 2016, p. 3). Indeed, as demonstrated by the data to be presented in this paper, this capacity-building model is also serving as a conduit for the development of member's professional capital as they lead and facilitate the learning of their peers.

Methods

Adopting a mixed methods case study design (Yin, 2006), this study aimed to explore the value-added component of communities of practice within the teaching profession by examining the SPDU's Facilitator Community as an example of a network of teachers leading teachers. The literature agrees that quality case studies utilize various data sources to triangulate findings and improve the rigor and robustness of their findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Yin, 2006). Sources informing this paper include observations of teacher-facilitated workshops, an online survey, and semi-structured interviews.

The online survey was based on an adapted version of a survey created by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) designed to gain a broad-based perspective of participants' perceptions of the impact of the Facilitator Community on various aspects of professional capital. Twenty community members completed the online survey over a three-week period in January of 2017. In addition, 10 community members completed a paper version of the same survey during an SPDU facilitation event in December 2016. Responses from the paper versions were input to the online database to facilitate simple statistical analysis of percent responses and run cross-tabs of all survey data simultaneously. Participants were not required to answer all questions and, as such, total responses vary across survey items.

To gather more in-depth accounts of member experiences and the impact of their participation in the Facilitator Community, qualitative interviews were conducted with 12 consenting community members. An interview with the Executive Director of SPDU was also conducted to gather data around the organizational perspective with regards to the benefits of professional learning designed by teachers for teachers, and the role of the Federation in creating spaces for teachers to engage in informal leadership. All interviews were semi-structured in nature to allow for a more natural, comfortable flow of conversation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews were recorded with participants' permission, transcribed verbatim, and inductively coded using the research software Nvivo. The initial coding structure focused on the three areas: human, social, and decisional capital. Secondary coding was used to tease apart these larger themes to reveal a more nuanced picture of the way the Facilitator Community supports and develops professional capital amongst its members.

To observe teacher facilitators in action, observations of professional learning sessions facilitated by community members took place on three separate occasions with three different participants. Participants who were co-leading asked the permission of their partner in advance of the session and assured that observational data was being collected only on study participants (not their co-lead). Each observation lasted for approximately three hours in duration and served to identify the kinds of learning activities designed and delivered by community members and the way they went about leading the learning of other teachers. To gain an understanding of the kind of training and support provided to community members, SPDU also invited the researcher to attend Facilitator Series workshops as well as a Facilitator Forum conference hosted by SPDU.

Recruitment of participants was done in collaboration with SPDU, who forwarded an invitation to participate, the letter of informed consent, and the link to the online survey to all members of the Facilitator Community through their email listserv. Community members who were interested in volunteering to be interviewed or observed contacted the researcher directly and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. Consent for the survey was embedded within the online database itself. It is important to note, however, that teaching in Saskatchewan is a unified profession, meaning classroom teachers, school administrators, and school division consultants are all represented by the STF. Collectively, all members of the STF are eligible to participate in the Facilitator Community and, as outlined in Table 1, each group was represented in all forms of data.

Table 1: Participant Breakdown According to Role					
	CLASSROOM TEACHER	SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR	SCHOOL DIVISION CONSULTANT/ LEADER	SELF-EMPLOYED CONSULTANT	TEACHER LIBRARIAN
Survey	19	4	3	1	1
Interviews	5	5	2	0	0
Observations	1	1	1	0	0

Triangulation of the data took place in two phases. First, data was collectively analyzed to look for patterns across all participant groups. Second, data analysis was broken down according to two subgroups to identify possible differences and nuances between groups: classroom teachers and those in leadership roles (including school administrators, school division employees, consultants, and teacher-librarians). The survey data of one respondent (who indicated “other” position but did not specify their current role) was omitted in order to ensure accuracy when comparing responses across participant groups. The results of these analyses are further described below.

Findings

Developing Professional Capital

By and large, all participant groups in this study found the Facilitator Community to be a very rewarding professional experience. It was clear across all data sources that taking on teacher leadership roles and leading professional learning through the Facilitator Community had provided all participants with an opportunity to develop and build all three aspects of their professional capital. That being said, the survey data did reveal some discrepancies between participant groups with respect to particular elements of professional capital. For the purposes of clarity and readability, the findings are delineated separately into human, social, and decisional capital, however, it is important to acknowledge the dynamic and inter-related nature of these areas as they all impinge on and influence the development of the others. In other words, “Professional capital is a function of the interactive, multiplicative combination of the three kinds of capital” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 39).

Human capital

In terms of their individual professional growth, interviewees exclusively described their involvement in the Community as the best professional learning in which they had engaged, owing to its networked structure, its practice of teachers leading teachers, and the learning-centred focus of the workshops. This was reiterated in the survey data, where 100% (n=27) of respondents agreed (n=4) or strongly agreed (n=23) that the Facilitator Community has been a beneficial professional learning experience. Relatedly, 100% (n=27) of survey participants saw the Facilitator Community as aiding their search for additional professional learning opportunities to improve their own practice.

In particular, participants identified the learning in which they engaged as part of the Community as strongly impacting their own professional practice. For classroom teachers, this was primarily discussed in terms of their work with their students. For John, this was a function of the Community’s focus on empowering teachers to be in control of their own learning, which he had transposed onto student learners:

It gave me a different perspective on empowerment . . . I’m super cognizant we [teachers] are not the possessors of knowledge; that it’s actually the act of discerning what is good and useful knowledge and helping students to create something or contract their knowledge that they require for a particular situation so I think it’s made me a much better teacher that way.

For others, facilitating professional learning for teachers had equipped them with a whole new set of learner-centred strategies that they then began to use within their own classrooms. For instance, Kathy noted:

Even though these are strategies designed to work for adults it has felt very applicable in my day-to-day work. Even in just setting norms in my own classroom, and I've been using a lot more stickie note activities in my classrooms since I've been doing the facilitator series and kind of just being a better question asker of my students. So, there has been a direct connection to my classroom

Survey data supported this finding, with classroom teacher respondents overwhelmingly identifying the Community as helping them to better understand what students need to be successful (82% strongly agree or agree) and expand their knowledge of teaching strategies (88% strongly agree or agree).

School administrators and division consultants, on the other hand, tended to discuss the impact of their involvement on their leadership practice and their approach to promoting a culture of learning amongst the adults in their building. Liam, for instance, noted:

As a school administrator, it [the Community] has allowed me to facilitate adult learning within our own school here, so I think that is just a powerful thing. I try to keep the focus on learning and not so much on the information that I need to share, so when we are in a staff meeting and we are learning about, let's say, common assessment terms or common assessment practices, out comes my facilitator hat and I actually think that the teachers benefit far more than me saying "OK we are going to do this", you know and "this is how it's going to go", cause nobody learns in that kind of situation.

On a similar note, Andrea discussed how she used the principles of adult learning that underpin the Facilitator Community is founded to rethink professional learning in her school:

This year we kind of made a big leap in the way we organized our school goals with respect to the freedom and flexibility we offered to the teachers around their own professional goals. I certainly was advocating for people to have that kind of freedom and flexibility and for us to trust that they will do that, that it might not look like the way we're comfortable with, but we have to respect people as professionals and adult learners and if we want them to really engage then we need to set it up a little differently. The years previous we had specific goals around literacy and specific teaching and reading strategies, for example, and so I would say that my kind of push to change the way we were doing things at the school level was certainly a product of the steps that we had in the Facilitator Community.

Gloria positioned her work in the Community as helping her provide better professional development opportunities to the teachers in her division, since no internal mechanism existed to support her in effectively facilitating adult learning. She commented:

I strongly feel it is helping me be better at what I do on a day-to-day basis in my division. I'll do a session every eight to 10 weeks in a busier year, so it's those times between facilitating that because of my connections to the cohort and because of my attendance at the facilitator series and because of facilitating days I am stronger at supporting the teachers I work with on a more regular basis.

Tessa, another school division consultant, spoke of the impact on her leadership skills, remarking that she had become a better listener and more attentive to the needs of others. She emphasized the confidence she had built in her own understanding of professional learning and teacher collaboration, noting that:

When I joined the Community, I was feeling very isolated as a leader in our school division and I was receiving what I felt, at least for me, was some conflicting messages about how we should work together and who we should be working with and it was very difficult to be a leader in that situation. SPDU has really made me to feel like there is a community of practice who believe strongly what the research is telling us about professional learning and how we can best apply it, and that in turn has made me more confident in what I believe and what I know and I more willing to take that forward, as a leader in our school system.

In these instances, not only were community members growing their own human capital with respect to their knowledge of adult learning, teacher engagement, and what constitutes effective professional learning, they were also creating opportunities to further develop the human capital of other educators.

Those in formal leadership roles were not the only participants to discuss the impact of the Community on their leadership, however. Classroom teachers were also quick to comment that the Facilitator Community provided them with the opportunity to engage in leadership roles that were often not available through their regular work. Teachers particularly commented that their confidence in their leadership abilities and their expertise in that area had grown. For instance, Kathy noted, "I feel more comfortable speaking up or I feel that I come from a position of knowledge when I explain my position, my point of view and that [the Facilitator Community] has certainly contributed". Likewise, in the survey, over 75% ($n=13$) of classroom teachers agreed (47%, $n=8$) or strongly agreed (30%, $n=5$) that the program positively impacted their confidence in their ability to informally mentor or coach other teachers. Some interviewees also commented that their knowledge of group facilitation had improved, and others noted they had a better understanding of navigating group dynamics and understanding how to deal with different personality types. These relational skills are particularly valuable to those taking on informal leadership roles as they typically must rely on their relationships to influence others.

Looking back to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) framework, however, it is important to situate the growth of human capital within the context of social capital. As explained next, the skills and newfound confidence that participants noted did not happen in isolation. Rather, the development of their human capital took place within a network of collective professionalism and collegiality where they learned from, with, and alongside each other.

Social capital

As the Executive Director explained earlier, SPDU's Facilitator Community is predicated on the notion of social capital - building collective expertise to ensure the province's teachers have access to consistently high-quality professional learning. The Community's focus on social capital was confirmed throughout the data in this study. Aligning with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) definition, collegial relationships within the Community provided members with reassurance and resiliency and networking within the Community was identified by numerous participants as being a valued component of the initiative. For instance, Kathy described being a member of the Community as "being a part of something bigger than myself" and went on to explain:

Getting out of the four walls of my classroom and knowing that there's more and there are good people doing good work, with good practice and good research behind them is really reassuring and kind of helps me go to sleep on the nights when I think that what if we're all, what if we're messing up and doing the wrong thing and I know that I'm not alone in this.

Relatedly, others noted that they now had a group of colleagues from around the province upon whom they could call for advice should they need it; "there is always one or two people every year that are the type that like to stay in contact all the time, bounce things off you, vice versa" (Dean). Likewise, Kristy noted, "I can email a lady in Carrot River and say, 'remember when we did this, I want to tweak it a little bit, what do you suggest?', you know? I would never have that collaborative opportunity or those connections."

The importance of this kind of collaboration was also noted in the survey data, as 96% of respondents relayed that their participation had provided numerous (81%, n=21) or some (15%, n=4) opportunity to discuss issues of teaching and learning with people in other educational roles. 96% percent (n=26) also agreed (11%, n=3) or strongly agreed (85%, n=23) that being involved in the Facilitator Community had grown their professional networks.

In particular, the development of cohorts and the mentored model of supporting members as they moved from beginning to experienced facilitators appear to be of significance in growing professional networks to develop social capital. Interview data also showed that teachers appreciated the collaborative learning experiences and multiple viewpoints that participating in the Community and facilitating learning sessions offered. Speaking to the value of the cohort model, Tara stated:

We all come from different schools, different backgrounds and different strengths that we have so you get huge perspectives and different stages in your career. It's so nice to work with somebody else and have them critique that work [facilitation and workshop development]. We are supposed to be a profession that is self reflecting every single day and it really gets honed and built when you design professional development because you're going to have somebody else who is offering a different approach. And it's that looking at it from a different perspective that really makes you stop, think and reflect on your work that you have done, not only in professional development but your teaching as well.

John reiterated the significance of the networking aspect of the Community and how the collaboration brought so many perspectives to the table:

I just like the networking of it all. It's helped me to put my whole career into perspective and know that, although we all have different context and different struggles, ultimately, we are all in it for the same reasons, and I think that's very, the network is super valuable for me.

For Stephanie, the mix of participants in the Community gave her a broader view of the educational landscape:

I really enjoy the people that I'm working with and I get to build this community with. It's a lot of fun, we are from all over the province so the conversations we have a really interesting for me as well. It gives me good perspective for all the things that's happening as well with the government right now with education.

Survey data additionally confirmed this finding, with 92% (n=24) of classroom teachers indicating that the Facilitator Community had provided them with numerous (77%, n=20) or some (15%, n=4) opportunity to learn alongside other educators.

The collective capacity of the group was also viewed as an avenue for improving the facilitation and teaching skills of everyone in the group. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), this is the epitome of social capital, using the group to improve the group. For instance, Tara, who is now a lead facilitator, spoke of the growth in her facilitation skills because of the mentoring she had received. She remarked, "I didn't really think that I was that great of a facilitator and I probably wasn't when I first began, but through the mentoring that they have through SPDU you have that comfort and that support that you need". Stephanie commented that the mentoring experience was similar to that of being a beginning teacher; "my partner has so much experience that she could really have planned the day on the fly. I told her I felt like I was an intern again, there was just so much that it felt a little overwhelming." She went on to note that she wouldn't have been able to plan and facilitate a successful session had it not been for the mentoring she received.

Other interviewees commented on the positive impact of the mentored model on the growth of their facilitation skills. For Sherry, the model provided a safe space to try out a new role in a supportive collegial environment, noting, “the mentoring has been awesome because God forbid I would have been thrown into that [facilitation] without anybody that had done it before. It’s definitely a mentorship kind of atmosphere, which makes it safer.” According to Liam, working with a co-facilitator aligned with his preferred learning style. He stated:

That’s the value of the Community, learning together as a group. I know some people can learn in isolation and quite well but it’s never the norm for me, so personally the collaboration before the planning and even the during [is a great learning experience].

Survey responses confirmed that, by and large, teacher respondents viewed the Community as a place to examine and improve their practice in collaboration with their peers, with 84% (n=22) reporting numerous (65%, n=17) or some (19%, n=5) opportunities to do so.

Further to this, interviewees who belonged to cohorts noted that bringing together groups of teachers who were interested and had expertise in a similar area allowed for the development of a deeper understanding of the material at hand. It also helped them more deeply appreciate the professional learning needs of teachers in a professional area of expertise:

The people that you’re with have an in-depth knowledge of the subject area which you just can get to a deeper place faster. Everybody already understands what we’re working towards because everybody comes from a similar understanding of what best practice is. (Sherry)

For many, including Kristy, the collaborative approach to cohort planning was viewed as the best way to design professional learning. She relayed the following about her most recent group planning session:

We had feedback from the first time we delivered the workshop. So, we go through the feedback, we categorize it and then we decide where the focus needs to be and then we start building a plan for the day. We are thinking about content, the room set-up, what the people are doing, where they are moving, how is it operating. So, we are thinking about not just what they are learning, but how they are learning. When you talk that out with somebody you get so many great ideas, not necessarily new ideas but different ways to approach different things ... the collaboration and the understanding of the different ways people think and the different ways the people reflect and learn is so beneficial when you’re planning.

Hence, the networked structure of the Community has, as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest, provided access to the human capital of others, which has deepened the social capital of the collective. Further to this, as discussed in the next section, the structure of the cohort model and the power to decide the direction of professional learning within the cohort has also served as a platform for developing members' decisional capital.

Decisional capital

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), decisional capital is best developed through interaction with colleagues: "The decisions get better and better. High-yield strategies become more precise and more embedded when they are developed and deployed in teams that are constantly refining and interpreting them" (p. 96). In this study, the Facilitator Community not only provided teachers with the ability to engage and develop their decisional capital in collaboration with other Community members, but for some members, the Community also served as a springboard for new teacher leadership roles.

With respect to the development of decisional capital within the Community itself, the cohort model has been significant. As the Executive Director explained, one function of the cohorts is to use the expertise and professional judgment of members to discern the needs of students and teachers to make decisions about the kinds of professional learning the cohort will offer over the next year. This was appreciated by interviewees, who particularly valued the "teachers leading teachers" (Dave) aspect of the cohorts and the opportunity to make decisions about what PD might be needed by teachers in their particular areas of expertise. This was certainly the sentiment expressed by Gloria, Tara, and Andrea; all three of whom spoke of the empowering nature of putting decisions about professional development back in the hands of practicing educators:

I am in the early learning cohort and there is probably eight maybe 10 of us who sit down and meet once a year, look at what's been offered, and discuss how different pieces have gone. The last time we met last spring we did a three- to five-year provisioning of what we feel the field needs and when might be the best time to bring on some new material or new daySo really tapping into some of those layers of expertise (Gloria).

We all come together and we start looking at what are the needs of teachers, specifically in that area. Science has just gone through a renewal, so we look at what are the major areas in which teachers who are just dealing with the renewal are going through, where are the areas that they need help. Not only this year, but next year and in five years, what are they going to be needing? Of course we revamp every year, we look at them to see if those are still the needs, but it's really nice to see teachers come together and coming up with a plan for professional development for teachers province-wide. I think it's something quite unique (Tara).

It used to be that there was a binder that had the activities laid out and they had the schedules of the day laid out and you kind of did what the binder told you to do. Now it's a really involved process . . . a group of people sitting together building a plan . . . it's much more about being strategic in preparing ourselves as facilitators so that we can respond to the needs of the group within the topic that we are there to learn that day. There isn't a set outcome at the beginning anymore. Now we are very much about what the participants want to get out of the day and then as facilitators we feel responsible to make we are prepared to respond to that (Andrea).

Decisional capital within the Community is also developed through the mentored model of gradual release. As noted earlier, when members first join the Community they typically are a co-lead on a workshop. Together with the lead facilitator they work to make small changes to existing workshops that have already been developed. In this process members are developing decisional capital as they use their collective expertise to make such changes. As members become more experienced in facilitating, however, they begin to work with other experienced members to design their own workshops. It is here that decisional capital is amplified. For instance, Sherry explained the progression of her mentorship:

The first four facilitations that I've done have almost all been workshops that other people have designed, developed and then implemented . . . This last one that I did, the fellow that I facilitated with, he and I developed the workshop, so that was kind of neat because I saw that when you're the one that develops the workshop yourself you have a much deeper understanding of where you want to go with it. He was the lead but neither one of us was 'leading' so much, we were more co-facilitating it in a true sense.

All three data sources additionally suggest that Community members are developing decisional capital through their facilitations as they use their professional judgment to adjust their approach to meet the needs of teacher learners, guiding their participants in making connections to their own practice and directing their own learning. John, for instance, spoke of "taking the wisdom in the room, harnessing that and having teachers find solutions for themselves with a little bit of guidance and a little bit of conversation and directed conversations." As the following excerpt from observational notes demonstrate, site visits showed this kind of decisional capital in action:

While participants are engaged in active learning, facilitators are walking about, posing questions, assessing how the activity is going then meeting together to debrief, sharing how participants are engaging with the activity, adjusting timing, thinking on their feet but in partnership with each other. (Field notes).

Moreover, for classroom teachers, survey data highlighted that this “thinking on their feet” transferred to their work with students, with 82% agreeing (41%, n=7) or strongly agreeing (41%, n=7) that their participation in the Community had impacted their ability to assess what worked and what did not work in a lesson.

Survey and interview data also revealed that the Facilitator Community and the work in which members engaged provides opportunities to develop and demonstrate their decisional capital beyond the Community through engagement in new and additional leadership roles. These roles have taken on a variety of forms. Sherry, for instance, is now working with the school division to craft a new vision around parent engagement. She is also working with her grade-level partner to develop and deliver a workshop at her division’s teacher convention on the use of a new student assessment application. Kathy also noted that her presence in professional learning in her division is also growing:

It’s actually quite interesting because the consultant for math in my school division came to my facilitated session in February. After that I was approached by my school’s math department head and asked if I wanted to share some of what I have done at the PD session at the school.

Subsequently, Community members have increased their sphere of influence and are now exercising decisional capital in new capacities. While the specifics of their situations could not be gleaned from the survey data, 65% of teachers who responded to the survey indicated that their participation in the Community had impacted their influence on decision making beyond their own classrooms.

This extension of decisional capital seemed to be particularly evident for those participants who were school administrators, many of whom reported having opportunities within the school division to draw on their facilitation experiences and professional judgment to design and lead a variety of initiatives. Liam, for instance, discussed a new professional development initiative in his school division around assessment that he had been tasked with leading, in collaboration with other school principals and teachers from across the division. Likewise, Kristy, for instance, noted:

People in our school division, like my superintendents and things, realize that I had a deep understanding of assessment and curricula, so then they asked me to lead Inspired Learning Opportunity in our schools. We have a group of teachers come and we talk for an hour about what is going to happen in the classroom and we have a professional development book that we are all reading together, then we observe the class and we see the constructive or the inquiry-based situation and then we post conference after what we saw and we commit to something we are going to try.

Andrea also shared the work she is doing at the division level with the administrator leadership team as an offshoot of her facilitator work. Planning and facilitating monthly meetings for the administrators in the school division, she spoke of how her facilitator knowledge helps her to not only decide the structure of the day, but to also effectively respond to the myriad issues that arise when working with a group of school leaders:

I am much more strategic in keeping my focus on what we are trying to accomplish here today and, most importantly, being able to respond when things don't go as planned. There were a bunch of times where we had a day planned and then there was something that happened provincially or politically that meant somebody was going to hijack part of the day and it really led to interesting ideas on how you can help people keep their focus on learning when there are other things demanding their attention and pulling them. So certainly, the very specific strategies and the things I've learned about how to design opportunities are absolutely relevant and important to me and my broader work in the school division.

The increase in opportunity for those in formal leadership positions to exercise leadership beyond the program was also supported by survey data, where 77% (n=7 of 9) of formal leaders reported numerous abilities to demonstrate leadership potential as a result of their involvement in the Facilitator Community, as compared with only 41% of classroom teachers (n=7 of 17). Relatedly, 100% of formal leaders indicated that the Community had strongly (66%, n=6) or somewhat (33%, n=3) impacted their influence on decision making about student learning beyond their own classroom. On the other hand, only 64% of classroom teachers indicated their influence on decision making had been strongly (29%, n=5) or somewhat (35%, n=6) impacted. An additional element of decisional capital that present more prominently in the survey in those who were already in formal leadership roles was the ability to informally mentor or coach other teachers (88% of formal leaders strongly agreeing as compared with 29% of classroom teachers).

Challenges

With respect to challenges to participation in the Community, interviewees reiterated issues that historically have plagued participation in professional learning - feeling guilty about being away from their regular duties, access to substitute teachers, the resistance or apathy of others to embrace new ideas, and time.

Being away from the Classroom

For classroom teachers, being away from their students was a challenge. Sherry, for instance, commented:

Time away from the classroom is difficult. Last year when I did all the facilitator series workshops I was gone a lot, and I won't say my students suffered, but I felt badly, like they're little, they want their teacher there, I'm like their mom, you know, and to be gone as much as I was plus I had some family things that I had to deal with, so time out of the classroom can be a bit of a barrier.

Kathy described her inner conflict over having to miss a cohort planning day because she was involved in another learning opportunity and felt she couldn't miss more time away from the classroom:

I had already booked my sub, I had said I was going, but I had to email on Tuesday, and this is the reality of being a classroom teacher and trying to do PD, I just realized that there was no way that I could miss four days in a row.

Access to Substitutes

The issue of being out of the classroom was compounded by worrying about the availability of substitute teachers. For those in rural school divisions, this was sometimes an issue of access to substitutes, full stop. Even those working in urban centres acknowledged the plight of their rural colleagues:

It's really hard for people who live in rural communities to be involved in these projects. It seems that there is just another layer of complexity for them . . . finding good subs, I know that's a big barrier when I speak to any of my colleagues in the Facilitator Community or teachers that I have met across the province.

Those living in urban areas seemed to have less of an issue but, as demonstrated by Kristy's comments, issues still present themselves:

I find it challenging if I can't get my regular sub. She has come in and observed my teaching to see how things work, so planning for her it's quite a bit easier. That was one barrier to get that relationship set up and to really build the capacity of my sub to understand the procedures of my classroom. So if something comes up spur of the moment, and she's not available, then it's a lot harder.

Unsupportive Colleagues

Three participants, particularly, noted that not all colleagues were supportive of their work in the Facilitator Community. Kathy expressed concern of what she perceived as negative judgment from others who were further into their teaching career and had not found similar initiatives to be involved in. According to Tessa, her biggest barrier was colleagues who didn't understand or value professional learning opportunities. She noted, however, that her involvement in the Community had better equipped her with the leadership skills to deal with unsupportive colleagues. Sherry expressed disappointment in the apathy of some of her colleagues to engage with trying out new ideas:

It's like you go back to your staff and your real life, and you've just been to this mind-blowing session and you're like "Doesn't everybody know this!" And you go back and people are complaining about the most mundane things. Things they have no control over and they're still doing the same old things and it's like, your ideas are so big that you feel like saying, "Here let me show you this", you know? But it's not going to change a thing; it's just going to annoy people, so I keep my mouth shut (laughter). But at the same time, I'm thinking "It could be different. It could be different."

Time constraints

By and large, the most prominent challenge discussed by interviewees, regardless of their current role (teacher, administrator, etc.) was that of time. For Kristy, issues of time presented with competing interests around extracurricular activities. As Kristy related, “I coach high school curling and two facilitator learning opportunities are on days where there is sports playoffs.” On the other hand, Tara noted that even though planning time is provided by SPDU, planning the sessions takes quite a bit of time. Gloria similarly discussed the planning time involved. She particularly spoke about the lack of provided planning time for workshops that have already been delivered:

If it is a brand-new facilitation, one that has to be developed, there is covered planning time for that. The one we did recently, that was an existing facilitation that needed a few tweaks, not significant but a few. So there was no time given for that tweaking and there’s no time given for me to meet with my co-facilitator and talk through a plan for the day.

From a slightly different perspective, school administrators discussed the time demands they face as part of their regular duties. Being involved in the Facilitator Community, though extremely valued by participants, placed additional pressures in terms of their time and workload. The intensification of the work of school leaders was particularly prominent for Dave. He commented:

My role as a principal is a lot more challenging now than it was when I first started. So just the regular everyday workload is challenging. I am surrounded by less resources than I had at one time, I also have less autonomy as a principal now as I used to have, much more division-directed, you know ministry-directed initiatives than I ever dealt with than when I first became a principal so, it’s just what it is.

Similarly, Liam noted, “The only challenge I’ve had is finding the time. [As a principal] I do have a lot of plates spinning at the same time”, while Amanda echoed, “Life is busy as a principal.” She went on to discuss the difficulty she was having in finding the time to complete the facilitator series workshops; “There always seems to be barriers, so important meetings that come up or just other meetings within my school division which take me away.”

Also in a formal leadership role, Tessa, however, suggested that the challenge of time is simply a matter of prioritizing. She stated:

Time is finite and I think we’re all too quick sometimes to say we just don’t have enough time. What I’ve learned, and maybe it’s because I’m old and grey now, is that I just need to make sure the work gets done and that I know which work counts the most, so I prioritize a lot more. So, time is a barrier; it’s not one that I allow to get in my way.

Supports

Despite the challenges discussed, interviewees also identified several supports that enabled their involvement in the Community, including leadership that valued professional learning, their compassion of their families, and SPDU itself.

Supportive Leadership

More so than any other enabling factor, supportive leadership at both the school and division was discussed extensively by participants. Interviewees noted that time to participate in the Community had to be approved by their school division, many of whom highly valued professional learning. For example, Tessa commented, “the fact my director and my immediate manager are so supportive, that means the world to being able to be a full participant in all of this.” Similar sentiments were echoed by other participants:

Admin at my school level and the division see this as very valuable for the professional community, in our school, in our province and gives that OK for me to go and do this and learn and facilitate; that has been a good support (Sherry).

I’m lucky because I’m in a school division that values adult learning so much. They believe in building capacity and leadership, so I’m really lucky that my school division supports me facilitating PD for the SPDU and going to the sessions and doing the PD and leaving my school to do that. So I’ve been super lucky in terms of that and I would say that’s the support that you need in order to participate in this (Amanda).

I’m very, very lucky that my school division supports professional development. Most things that I’ve asked for have been accommodatedI have had opportunities to go for PD, I’ve asked for release time, I’ve been invited into research projects through the McDowell Foundation and I have to say that’s because I have a fantastic school division that wants to be engaged and cares about this type of work (Kathy).

In general, participants felt that they could not participate in the Community if their immediate supervisors didn't support their involvement. They noted that being away from their schools and their regular duties was not easy and the understanding of school and division leaders was imperative.

Familial Support

Most participants have to travel to attend community workshops and deliver their facilitated sessions. This means that not only are they away from their jobs, they are also away from their families. Supportive spouses and understanding children were seen as a big support in being able to balance their personal and professional lives. This was particularly noted by female participants. For instance, Gloria commented, "Without an understanding home base that lets me go away to do this work, I couldn't do it". On a similar note, Tessa explained, "Any time I'm away from the home, it means my husband is now looking after the dogs and whatever household chores need done or whatever needs to be tended to, so there is always that support". Tara echoed the same sentiments:

I live an hour outside of Saskatoon, which is where I do most of my facilitating, so my family, my children are very supportive of that, and they are aware that mom doesn't always just work at school and my husband is fantastic. I have parents as well that if I have to stay overnight they are fantastic at helping me.

Support from SPDU

Participants also noted both the financial support provided by SPDU and the mentoring and support afforded to them through the SPDU staff. In particular, participants discussed the remuneration provided by SPDU for travel and accommodation. As John noted, "There's lots of support from SPDU, if they didn't remunerate me to get me to Saskatoon I don't think I could make it up there so that's kind of important." Likewise, Sherry stated, "My mileage is paid for. If I needed a hotel room, that would be paid for. No one is going to do this out of the goodness of their hearts for long. It wouldn't be sustainable."

Beyond finances, participants also appreciated the support and mentorship of SPDU staffers. In fact, seven of the 12 interviewees affirmed that shoulder-tapping and SPDU's belief that they would be great facilitators was actually their motivation for getting involved in the Community in the first place. Liam, for instance, stated "I really value a person like [SPDU staffer], who came out and said, 'Hey, I think you've got some talent here, why don't you come and give this a go?'. Otherwise I would have never considered being a facilitator." On a similar note, Amanda commented, "I think the support of being mentored by [SPDU staffer] has been amazing, I've learned so much from her, just through planning and facilitating with her. She is a brilliant, brilliant woman and I've really enjoyed that mentorship."

Discussion: Professional Capital as a Function of Teachers Leading Teachers

Interacting and collaborating with their peers as a community of practice, Facilitator Community members are leading the development of high-quality professional learning for their peers and themselves. They are indeed agents of change, providers of solutions, and creators of new knowledge. Furthermore, through their leadership of professional learning they are honing all three areas of their professional capital, growing their individual and collective abilities to lead change and influence decision making in their own classrooms, schools, and beyond. While the growth of their individual human capital is important, it is the presence of strong social capital that plays the most significant role here. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) posit, “learning is the work and social capital is the fuel. If social capital is weak, all else is destined for failure” (p. 92).

However, developing social capital is not as simple as “collaboration”, as it exists most effectively in forms of collaboration that enable co-learning, co-development, and joint work for educators. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) outline:

If collaboration is limited to anecdotes, giving help only when asked, or pooling existing ideas without examining or extending them, she says, collaboration will reproduce the status quo instead of challenging it. It is ultimately joint work that leads to improvement through exploring challenging questions about practice together - although other kinds of collaboration may be prerequisites for it. (p. 112)

It is specifically this kind of joint work - through the design, development, and delivery of professional learning - that sets the stage for the development of strong social capital within the Facilitator Community. Inevitably, this further builds decisional capital, which includes the autonomy and inquiry skills to collaborate with peers to examine evidence of student learning, make judgments about student needs, decide what sorts of professional learning would best support student needs, and evaluate and reflect the success of new

practices within their own contexts. This cycle of collaboration, reflection, and experimentation is critical if such cultures of leading learning are to be sustainable in the long-term and bring about authentic change that fosters continuous professional learning and drives school improvement.

Despite the promotion and proliferation of forms of professionally led professional learning, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) lament, “Unfortunately, the development of social capital as a strategy has not yet caught on in the teaching profession” (p. 91). Hence, it is important to note that the Facilitator Community does not engage in this cycle in a haphazard manner. Rather, the Community is nurtured through a mentored model of gradual release designed to create an environment conducive to supporting organic and meaningful learning and growth experiences for its members. It is this same environment that serves as the platform for the development of professional capital. Furthermore, decisional capital - the opportunity for educators to be professionals with responsibility and trust for their own informed judgments - is often overlooked, or undermined, in current policies regarding teacher quality and effectiveness (Lieberman et al., 2017). In this study, it would appear that, although the Community does serve as a powerful conduit to the development of decisional capital across the membership, being in a formal leadership position acted as a second factor in the development of participants’ decisional capital. This speaks to the historical power differential that remains between classroom teachers and formal school leaders with respect to their involvement in decision making and engaging in the broader context of schooling. Within this context, creating counter-narratives to deeply entrenched notions of the limited purview of the work of classroom teachers becomes even more important, further underscoring the significance of the informal leadership opportunities that initiatives like the Facilitator Community create.

Challenges identified in the study were typical of those identified as barriers to participation in the existing professional learning literature, particularly the issue of time. These issues were also discussed in Campbell and Associates (2016; 2017) recent report, the *State of Professional Learning in Canada*. In that study, the largest obstacles to participation in professional learning were time (and related workload) and funding. While the provision of funding to cover participation costs for Community members is provided by SPDU, the systemic issue of workload intensification, and the fact that educators have to “leave behind” their regular daily jobs to attend to their own learning or deliver professional learning with their colleagues, does hamper Community member participation. That being said, participants across data sources were quick to point out the value of the Facilitator Community, both for their own learning and for that of their peers. Tensions, however, did exist for many participants with respect to balancing their engagement in the Community with both their other professional responsibilities, and their personal lives. Connected to the narrow conceptualization of the work of teachers discussed above, these tensions seemed to be more apparent for classroom teachers than they did for school administrators, unless they were also carrying teaching responsibilities. In other words, such conceptualizations additionally contributed to the feelings of guilt internalized by some classroom teachers as a result of being away from their regular duties. When popular discourses of teacher professionalism conceive the regular duties of teachers as including extra classroom work like professional learning, perhaps classroom teachers will no longer feel guilt-ridden about engaging in such activities.

Also aligning with the findings of Campbell et al. (2016; 2017), supportive leadership appears to be a critical element in educators' ability to overcome the obstacles they face with respect to engagement in learning and leadership roles beyond their regular classrooms and schools. Participant after participant echoed the same sentiments - they could not have participated in the Community without the support of principals and superintendents who recognized and valued the professional capital they were gaining as a result of their involvement. Participants particularly appreciated when school and division leaders took an interest in what they were learning, celebrated their work, and utilized their unique skill sets to lead and develop other professional learning activities outside of the Community work. This seemed to validate the hard work and dedication shown by members, and make the challenges of participation in the Community (like leaving their students with a substitute for a day) more worthwhile.

The support shown by SPDU, and the STF by extension, is also noteworthy. As mentioned earlier in this report, advancing their professional agendas has been no easy feat for teachers' organizations amidst challenging neo-liberal times. While Canadian education has avoided some of the pitfalls American teachers' organizations are contending with, recent policy changes around teacher professionalization in Saskatchewan have created tensions that may prove to be a mounting struggle for the STF with respect to a united teaching profession, should Ontario and British Columbia serve as examples (the only other provinces in Canada to have professional regulatory bodies outside of teachers' professional member organizations). In spite of this context, SPDU continues to provide opportunities for member engagement in a variety of high-quality learning and leadership experiences that promotes both individual and collective growth. Like many other Canadian teachers' organizations, this portrayal challenges the literature that situates teacher organizations as "immovable" roadblocks to educational change (Mangu-Ward, 2011) whose sole purpose is to derail educational progress and maintain a status quo of mediocrity. More importantly, in a time of fiscal challenge and cutbacks from school divisions around teacher professional learning, the financial support SPDU provides to Community members is critical.

In a recent call to action around professional learning, Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) specifically note that "if you want a return, you have to make an investment" (p. 1). SPDU has certainly made a worthwhile investment in the Facilitator Community. As this study demonstrates, teachers leading teachers clearly has the power to develop professional capital. Consequently, rather than investing in the "wrong drivers" (Fullan, 2011, p.1) of accountability and individualistic solutions, the key for systems of education appears to be the development of collaborative forms professionalism focused on building professional capital and collective ownership over student success. The work of the STF in advocating for increased access and opportunities for educators to engage in a variety of professional learning opportunities and broader understandings of the work of professional teachers is an essential component in moving such an agenda forward in the province.

Conclusion

This study extends the small but growing body of literature examining the link between professionally led professional learning and the development of professional capital within the teaching profession. SPDU's Facilitator Community stands as an exemplary practice of the development of teacher professional capital in Canada. Analysis of survey, interview, and observational data revealed the Community to be a powerful platform from which educators in Saskatchewan are extending their own individual skills, learning from and with each other, and using their collective expertise to lead the learning of their peers. In doing so they are forging paths to new leadership roles beyond the Community as they build their confidence, expand their knowledge of instructional strategies, and better understand the learning needs of students and teachers alike.

Given the recent tensions identified in Canada around control of professional learning (Campbell et al., 2016; 2017), the results reported here support findings from other studies (Lieberman et al., 2017) around the power of teacher-led professional learning to stimulate teacher learning and enhanced leadership. This finding has significant implications for those involved in the development and planning of teacher professional learning at all levels including ministries of education, school divisions, and teachers' organizations alike.

Questions remain, however. What impact does professionally led professional development have on classroom practice? Is it received by participants differently than professional learning delivered by others outside the profession? Does social capital extend beyond Community members to their workshop participants? Hoping to shed light on some of these questions, the next phase of this research will aim to explore how the professional capital of Community members impacts the practice of the teacher learners they are leading. This will be important in continuing to establish the link between professional capital and improved teaching and learning across the teaching profession.

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