

THE PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCES OF A VALUE-ADDED MODEL EVALUATION
SYSTEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN
NORTH GEORGIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Kyle Keller Shugart

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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APPROVED BY:

Rick Bragg, Ed. D., Committee Chair

Amy Jones, Ed. D., Committee Member

Susan Buice, Ed. D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. A transcendental phenomenological design was used to provide a voice to ($N = 12$) elementary school teachers evaluated with a value-added model evaluation system through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological model of the educational environment and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as it related to mastery experiences of the teacher. Data collection methods included interviews, a focus group, and evaluation documentation. The data were analyzed according to Moustakas' (1994) approach using bracketing, horizontalization, and developing clusters of meaning to determine the essence of the shared phenomenon. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) understanding the process, (b) implementing the process, (c) documenting the process, and (d) internalizing the process. The results of this study indicated that additional professional development is needed to ensure teacher understanding of the evaluation process, assessment use, and assessment strategies to achieve optimum student learning. In addition, administrators should provide ongoing and constructive feedback, limit their subjectivity in evaluations, and provide an environment conducive to teacher and student learning. This study could guide future teacher evaluations, provide insight to direct administrators in evaluating teachers, and provide guidance and support for elementary teachers to achieve the maximum percentage of students obtaining the highest level of learning outcomes.

Keywords: value-added model, pedagogical experiences, performance standards, student growth data, Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation

Dedication

For Glenn, Christopher, Alex, Anna, Sweet Caroline, and Ava Bear for allowing me to pursue my dream. And, for Mommy, without you looking over my shoulder from up above and encouraging me to realize our dream, this would not be possible! I know you are proud!

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS)

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

English Language Learners (ELL)

Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC)

Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Local Educational Agency (LEA)

National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Non-Tested Subjects and Grades (NTSG)

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Professional Learning Goals (PLG)

Professional Learning Plans (PLP)

Race to the Top (Rt3)

Student Growth Percentile (SGP)

Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS)

Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM)

Value-added Model (VAM)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teacher evaluation remains at the forefront of public debate. In the state of Georgia, the Georgia Milestones test scores measure student achievement and then translated to teacher effectiveness under a value-added model (VAM) evaluation (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2015). A value-added model of evaluation is an evaluation that utilizes observations, performance standards, and student growth data as measured by standardized test scores to determine the effectiveness of teachers (Stronge, Tonneson, Xu, Grant, & Leeper, 2011).

In 2015, 43 states in our nation required that student growth and achievement to be a component of teacher evaluations (National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2015). These 43 states transitioned to new student testing systems aligned with college-and career-readiness standards also aligned with the implementation of teacher effectiveness policy (NCTQ, 2015). The states that have adopted the new evaluation systems are utilizing a VAM, which is used to estimate the effects of individual teachers (Koedel, Mihaly, & Rockoff, 2015). Georgia's teacher evaluation system is similar to those found in 43 states of the United States (NCTQ, 2015). Berliner (2014) stated that there is much educational research and confusion among researchers, the public, and politicians concerning the pros and cons of the VAMs and teachers' effects on student achievement. However, there is there is no qualitative research on the aspects of the pedagogical influences of the VAM evaluation from the perspectives of teachers after three years of evaluation implementation (Taylor & Tyler, 2012a; Bogart, 2013).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. In this chapter, I explain the background of teacher

evaluations, situation to self, the problem, the purpose, and the significance of the study. This chapter also conveys the theories of Bronfenbrenner (1976) and Bandura (1977) and their relation to this study. This chapter concludes with a summary. The teachers in this study described the pedagogical influences of a VAM teacher evaluation from their perspectives.

Background

Teacher evaluations have been in existence since the 1700s when teachers were considered servants of the community and evaluated by the local government and local clergymen (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). In the mid-1800s, it was determined that educators should receive feedback on improving instruction (Marzano et al., 2011). Student surveys were utilized to determine teacher effectiveness in the 1890s, and researchers applied John Dewey's democratic theory and Frederick Taylor's management theory to education by the late 1900s and early 20th century (Medley, 1979). In the 1950s and 1960s, teachers were evaluated using clinical supervision of a classroom model of seven lessons using the Hunter Model (Parker, 2013). By the 1980s, goals and purposes were the foundation of teacher evaluation (Parker, 2013), and by the early 2000s, there was a cry for change and teacher accountability. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) raised the expectations for students meeting and exceeding state standards (GADOE, 2013), which led to current teacher evaluation systems.

A study entitled *The Widget Effect* (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009) declared that the teacher evaluation system needed a complete overhaul. This overhaul came about with the introduction of the VAM evaluations system, which is said to address the abysmal state of teacher evaluations (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011). The new evaluation systems utilize a variety of measures of teacher effectiveness, but one constant to determine teacher

effectiveness is student achievement measured by test scores. In response to the Race to the Top (Rt3) initiative, the Georgia legislature's answer to the call for greater accountability of teachers is the mandated Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The TKES was first implemented statewide in 2013-2014 (GADOE, 2015).

The current educational climate places teachers under a tremendous amount of scrutiny and pressure to raise students' test scores (Stearns, Banerjee, Mickelson, & Moller, 2014). The use of VAMs has been employed to estimate value-added to student achievement, but the most controversial aspect has been to estimate the effectiveness of individual teachers. There is research that notes that teachers feel a VAM does not measure their effectiveness, and therefore the evaluation is invalid (Lee, 2012). One recent study has shown that teachers who score well on a VAM have affected students in later life including wages and college attendance (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). Some studies conclude that the use of VAMs is a valid and necessary process in ensuring that teachers are effective (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014; Smagorinsky, 2014; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). In contrast, there is research that studies concerns related to the bias of VAMS (Baker et al., 2010; Paulfler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; Rothstein, 2010) and the belief that VAMs are unstable (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010).

In the United States, individuals criticize standardized tests because of the focus on lower level skills. Evidence has shown that high-stakes evaluations have caused teachers to focus on mandated tests and have reduced time spent teaching important content and skills (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). There is a great deal of research on the use of VAMs, the bias (Isenberg, Teh, & Walsh, 2015; Paulfler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014), the effect on teacher morale (Elwood, 2014), teacher stress (Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, & Yang, 2015), and student

achievement (Ruzek, Domina, Conley, Duncan, & Karabenick, 2015; Ready, 2013), yet there is no research on the influences of these evaluations on classroom pedagogy. In a review of VAM, Koedel et al. (2015) stated that it is important to examine how students, teachers, and schools are affected along many dimensions, such as the effects in the classroom.

The conditions in which they are taken heavily influence teachers' pedagogies, work, and learning (Hardy, 2013). Burrige (2014) posited that teachers within a school will be influenced by school structures and stated that teachers, in turn, structure their pedagogical practices around the social and cultural practices of a school. In addition, Kobalia and Garakanidze (2010) found that the factors that form the "pedagogical set" of a teacher develop throughout the entire career of a teacher: (a) the motivation and desire to perform the act of teaching, (b) the ability of the teacher to analyze the requirements of the learning situation, and (c) the operational abilities of an individual. An assessment of these factors occurs in teacher evaluations throughout the country. Teachers evaluations in the state of Georgia include a VAM where administrators base their observations on 10 performance standards, eight of which are directly related to teachers' pedagogical practices. The second component of the TKES is Professional Growth, and the third component is Student Growth (GADOE, 2016).

In the state of Georgia, the TKES uses student growth data to measure a teacher's effectiveness. Student growth percentiles, defined as a student's growth relative to his/her academic peers (other students with similar prior achievement), account for 30% of a teacher's evaluation. Student growth scores are generated for each student to describe each student's current achievement relative to others with similar score histories (GADOE, 2015). According to the GADOE (2015), a student growth percentile can range from 1 to 99. Lower percentiles indicate lower academic achievement growth, and higher percentiles indicate higher academic

growth (Woods, 2015). After tabulating the test scores, the state education department utilizes a formula to determine the effect of each teacher. Classroom teachers are assigned student growth per subject area taught. This measurement then becomes 30% of the teacher's annual evaluation score (Woods, 2015).

All VAM teachers' evaluations in the country directly correlate to a teacher's pedagogical practices in the classroom (NCTQ, 2015). Performance standards are the basis for a VAM teacher evaluation, and correlate to what is happening in the classroom; therefore, a study such as this one is necessary to explore the pedagogical influences of a VAM evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers.

A qualitative study is ideal to research the phenomenon of pedagogical influence because quantitative research cannot find reliable measures for all that occurs in classrooms that are worthy of study, nor can quantitative research ever explore classroom interactions (Berliner, 2014). One recent quantitative study on teacher evaluation and classroom practice was conducted to explore the perceptions of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration evaluation system (Bogart, 2013). Bogart (2013) found a significant change in teachers' planning processes but found no significant differences in their perceptions of the new evaluation from the previous evaluation. The researcher suggested that a qualitative study could seek to discover differences in instructional strategies being used by teachers and to perform the study during or after the third year of implementation of the new evaluation method. Bogart's study suggested there was a gap in the literature for a qualitative study of the pedagogical influences of a VAM of evaluation for teachers after the third year of implementation (Bogart, 2013).

This qualitative study seeks to describe all the pedagogical influences that occur within the classroom as related to the VAM. For every study that postulates the benefits of a VAM,

there is another that addresses the weakness of such an evaluation model. Therein lies the need for investigation and consideration. The voices of teachers are absent from VAM research, and this study allowed those voices to be heard. This study could prove helpful to all educators being evaluated using a VAM as the evaluation itself influences the pedagogy that lies at the heart and in the art of teaching.

Situation to Self

As the researcher, I am a teacher who has been evaluated with the TKES for five years. I conducted this study to explore teachers' experiences with pedagogical influences of the VAM evaluation. My motivation for conducting this study was to understand better the pedagogical influences that teachers have experienced under the new teacher evaluation system. This study was of interest to me because a "topic that is interesting or creates tension is more likely to be examined comprehensively by the one doing the research because she has something personal at stake" (Milacci, 2003 p. vi). I have been in education for 27 years, and the heart and mind of the educator are my passion. I find this topic to be interesting; it creates tension, and I have something personal at stake. The new knowledge obtained from this study could inform policymakers, administrators, and teachers as to the influences on teacher pedagogy.

Also, this study may help increase student achievement, as the ultimate goal of teacher evaluation is to improve levels of student outcome (Stronge, Tonneson et al. 2011). As the researcher, I conducted this study with a constructivist mindset as I allowed the participants to construct their own meaning of pedagogical influences. Creswell (2013) stated that through a constructivist perspective, researchers "seek understanding of the world" and "their views are formed through their interactions with others" (p. 24). My role as the researcher was to discover the themes and essence of the study to better inform teachers and all those influenced by a VAM

teacher evaluation. In conclusion, I approached this study with an axiological assumption where I discussed values and included my own interpretation in conjunction with the participants' interpretations (Creswell, 2013).

Problem Statement

States competing for available funding and pursuing waivers of the NCLB seek federal Race to the Top program funds. This funding has forced states to adopt more rigorous teacher evaluation systems. As of September 2015, 43 states and the District of Columbia Public Schools require that student achievement is the most significant factor in teacher evaluations (NCTQ, 2015). The states that have adopted the new evaluation systems are utilizing a VAM, which is used to estimate the effects of individual teachers (Koedel et al., 2015). The point of improving evaluations is to improve teacher practices in ways that will help schools obtain optimum student achievement. If we want teachers to find the evaluation system as meaningful, it is imperative to engage teachers in activities that promote learning, self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation (Danielson, 2010; NCTQ, 2013).

There is much educational research and confusion among researchers, the public, and politicians concerning the pros and cons of VAMs and teachers' effects on student achievement (Berliner, 2014). Researchers in favor of VAMs list pages of formulas to estimate students' growth percentiles, while those not favoring VAMs have extensive lists of external factors that affect a student's learning (Koedel et al., 2015). The ongoing and seemingly endless debate over the reliability and validity of the use of VAMs has led and will continue to lead to battles fought within the state and federal court systems (Eckes & Bae, 2014). There is research to support the use of VAMs for educator evaluation (Chetty et al., 2014; Goldhaber, 2015, and yet others call

its use into question (Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; American Statistical Association, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Haertel, 2013; Rothstein, 2010).

The GADOE published a recent survey in December 2015. The results of the survey indicated that 66.9% of teachers answered that they were not likely to encourage teaching as a profession to graduating high school students. The survey ranked mandated testing and teacher evaluation as the main reasons for leaving the profession. Current research has found that in the state of Georgia, 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of employment, and in any given five year-period, nearly half of the state's professional public educators drop out of the classroom (Owens, 2015).

Donaldson (2012) suggested that teachers should be encouraged to provide input and feedback on the design of performance evaluation systems and to provide insight into their pedagogical practices. Research articles are non-existent in reflecting teachers' experiences and reactions toward evaluations revamped as a result of the NCLB Act (Ravitch, 2010). Still, four years later, Marx (2014) stated that even though there is much debate and research concerning VAMs, there is still no research to demonstrate that data on students' performance has been used to implement instructional practices to improve achievement. A recent study sought to find which classroom practices employed by teachers promote student achievement (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011). The authors found that there is a relationship between observed classroom practices and student achievement gains, yet they suggested that further study is completed to investigate the unobserved teacher characteristics as well as pedagogy. The problem is that there are no qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of elementary teachers regarding pedagogical influences of a VAM teacher evaluation (Kane et al., 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. A VAM evaluation will generally be defined as the process of measuring individual student learning gains and attributing them to a specific teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2015). The VAM teacher evaluation in Georgia utilizes student growth for 30% of the teacher evaluation, which is similar to 42 other states in determining teacher effectiveness without determining the outside factors that contribute to student success (Owens, 2015).

Pedagogical influences will be defined as the functions, methods, and instructional practices of the classroom teacher (Kobalia & Garakanidze, 2010). The central theory guiding this research was Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory stated that there exist four subsystems of relationships that affect a teacher's pedagogical practices: a) macrosystem, b) exosystem, c) mesosystem, and d) microsystem. The macrosystem consists of public education within our country, and the exosystem consists of the local, state, and federal policies. The mesosystem includes the school and community influences, and the microsystem includes the teacher and students within the classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). This theory allowed me to relate the influences of the subsystems to teachers' pedagogical influences of a VAM.

The second theory guiding this study was Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as it related to the teachers' beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage their pedagogical practices in the classroom to optimize student learning. Bandura (1986) later advanced his theory from the social learning aspect to a social cognitive theory. Bandura (1986) posited that people are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and

self-regulating, and they are not just reactive to external events. He explained that the interpretation of one's behavior informs and influences their environment and alters any subsequent behavior. "This viewpoint, reciprocal determinism, states that (a) personal factors in the form of cognition, affect, and biological events, (b) behavior, and (c) environmental influences form interactions that produce a triadic reciprocity" (Bandura, 1999). Social cognition plays an important role in teachers' ability to construct reality, self-regulate, encode information, and perform behaviors (Bandura, 1999). The population of this study consisted of 12 elementary school teachers in a North Georgia school district who were evaluated using TKES, a VAM of teacher evaluation.

Significance of the Study

In a recent publication from The National School Boards Association, it was cited that 87% of school boards think it is shortsighted to define success in public schools based on student achievement alone and that the purpose of educating our next generation is to ensure they can make a living, a life, and a difference (Peifer, 2014). However, we now have evaluation systems that seek to ensure that teachers are effective as measured by test scores (GADOE, 2016; Koedel et al., 2015). It is difficult to determine the success of a student or the effectiveness of a teacher by a single set of data, yet districts continue to use a VAM. The use of a VAM is to ensure and estimate the effectiveness of each teacher and the correlation between student learning and the teacher (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011). This research sought to determine the positive pedagogical influences of VAMs to understand better the best ways to improve pedagogical practices in these times of educator scrutiny. The participants of this study were kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary educators in the Keller School District, (a pseudonym) a large suburban school district in North Georgia, who have shared the experience of being evaluated

with a VAM. The participants were from four different elementary schools within the Keller School District. The four elementary schools were chosen for their differing overall performance scores as determined by the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), which is calculated by the GADOE and approved by the State Board of Education (Georgia School Reports, 2016). State test scores, student growth on these tests, graduation rates, post high school readiness, achievement gap size, innovative instructional practices, and strong performance of economically disadvantaged students with disabilities and English Language Learners relative to state targets determine the CCRPI scores of A-F (Georgia School Reports, 2016).

The problem that inspired this study is the lack of qualitative research regarding the pedagogical influences of a VAM as experienced by elementary educators (Berliner, 2013; Bogart, 2013; Kane et al., 2011; Taylor & Tyler, 2012a). A qualitative study was conducted using the transcendental phenomenological approach. Giorgi (1985) described the steps of this approach as (a) the researcher reads the entire description to grasp the whole statement, (b) the researcher goes back and rereads to determine “meaning units,” (c) the researcher expresses insight into the “meaning units,” and (d) the researcher synthesizes the information regarding the experience (p. 10). This approach was appropriate for this study because a phenomenology allowed me, as the researcher, to describe the lived experiences of several individuals to discover the common meaning (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

In addition, the transcendental phenomenological approach allowed me to utilize an emphasis on intuition, imagination, and universal structures in obtaining a picture of all dynamics contributing to the educators’ experiences through bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). This approach allowed me to understand the essence of the experiences of the participants.

Phenomenology examines entities from many sides, angles, and perspectives, which allowed me to hear the voices of the teachers (Moustakas, 1994). The data collected were drawn from interviews with participants, a focus group, and document analysis of teacher evaluations.

Through this qualitative study, I made empirical contributions to the research of teacher evaluations by providing documented descriptions of teachers' experiences with the phenomenon. This study addressed an evaluation method used in 43 states throughout our country and therefore has the potential for wide-scale application of its findings. This study could enhance and further personalize the research concerning VAMs (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012; Ballous & Springer, 2015; Briggs & Domingue, 2011; Corcoran, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2013, 2015; Goldhaber, 2015; Johnson, 2015; Kodel et al., 2015) as it allowed me to share the voices of the teachers. This study could prove invaluable to the Keller School District, a pseudonym for a large suburban school district in North Georgia, to provide pedagogical guidance to schools in the district that are not meeting standards and to improve the percentage of students exceeding in all schools in the district. This study is similar to a study completed by Lee (2012) in that it gives voice to teachers evaluated using a VAM. However, Lee's conceptual lens was through Maxwell's (2004) theory as a spotlight, which sought to explore what teachers believed to be effective teachers. In another recent study, Sell (2013) sought to explore the lived experiences of teachers who remained in the profession as examined through Bronfenbrenner's (1976) theory.

In addition, theoretical contributions were made to the field by exploring teachers' perceptions of pedagogical influences through Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological structure of person-environment subsystems as they related to pedagogy practices of teachers and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as it related to the teachers' beliefs in their capabilities

to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage their pedagogical practices in the classroom to optimize student learning. The gap in literature is evident from the research (American Research Education Association [AERA], 2015; Berliner, 2013; Bogart, 2013; Chesnut & Cullen, 2010; Kane et al., 2011; Taylor & Tyler, 2012a) that suggests that a qualitative study was needed to address the pedagogical implications with teachers under a VAM.

Research Questions

This study focused on the pedagogical experiences of North Georgia elementary schoolteachers evaluated with a VAM. This study was guided through the lens of Bronfenbrenner (1976) and Bandura (1977) as it seeks to explain the experiences of teachers within the four subsystems of person-environment relationships and teachers' efforts to manage their pedagogical practices.

As such, the following questions provided the framework for this study:

Central Research Question

How do elementary school teachers from a North Georgia school district describe their experiences with pedagogical influences from the value-added model of evaluation? Value-added models measure teacher contributions to student learning and are increasingly utilized in educational reform efforts (Ruzek et al., 2015). In a recent article pertaining to VAMs, the author suggested that there is little time for extended reflection because the politics involved with VAMs are ever-changing (Wainer, 2011). The central question seeks to understand the teachers' experiences of a value-added model of evaluation and allow for teacher reflection.

Guiding Question One

What influences from federal, state, local, and school level policies and procedures are influencing participants' pedagogical practices as they relate to the TKES? Bronfenbrenner's

(1976) social ecological theory will provide the lens in which to determine the influence of interactions that a teacher experiences in an educational setting as related to the teacher evaluation process. The interactions of a teacher with policies and procedures from federal, state, local, and school levels can affect the lives of the teacher as they function within their person-environment educational settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

Guiding Question Two

What, if any, positive pedagogical influences have participants experienced with the VAM?

Student achievement is the driving force behind the new teacher evaluations, and this study explored the influence on teachers' pedagogical practices. Teachers who experienced proficient scores on VAMS as related to student learning would hopefully be able to identify the positive pedagogical influences of the VAM evaluation. The study of Chetty et al. (2014) bore witness that highly effective teachers influence students' short-term academic success as well as long-term effects. Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) also studied the importance of access to effective teachers for all students. It is important to identify the pedagogical influences of a VAM as experienced by teachers to discern effective strategies for other educators that this study will afford.

Guiding Question Three

What, if any, negative pedagogical challenges have participants experienced with the VAM?

Many research studies explored the bias in VAMs. Paufler and Amrein-Beardsley (2014) studied the concern for random student-teacher assignments as made by administrators at the school level. Rothstein (2010) also criticized the extent to which future teacher assignments

predict students' previous test-score growth. Koedel et al. (2015) noted that the implementation of personnel policies designed to improve teacher quality is a high-stakes proposition. The students stand to gain and lose the most with policies that come up short. This question was designed to identify those pedagogical influences that increase student growth as well as those that may be detrimental to student growth.

Guiding Question Four

How have the pedagogical influences of the TKES affected participants' feelings of self-efficacy?

Bandura's (1999) Social Cognitive Theory will provide an additional lens to determine the causal relationship between the individual and influencing factors that determine self-efficacy. Self-efficacy includes the behavior individuals engage in, as well as the environmental forces that affect an individual's behavior, which determines self-motivation (Bandura, 1999). In studies by Brown (2012), Chesnut and Burley (2015), Donaldson (2012), Finnegan (2013), and Goodwin and Webb (2014), there was evidence to suggest that teachers were experiencing burnout, low levels of self-efficacy, in addition to low levels of job satisfaction as they related to VAMs (Brown, 2012; Chesnut & Burley, 2015; Donaldson, 2012; Finnegan, 2013; Goodwin & Webb, 2014).

Definitions

1. *Performance standards* – refers to the major duties performed by a teacher (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011).
2. *Student growth data* –the student growth relative to his/her academically similar peers-other students with similar prior achievement based on state assessment data (Woods, 2015).

3. *Pedagogical experiences* - the functions, methods, and instructional practices of the classroom teacher (Strong et al., 2011).
4. *Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System* – the state of Georgia’s teacher evaluation that offers clear and precise indicators and resources to guide teachers to improved performance that will positively impact student achievement (Woods, 2015).
5. *Value-added model* – refers to the premise that one can identify each student’s human capital accumulation up to some point and then estimate the value-added to human capital (Kodel et al., 2015).

Summary

This chapter explained the background of teacher evaluation from the 1700s until present day where the policymakers and the public have called for more accountability for teachers in the classroom. Policymakers are now using standardized test scores to measure the effectiveness of teachers. This chapter described some of the benefits and challenges of using VAM evaluations. However, there is no research that provides the voice of the teachers regarding pedagogical influences. The theoretical framework of using Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) social ecological theory and Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory lent credence to the value of this study: researching the pedagogical influences of a VAM.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

One merely must watch the state and national news to witness the public debate between teachers and state-mandated evaluation systems. The banter between educators and lawmakers has become a constant in our society, and it is still unclear when peace will reign again between these groups. A review of the literature was completed to expose the gap in the literature concerning the pedagogical influences of a VAM teacher evaluation experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia school district. The Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES) is a value-added model of teacher evaluation in its third year of existence with no studies on the lived experiences of teachers and what is occurring in the classroom. Bogart's (2013) study on teacher evaluation and classroom practice was conducted to explore the perceptions of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration evaluation system. While Bogart found a significant change in teachers' planning processes, the researcher found no significant differences in their perceptions of the new evaluation from the previous evaluation. Also, Bogart suggested that a qualitative study could seek to discover differences in strategies being used by teachers during or after the third year of implementation of a new evaluation method.

Bogart's (2013) study suggested a gap in the literature for a qualitative study of the pedagogical influences of a VAM of evaluation for teachers after the third year of implementation. A different study related to teacher evaluations identified that VAMS were effective at raising student test scores, but they were unable to distinguish the pedagogy that drove the improvements (Taylor & Tyler, 2012a). Finally, Chesnut and Cullen (2010) stated in their meta-analysis that more research is necessary to identify mastery experiences related to

pedagogy practices of teachers evaluated with a VAM. This study lessened the gap in literature related to these two studies.

This literature review begins with an overview of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) and Bandura's (1977) theories, which will provide the theoretical framework for educational environments and teachers' willingness to act in the best interest of their students. This review defines a VAM of evaluation and Georgia's TKES. In this chapter, I also reviewed related literature that correlated with this study including school improvement and accountability, teacher evaluations, self-efficacy, and pedagogical practices. The related literature lies at the heart of Bronfenbrenner's theory explaining what is occurring in the classrooms with the interactions of relationship subsets and Bandura's (1977) theory as it related to teacher self-efficacy and teachers' efforts within the classroom environment.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory provided the theoretical lens throughout this study as it relates to the interactive nature of the pedagogical influences as experienced by each teacher. In an article, "The Experimental Ecology of Education" Bronfenbrenner suggested that there are two sets of interactions within an educational setting: a) the person-environment and b) the environment-environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). The first system described how the individual "lives out their lives" within the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 5). As shown in Figure 1, Bronfenbrenner also suggested four educational settings with a person-environment nested within each other: (a) macrosystem, (b) exosystem, (c) mesosystem, and (d) microsystem.

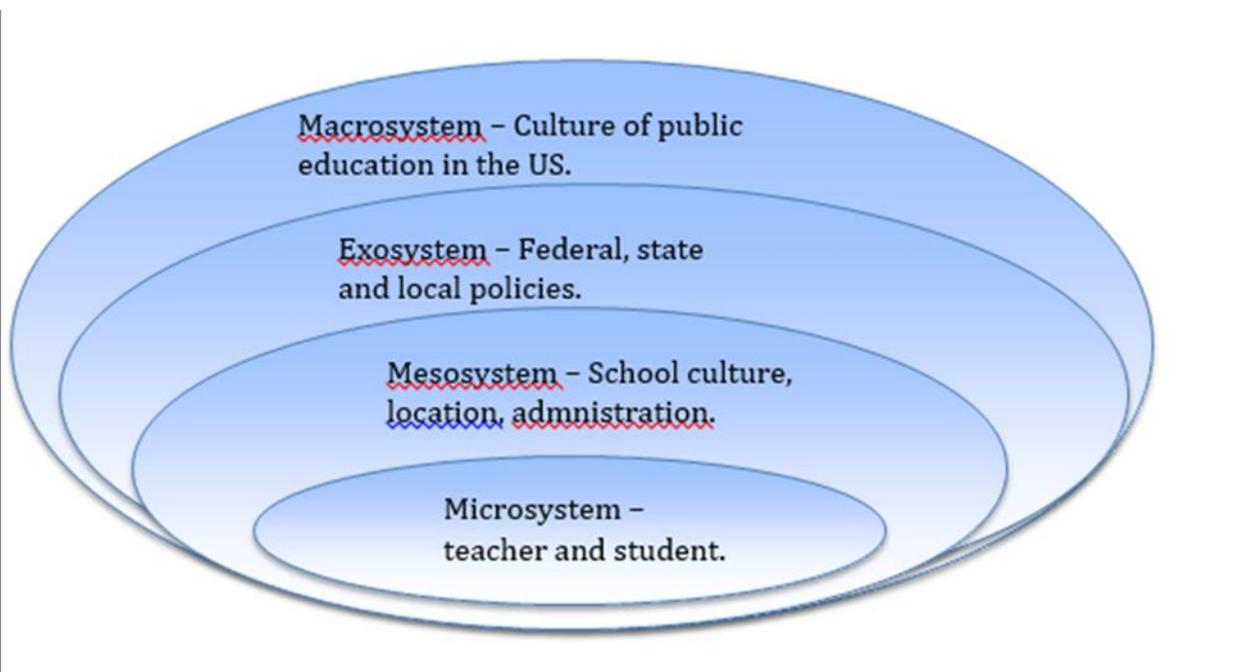


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory. Adapted from the experimental ecology of education by U. Bronfenbrenner. *Educational Researcher*, 5(5), 5-15.

The largest layer, the macrosystem, refers to the entire culture of public education and its practices within the United States. In this study, the macrosystem refers to the teachers and their perceptions of the individual as they operate within the educational system today. National and cultural laws and rules define the macrosystem (Christensen, 2016). The exosystem refers to the local, state, and federal educational guidelines and policies. It accounts for the individuals and how they relate to agencies of government and neighborhoods. The exosystem may link an individual to social settings where the individual is not actively involved (Christensen, 2016). The mesosystem refers to the school culture, community, and local administration. This system also refers to relationships between microsystems. An example would be relating school experiences to family experiences (Christensen, 2016). The final layer, the microsystem, refers to the individual teacher and the immediate setting of his or her classroom and their interactions with their students. The microsystem includes where someone lives, his/her peers, his/her classroom, and the effects of the other subsystems within the classroom.

The second system Bronfenbrenner (1976) addressed, the environment-environment, consists of all the relationships and interactions within and between each set of environments. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model consisted of four environmental levels with each level impacting differently on the development of each person (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013). Fullan (2011) referred to a reform effort such as the VAM as a "driver." He stated that these "drivers" help school reform efforts with (a) capacity building, (b) group work, (c) pedagogy, and (d) systemic solutions. Fullan stated that using Bronfenbrenner's model of ecosystems keeps the unintended circumstances of educational policy to a minimum.

Bronfenbrenner (1976) stated that experiments that construct and strengthen interconnections between ecological systems offer promise for scientific understanding and social policy. This theory provided a lens that explored the person-environment and the environment-environment interactions of the pedagogical influences of teachers using a VAM evaluation. This study discovered the factors of public education, state and local factors, as well as school and classroom factors as they relate to the VAM model. Kindermann (2011) stated that teachers are the trained organizers of formal education and are predestined to be influential. Additionally, using Bronfenbrenner's (1976) model within this study illuminated the organization of teachers intertwined complexities within a VAM of evaluation. This study advanced Bronfenbrenner's theory regarding actual classroom practices that are influenced not only by the four systems but also within the context of a VAM of evaluation. Smargorinsky's (2014) thinking lent credence to Bronfenbrenner's theory. He believed that instead of using one measure to evaluate, an evaluation of teaching in and of itself should be more local and more responsive to the people who primarily matter: the stakeholders who are involved in the conduct of any one school and all who influence the teaching in a classroom. Christensen (2016) stated

that Bronfenbrenner's theory has proven to provide an insight into all the factors that play a role in the development of an individual. This study could prove to be an insight to interrelationships according to Bronfenbrenner's theory as they relate to the work and world of the teacher.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

A second theory that guided this study is Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. Bandura posited that personal efficacy comes from four sources of information: (a) performance accomplishments, (b) vicarious experience, (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) physiological states. Self-motivation involves standards for which to judge performance, and individuals will persist in their efforts until they meet self-prescribed standards (Bandura, 1977). Performance accomplishments hinge on personal mastery experiences. Successful experiences will raise mastery expectations, and failures will lower them as failures decrease. A teacher will utilize successful pedagogical methods that increase student learning and lessen pedagogical experiences deemed as a failure. Vicarious experiences stem from observing other teachers and their successful actions as well as actions deemed as a failure (Bandura, 1977). Verbal persuasion is an important factor in a VAM evaluation as it relates to administrator feedback. Teachers receive formative and summative evaluations in written and verbal formats from their evaluators (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011). This source of feedback may motivate or demotivate a teacher. As a teacher experiences success in the classroom, mastery expectations can contribute to the success achieved by teachers (Bandura, 1977). In addition, mastery experiences are the most influential form of efficacy information (Brown, 2012). The final source of information is emotional arousal. Emotional arousal can affect perceived self-efficacy and is both informative and motivating (Bandura, 1977).

In a recent article, Bandura (2012) described the social cognitive theory as a causal structure grounded in triadic reciprocal causation as described in Figure 2. He posited that human functioning is a product of interpersonal influences. Self-efficacy includes the behavior individuals engage in, as well as the environmental forces that affect a person's behavior (Bandura, 2012). A teacher's self-efficacy is determined by the conditions of this interplay of influences and shapes his course of actions in the classroom. Bandura (2012) further stated that the imposed environment acts on the teacher whether he likes it or not, but he does have some leeway in how he reacts and responds to his environment within the classroom.

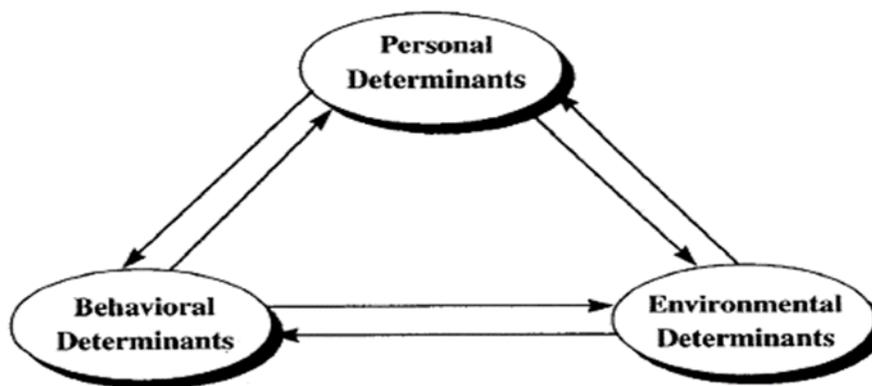


Figure 2. Triadic reciprocal causation. Adapted from On the functional properties of perceived self-efficacy revisited by A. Bandura. (2012). *Journal of Management*, 38(1), p. 12.

Bandura (1997) believed that teachers' sense of self-efficacy revolves around teachers' observations of others and reflection on their own behaviors. Teachers are forming their beliefs about their ability, or lack thereof, through current teacher evaluation methods, which are based largely on student growth. It is important to note that Bandura (1997) also felt that people read their failures as indicative of a personal deficiency. Teachers internalize student failure as personal failure. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) stated that self-efficacy is one dimension of self-perceived competence. Bandura (1997) stated that self-efficacy beliefs could enhance or hinder motivation. Recent research utilizing the lens of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as it

related to his self-efficacy beliefs found that these beliefs rest on experiences and physiological and affective states of teachers (Brown, 2012).

The VAM of evaluation utilizes standards that measure a myriad of performances related to teaching in the classroom. A teacher must have an outcome expectancy that a given behavior will lead to successful outcomes. Efficacy expectations are a major determinant of people's choice of activities and how long they will sustain their effort in dealing with situations (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's (1977) theoretical lens lent credence to this study as it explained why teachers continue to perform the pedagogical practices under a VAM of evaluation in the hopes of attaining high levels of student outcomes. This study has further advanced this theory as I attempted to explain the motivation that leads teachers to succeed in the classroom while being evaluated with a VAM.

Related Literature

Value-Added Model

Harris and Herrington (2015) suggested that the "use of teacher value-added measures could have greater influence on classroom instruction than perhaps any single reform in decades for good and for ill" (p. 71). This statement causes one to pause in contemplating an evaluation process that is at this moment in widespread use throughout the United States. Another alarming statement, from Marshall (2012), was "It's highly problematic to use standardized test scores to evaluate teachers. The idea sounds appealing, but it will inevitably hit a brick wall" (p. 51). The new evaluation systems utilize a variety of measures of teacher effectiveness, but one constant to determine teacher effectiveness is student achievement measured by test scores. Youngs (2013) posited that VAMs face a host of unique challenges, including issues related to the stability of VAM scores over time, nonrandom assignment of students to teachers, and whether student

assessments are consistent. Teacher observations have been the historic basis for teacher evaluations. However, now teacher observations alone are no longer adequate to determine teacher effectiveness (Marzano, 2012). Additionally, hours of professional development can no longer assure improvement in student success, and many even doubted that traditional teacher certification is an indicator of instructional quality (Shober, 2012). The VAM now includes information about the educator as well as students the educator has taught (Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; Umpstead, Pogodzinski & Lund, 2013). VAMs use one or more years of prior student test scores, as well as other data, to adjust for preexisting differences among students when calculating contributions of educators or institutions to student test performance (National Research Council, 2010). These statistics are an effort to estimate the value an educator brings to student success while comparing student growth using tests at two different times compared to students of approximately the same ability while also comparing teacher performance to other teachers (Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; Floden, 2012; Harris & Sass, 2011; Harris & Herrington, 2015a, 2015b; Kane, Kerr, & Pianta, 2014). In the same way, administrators are evaluated using aggregations of student growth changes across multiple grades and classrooms (AERA, 2015).

VAMs have predominantly been utilized within K-12 schools; however, many educator preparation programs are beginning to use student performance data from their graduates. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) utilizes VAM data to determine graduates' effectiveness (CAEP, 2013; Pullin, 2015). Additionally, The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2014) recently approved an online portfolio for educators to submit representations of classroom performance and documentation for determining licensure (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; Knight et al., 2014; Pullin, 2015; Sato, 2014; Wilkerson, 2015). This program is now in the hands of Pearson, an international for-profit

education corporation. (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2014; Wilson, Hallam, Pecheone, & Moss, 2014). Pullin (2015) pointed to possible legal issues as they relate to the privacy of portfolios and student and parent information. Additionally, Pullin (2015) warned about the ever-increasing use of for-profit companies used for reporting the data sets of test scores to the media, which reports teacher and school evaluations. A recent article by Brady, Heiser, McCormick, and Forgan (2016) warned about the use of VAMs in teacher preparation programs. The authors expressed concern that students of a teacher preparation program learn and adopt effective teaching behaviors as a result of their program. However, life and career changes may alter the teaching practices learned in their program, thus use of a VAM later in their career might not be representative of the teacher preparation program (Brady et al., 2016).

There are as many proponents of using a VAM as there are those strongly opposed to their use. Those in favor of VAMs point to the persistent information contained in value-added measures and argue that the benefits outweigh the costs associated with its limitations (Chetty et al., 2014). Although there is much disagreement, local and state education agencies continue to rely on test-based performance measures to instruct decision-making (Winters & Cowen, 2013).

There is a great deal of research to support the bias of VAMs due to validity and unreliability of test score data (Berliner, 2013; Isenberg et al., 2015; Karl, Yang, & Lohr, 2013; Konstantopoulos, 2014; Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; Rush & Scherff, 2015, Sass, Semykina, & Harris, 2014; Schochet & Chiang, 2013; Timmermans, Doolaard, & de Wolf, 2011). In a recent quantitative research study, Sass et al. (2014) compared six value-added models for teacher evaluation, and their findings suggested that all commonly estimated models are biased to some degree. In addition, teacher evaluation assessments utilizing student growth can vary from state to state, or even from district to district (Popham, 2013). Also, a recent

article in the *Las Cruces Sun-News* stated that a judge in the Texas Southern District Court agreed with a Houston Independent School District teacher and union plaintiffs that the use of the Texas VAM model of teacher evaluation to make employment decisions is a violation of a teacher's right to due process. The author warned that the use of VAMs might be invalid and unreliable means to determine the effectiveness of a teacher (MacGregor-Mendoza, 2017).

Some researchers support the use of VAMs for educator evaluation (Adler, 2013; Goldhaber, 2015), and others called its use into question (American Statistical Association, 2014; Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). Brady, Duffy, Hazelkorn, and Bucholz, (2014) purported that the intended outcome of a VAM is to increase the value placed on student performance. However, the use of VAMs also brings about unintended outcomes as it: (a) reduces the number of teachers willing to teach low-performing students, (b) reduces principals' willingness to house special programs, and (c) reduces universities' willingness to admit nontraditional college students (Brady, Duffy et al., 2014). Researchers also argued that using student growth data comprised of state tests are poor predictors of learning for English language Learners (ELL), students identified with learning disabilities, and students living in poverty, and further insisted that the tests are fraught with inconsistencies (Jones, Buzick, & Turkan, 2013; Papay, 2010). There was one quantitative study (Buzick & Jones, 2015) that researched the longitudinal data from a population of teachers in one state of teachers with students with disabilities. The findings revealed including tests scores of students with disabilities did not have a significant impact on teachers' overall effective scores. Youngs (2013) illustrated bias in a VAM and warned that there are unobservable student characteristics that can influence, student achievement, such as parental and peer influence that are beyond the control of the teacher.

There is also the argument that there may be discrepancies in the accuracy of matching students with the correct teachers in testing reports. Battelle for Kids (2013) reported that during the 2013-2014 school year, throughout many districts and many states, nearly one in four elementary teachers had incorrect or incomplete content area association, and more than one in three rosters were inaccurate. Still, others warn about conducting studies of the use of VAMs with elementary school teachers because students in elementary school are usually grouped heterogeneously and not by ability levels as in middle and high school (Isenberg et al., 2015). In addition, Hansen (2013) asserted that states could currently only generate value-added estimates for teachers of reading or math in grades four through eight, which means over half of the teacher workforce cannot have a value-added estimate produced for them. Some argue that assessments of student learning that are partial and are not effective at measuring critical thinking, the ability to engage in rigorous academics, nor students' social and emotional development drive VAM measures (Grossman, Loeb, Cohen, & Wyckoff, 2013).

Because of the controversies and concerns about VAMs, AERA (2015) recently issued a statement to inform those using or considering the use of VAMs about their scientific and technical limitations. AERA declared that the technical foundations for the use of VAMs in evaluation systems are far from settled. They expressed that there are potentially serious negative consequences based on incomplete or flawed data. AERA further stated that standardized tests vary in the degree to which they fully capture target constructs as well as in their precision across reported scores. Also, AERA asserted there is very limited research that VAMs can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of educator preparation programs. AERA suggested the following technical requirements for the use of a VAM to help ensure that a VAM is scientifically rigorous and fair:

1. VAM scores must only be derived from students' scores on assessments that meet professional standards of reliability and validity for the purpose to be served.
2. VAM scores must be accompanied by separate lines of evidence of reliability and validity that support each claim and interpretative argument.
3. VAM scores must be based on multiple years of data from sufficient number of students.
4. VAM scores must only be calculated from scores on tests that are comparable over time.
5. VAM scores must be calculated in grades or for subjects where there are not standardized assessments that are accompanied by evidence of their reliability and validity.
6. VAM scores must never be used alone or in isolation in educator or program evaluator systems.
7. Evaluation systems using VAM must include ongoing monitoring for technical and validity of use.
8. Evaluation reports and determinations based on VAM must include statistical estimates of error associated with student growth measures and any ratings or measures derived from them.
9. The AERA recommends substantial investment in research on VAM use as well as continued efforts to devise alternative methods and models for educator evaluations.
(AERA, 2015, p. 449)

Courtrooms have already witnessed litigation whereby teachers have been held responsible for test scores of students they did not teach. Only 30 – 40% of teachers teach

students, grades, or subjects utilized in VAM evaluations (McGuinn, 2012). Warring (2015) warned that the validity of existing VAMs differ in their aspects of empirical specifications, and this leaves little guidance on what to include in a fair VAM model. Research also found that VAMs may not be fair in that it is hard for a teacher who does not have top students to get higher level evaluations (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Whitehurst, Chingos, & Lindquist, 2014). Studies have also found that a teacher's value-added score may not be stable from one year to the next as 40% or more of teachers who perform in the top quartile in one year will no longer be in the top quartile the next year (Youngs, 2013). Youngs (2013) also warned that using a teacher's value-added score based on three or more years of data can vary greatly from scores year to year. He suggested only using multiple years of value-added data when evaluating teachers.

Stakeholder buy-in and feedback is a major component of the VAM evaluation. Ehlert, Koedel, Parsons, and Podgursky (2014) stated that there is value in the recently developed teacher evaluations; however, teachers may be more likely to use these identified measures to improve their instruction if they are more comfortable with the development process of the evaluation.

Many research studies addressed the experiences, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy of the teachers evaluated using a VAM (Balch & Koedel, 2014; Finnegan, 2013; Heaton, 2014; Leger, 2014; Mize, 2015), yet there is little research on teacher buy-in and feedback. One study researched the teacher concerns in Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) where value-added accounts for up to 35% of a teacher's total ratings. The researchers, Balch and Koedel (2014), addressed the four main concerns of teachers and provided responses for the teachers to use with the BCPS staff for communication with teachers. The teachers' key issues of concern were: (a) Differentiated Students – How can the model deal with a teacher who has students who are

different for some reason (poverty, special education, etc.)? (b) Student Attendance- Will teachers be held accountable for students who do not regularly attend class? (c) Outside Events and Policies – How can the model account for major events (school closings due to weather) or initiatives (Common Core implementation) that impact achievement? and (d) Ex Ante Expectations – Why can't researchers have their predicted scores-the target average performance levels for their students-in advance (Balch & Koedel, 2014)? These teacher considerations are further supported with research considering teacher motivation as it applies to the use of a VAM (Hewitt, 2015), teacher perceptions (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015), the effects of student behavior on VAMs (Johnson, Lipscomb, & Gill, 2015) and perceptions of principals (Brady, Dolan, & Canavan, 2014; Hoerr, 2013).

A mixed-methods study by Hewitt (2015) found that educators evaluated by value-added have significantly more negative perceptions about the fairness and accuracy of value-added and are more opposed to its use in teacher evaluation. Educators in this study felt the use of VAM evaluations were unfair, inaccurate, and influenced by the students whom they were assigned. Hewitt suggested that (a) educators need increased experience with value-added, and (b) evaluation policy with the use of a VAM may cause issues with recruitment and retention issues of educators.

There are additional studies focused on a variety of topics concerning value-added evaluations. Horoi and Ost (2015) claimed that students who cause classroom disruption might unfairly influence other students' learning and consequently teacher evaluation scores. Another recent study researched the effects of using test score data from students with disabilities in teacher evaluation (Buzick & Jones, 2015). This study found two possible strategies for handling test score data from students with disabilities and suggested (a) removing their scores,

or (b) including their scores without disability-specific variables (Buzick & Jones, 2015). All students (with few exceptions) identified with disabilities in the Keller School District, complete the same test as the general education students.

In addition, Bryan (2015) conducted a study on the potential influence a teacher's personality had on student valued-added results and determined that teachers whose personalities were much like their students as measured by a personality inventory were more likely to see higher levels of student achievement. Another study researched the effects of weekend feeding programs on achievement that affected the VAM of teacher evaluation (Kurtz, 2015). These summaries are merely to point out the myriad of research on value-added models, but none concerning the cornerstone of teaching, what is happening in the classroom from the heart of the teacher. Professor Smagorinsky (2014) posited, "Teachers are the heart and soul of every school because they are the ones who provide continuity and local culture" to a school (p. 166).

It was evident from this review of literature that definite beliefs exist on both sides of the coin. Additional research could provide the voices of the teachers to substantiate one view or the other regarding student achievement and pedagogical influences. Furthermore, future research needs to examine the complex interconnections throughout the VAM of evaluation (Hewitt, 2015).

This study focused on the pedagogical influences of a VAM as experienced by teachers and not merely on teachers' emotions concerning the VAM. It was only in exploring what was truly occurring on a day-to-day basis in the classroom that we can begin to estimate the true effects of a VAM and the interconnections throughout the lived experiences of the educator. Existing research on VAMs is largely quantitative, focusing only on the data generated from the research and not the true heart of the teacher. It was evident from the suggested research that

this study was needed to address the gap in literature regarding a qualitative study of VAM after the third year of implementation (AERA, 2015; Berliner, 2013; Bogart, 2013; Chesnut & Cullen, 2010; Kane et al., 2011; Taylor & Tyler, 2012a).

School Improvement and Accountability

The current legislative action throughout the United States cries for accountability for student learning, and research confirms the critical impact teachers can have on student achievement. This political push has moved education to a performance-based emphasis on teacher quality (NCTQ, 2011). Fullan (2011) suggested that change in the educational system that focuses on accountability, promoting the individual rather than group solutions, and assuming that technology will guarantee an increase in student achievement is faulty. He supported change that focuses on capacity building, group work, instruction supported by technology, and solutions that provide strategies for increased student outcomes (Fullan, 2011).

Gone are the days of teachers sitting in workshops counting the number of hours in attendance to meet recertification requirements. In place of professional development, many districts and states are using Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a group solution to achieving maximum student learning. The Glossary of Education Reform (2014) defined a PLC as a group of educators who meet regularly, share expertise, and work collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. PLC involvement by teachers will serve to address the Professional Learning Growth Standard of the Georgia TKES teacher evaluation as well as provide research and use of best practices for student achievement. Research has found that schools, where educators engage in PLC practices, have cited those practices as the best hope for sustained, school improvement (DuFour, 2012). The work with colleagues is an aspect of teacher accountability that ties to the VAM of evaluation. Warring

(2015) suggested that collaboration with colleagues, as in the work of a PLC, is a significant factor that should also play a part in the evaluation process. Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) warn that teachers who work without PLCs will incur negative effects on student outcomes. Teachers work best when motivated by a commitment to students and their life's chosen work. The evaluation systems of today's teachers attempt to build upon teacher accountability to the profession as well as to the student.

The use of PLCs has recently become part of the evaluation process for teachers in the state of Georgia (Georgia Professional Standards Commission [GaPSC], 2016). Teachers will now be required to write and successfully complete Professional Learning Plans (PLPs) or Professional Learning Goals (PLGs) to obtain recertification (GaPSC, 2016). The suspension of Professional Learning Units (PLUs) historically utilized by most states for teacher recertification was approved after a Georgia Professional Standards Commission Task Force (2016) studied the effectiveness of PLUs. The work of the task force resulted in House Bill 164 and the implementation of PLPs and PLGs. The North Georgia school district where this study took place mandated teachers' participation in school and district PLCs as a requirement of PLPs and PLGs for recertification beginning in the 2016-2017 school year (GaPSC, 2016). DuFour and Fullan (2013) speculated that PLCs could play an essential role in improving the overall performance of schools, the engagement of students, and the sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. While the ultimate goal of PLCs is to improve student learning, there is hope that teachers in PLCs will be the primary agents to bring about school reform and thus impact not only student achievement but also teacher involvement and higher levels of teacher self-efficacy.

The three big ideas associated with a PLC as defined by DuFour and Fullan (2013) are:
(a) a relentless focus on learning for all students, (b) collaborative culture and collective effort to

support student and adult learning, and (c) a results orientation to improve practice and drive continuous improvement. The introduction of PLCs in the North Georgia school district where this study took place added another lens in examining the pedagogical practices of teachers as influenced by the TKES. The county mandated the implementation of the new concept of PLCs at every school in the district in the 2016-2017 school year.

Teacher Evaluations

The first sentence of The Bill and Melinda Gates sponsored Measures of Effective Teaching Project emphasizes that real improvement in education requires quality measurements (Kane et al., 2014). Arne Duncan (2010), the U.S. Secretary of Education, stated, “Everyone agrees that teacher evaluation is broken. Ninety-nine percent of teachers are rated satisfactory, and most evaluations ignore the most important measure of a teacher’s success, which is how much their students have learned” (Duncan, 2010).

While there remains much debate over how to evaluate teachers, evaluation is a necessary process in all education systems. The State of the States (NCTQ, 2015) reported that in 2015, just five states had no formal state policy requiring that teacher evaluations use objective measures of student achievement when measuring teacher effectiveness. In addition, three states have teacher evaluations that exist only in waiver requests, and since 2013, only three states no

longer require student achievement as significant factors in evaluations as identified in Figure 3.

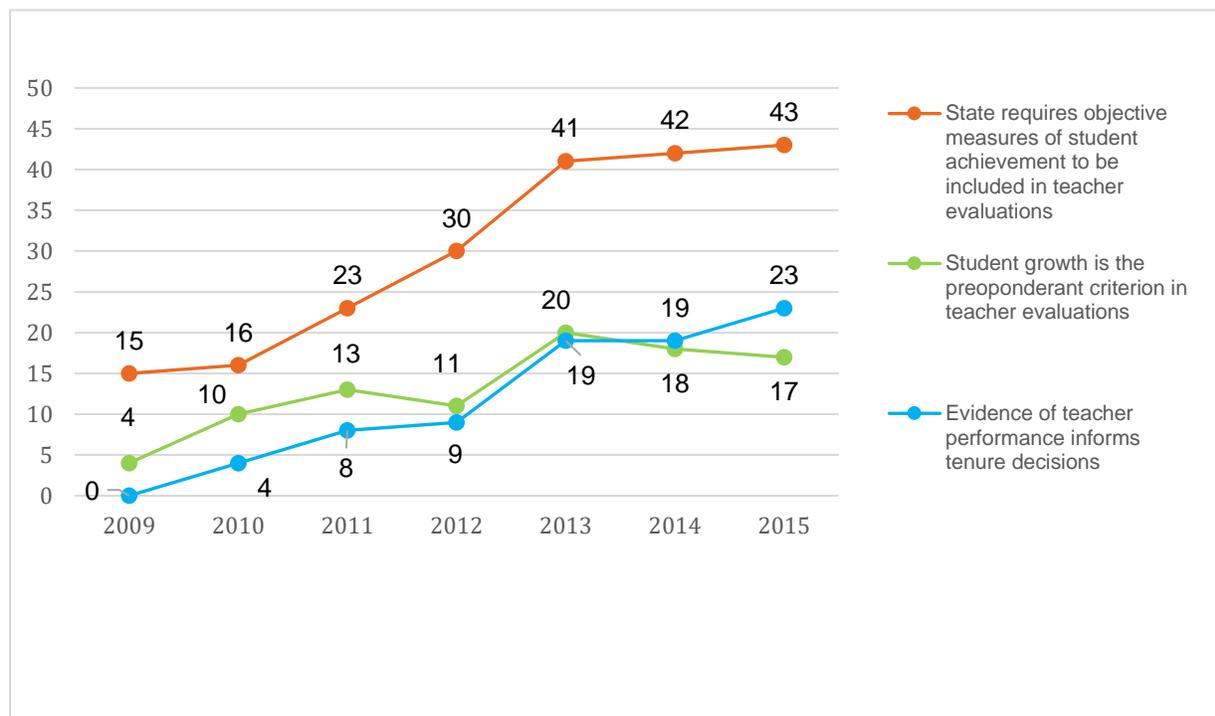


Figure 3. Graph of teacher effectiveness. State policy trends as of 2015. Adapted from *State of the States 2015: Evaluating Teaching, Leading and Learning* by K. Doherty and S. Jacobs, National Council on Teacher Quality.

A study entitled *The Widget Effect* (Weisberg et al., 2009) declared that the teacher evaluation system needed a complete overhaul. This effect came about with the introduction of the VAM evaluations system, which is touted to address the abysmal state of teacher evaluations (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011). Current mandates for teacher accountability for student learning and research that affirms the impact a teacher can have on student achievement have moved education to a performance-based emphasis on teacher quality (NCTQ, 2011). Teacher evaluation and the institutions that prepare future educators are now under scrutiny (Cochran-Smith et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2013; Earley, Imig, & Michelli, 2011; Superfine & Gottlieb, 2014). States and local districts have now begun to define and assess the quality of employed educators using enhanced evaluations and VAM approaches (Amrein-Beardsley,

2014; Knight et al., 2014; Pullin, 2014). The United States is not alone in its endeavor to improve teacher evaluations as international research indicated (Flores, 2012; Liu & Zhao, 2013; Walker & Ko, 2011).

Another concern of a VAM is the evaluation process for teachers of non-tested subjects and grades (NTSG) areas such as art. The concern is that evaluators may lack knowledge necessary to fairly evaluate an art teacher (Palumbo, 2014). Art teachers, and in general all teachers of non-tested standards, are assessed the same way as all other teachers with little or no differentiation of the evaluations (Education Week, 2013). Flanagan (2012) stated that using standardized tests in the arts revealed nothing about the instructional quality of their teachers. She further stated that holding a teacher to standards that are not relevant within a teacher's curriculum or the subject he/she teaches is demoralizing and counterproductive (Flanagan, 2012; Schmoker, 2012). The heart of Palumbo's (2014) research study was to find if the participants felt that their evaluators had a good understanding of the arts. A majority, 64% of the participants, felt that their evaluators never had an understanding of the arts and wished to be evaluated by those who do. The art teachers' areas of concern regarding evaluation were: (a) wary of "snapshot" evaluations, (b) wanted a differentiated approach, (c) weary of being evaluated on classroom management skills with overloaded classes, (d) lack of authentic assessment tools to measure individual and collective learning, and (e) wanted evaluators who had current art knowledge (Palumbo, 2014).

Marzano (2012) believed that teacher evaluations should develop teachers and not measure them. He insisted that current VAMs are missing references to the teacher-student relationship and classroom management, recognized in research as the most important aspects of effective teaching (Marzano, 2012). Marzano also argued that once a teacher reaches

competence in the student-teacher relationship and classroom management, it is only then that a teacher can have a positive influence on student achievement. Finally, Marzano insisted that a teacher evaluation system should foster teacher learning and will differ greatly from one whose aim is to measure teacher competence. Hallinger, Heck, and Murphy (2014) agreed with Marzano. They conducted an extensive meta-analysis of literature and found that the current use of VAMs offers limited utility for determining the effectiveness of an individual teaching working with a specific set of students (p. 17). The authors concluded that policy logic concerning teacher evaluations remains stronger than the empirical evidence of positive results (Hallinger et al., 2014). They further stated that administrators can enhance instruction by (a) providing teacher feedback, (b) creating professional learning communities, (c) supporting teacher work, and (d) continuing ongoing professional development (Hallinger et. al., 2014).

Ritter and Barnett (2016) recently surveyed 50 teachers and policymakers in Tennessee to determine how teacher evaluation systems could improve teacher skills and effectiveness. They found merit in the new evaluation systems occurring throughout the United States. They concluded that (a) teachers were embracing the new VAM model of evaluation, (b) evaluations could provide a focus for staff development, (c) meaningful evaluations create meaningful feedback, and (d) teachers felt positive about the new evaluation system (Ritter & Barnett, 2016). Additionally, Hill and Grossman (2013) report that recent surveys with policy makers found that the majority believed that teacher professional development and support were truly the main intents of the new evaluation systems and did not perceive them to be negative. Teacher evaluations were designed to be used as conduits of beneficial outcomes and increased student achievement (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lun, 2011; Kane, McCafrey, Miller, & Staiger, 2013; Papay, 2012; Taylor & Tyler, 2012a).

Research conducted by Taylor and Tyler (2012a) identified those teacher evaluations, specifically, classroom observations, which were effective at raising student achievement during a school year, but they were unable to identify the mechanisms driving the improvements. The researchers studied student achievement data for teachers who had undergone an evaluation in a particular year. The evidence suggested that student achievement gains were higher in the years following evaluation due to the evaluation process itself. They suggested research such as this study to determine the mechanisms driving improvements in student achievement (Taylor & Tyler, 2012a). The research also suggested reducing the large number of teacher evaluations for satisfactory teachers and to concentrate time and resources to teachers demonstrating a need for crucial feedback (Hill & Grossman, 2013).

Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System

At the time of this research, the Georgia State Department of Education reduced the percentage of weight of student test scores on TKES from 50% to 30% (GADOE, 2016). The data has modified to match the new (July, 2016) TKES requirements. The recent changes in TKES did not change the purpose of this research, but rather emphasized the need for teacher voice in the TKES process as the evaluation system itself is in constant change from year to year (GADOE, 2015, 2016).

The TKES is in its fourth year of implementation and is Georgia's answer to the VAM evaluation movement. It reflects the Stronge, Tonneson et al. (2011) Teacher/Leader Effectiveness Performance Evaluation System. Research served as a foundation of the Stronge evaluation system (Munoz, Prather, & Stronge, 2011; Popp, Stronge, & Grant, 2011; Stronge, Ward et al., 2011), and according to Stronge is reliable and valid. The TKES is comprised of three components to determine a Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) as shown on page six of

the GADOE TKES Handbook found at <http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/Teacher-Keys-Effectiveness-System.aspx>.

Teachers are evaluated using performance appraisal rubrics that consist of three areas. The first component of TKES is the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS). TAPS is a qualitative, rubrics-based evaluation method to measure 10 performance standards. There are eight steps in the TAPS process: (a) orientation, (b) familiarization, (c) self-assessment, (d) pre-evaluation conference, (e) formal assessment process, (f) mid-year conference, (g) summative evaluation process, and (h) summative conference (GADOE, 2016).

TAPS defined the expectations for teacher performance consisting of five domains and 10 Performance Standards and focuses on observations and documentation. Each teacher is rated using performance appraisal rubrics for each one of 10 performance standards. The Georgia Teacher Keys Performance Standards are as follows:

1. Professional knowledge – the teacher addresses curriculum standards; has the ability to link content with past and future learning; demonstrates deep, and current knowledge of subject matter; exhibits pedagogical skills, and understands the child as a whole.
2. Instructional planning- the teacher analyzes and uses student learning data to inform planning, pacing, and transitions; meets the needs of all students; aligns and connects lessons with state and local curricula and standards; and develops appropriate lessons.
3. Instructional strategies- the teacher engages students in active learning; builds upon students' existing knowledge and skills; reinforces learning goals; uses a variety of research-based instructional strategies and resources; uses appropriate instructional

- technology; and develops higher-order thinking through questioning and problem-solving activities.
4. Differentiated instruction- the teacher differentiates the instructional context, process, product and learning environment; provides remediation, enrichment, and acceleration; and uses flexible grouping and diagnostic assessment data.
 5. Assessment strategies – the teacher aligns student assessment with established curriculum and benchmarks; and varies and modifies assessments.
 6. Assessment use- the teacher uses diagnostic assessment data to develop learning goals for students; differentiates instruction; documents learning; plans a variety of formal and informal assessments; and systematically analyzes and uses data.
 7. Positive learning environment – the teacher responds to disruptions in a timely and appropriate manner; establishes clear expectations; models caring, fairness, and respect.
 8. Academically challenging environment – the teacher maximizes instructional time; conveys high expectations for student learning; provides academic rigor; encourages critical and creative thinking; and encourages students to explore ideas and take risks.
 9. Professionalism - the teacher carries out duties; maintains professional demeanor and behavior; identifies areas of personal growth and their impact on student learning and sets goals for improvement. (Starting in the 2016-2017 school year, teachers in the state will be evaluated on their involvement in school wide Professional Learning Communities).
 10. Communication – the teacher uses verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to foster positive interactions and promote student learning; engages in ongoing

communication with parents, and shares goals and expectations with parents; uses precise language, corrects vocabulary and grammar; listens and responds with cultural awareness, empathy, and understanding; and uses modes of communication that are appropriate for a given situation (GADOE, 2013).

Teachers receive a ranking of Level I, Level II, Level III, or Level IV for each of the performance standards, where each level is intended to be superior to all lower levels. The evaluators will then create a TAPS Final Rating based on the TAPS Summative Cut Scores as shown in Figure 4. This score shall constitute 50% of each teacher's TEM score (GADOE, 2016). The TAPS component provides evaluators with a qualitative, rubrics-based evaluation method by which they can measure teacher performance related to 10 quality performance standards.

Summative scores are calculated by adding the values (0-3) for each of the 10 performance standards.	
TAPS Summative	Summative Score Range
Level I	0-6
Level II	7-16
Level III	17-26
Level IV	27-30

Figure 4. TAPS Summative levels and score ranges. Adapted from *Understanding Components of the Teacher Effectiveness Measure*, GADOE, 2016.

The second component of the TKES is Professional Growth, which counts for 20% of the TEM score. Professional Growth is measured by progress toward or attainment of Professional Growth goals as determined by the Local Education Agency (LEA). The GADOE (2016) suggested that Professional Goals and Plans may address (a) weaknesses identified through the TAPS process, (b) teacher's individual professional goals, (c) school improvement goals, (d) district improvement goals, and (e) any other district or school identified need. Evaluators are encouraged use an optional rubric to determine a teacher's professional growth as a Level IV,

Level III, Level II, or Level I. Again, it was suggested by the GADOE (2016) that a rubric could be used to evaluate professional growth like the one in Figure 5.

Level IV	Level III	Level II	Level I
The teacher leader continually applies the knowledge and/or skills in classroom practice and provides evidence that the professional growth experience has been extended to lead others in acquisition and application of the knowledge and skills.	The teacher provides evidence that classroom practice has been changed. The knowledge and/or skills is (are) applied in the classroom on a consistent basis.	The teacher provides evidence of use of knowledge and/or skills acquired through the professional growth activity in classroom practice.	The teacher participates in a professional growth activity. Sign in sheets verify attendance.

Figure 5. TKES Professional Growth rubric. Adapted from the finalized GADOE TKES Handbook, 2016.

The third component of the TKES is Student Growth, 30% of the TEM score, is comprised of Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) for teachers of tested subject grades and courses and LEA determined measures for teachers of non-SGP grades and courses (GADOE, 2016). The SGPs reflect state assessment data, in this case, the Georgia Milestones End of Grade tests in Grades 4-8 in English Language Arts/Reading and Mathematics, and additionally in End of Course tests in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Student growth is determined by comparing relative growth to academically similar students and can range from 1 to 99. In addition, the state department has added the stipulation that a student must have 90% attendance for student data to be included for growth score data. Lower percentiles indicate lower academic growth, while higher percentiles indicate higher levels of academic growth (GADOE, 2016). The GADOE (2016) proposed that SGPs are comparable across grade levels and subject areas. This model utilizes two years of prior test scores to determine growth by an individual student and will establish the individual teacher's Level ranking as shown on page 21 of the GADOE

TKES Handbook found at <http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/Teacher-Keys-Effectiveness-System.aspx>

The state of Georgia has left it to the discretion of each LEA to determine how teachers of non-SGP grades and courses will be evaluated to fulfill this third component of the TKES. The Keller School District (a pseudonym) was given the option of using the grand mean of the SGP performance for all SGP grades and courses taught in each school to determine the School Mean Growth Percentile for all teachers of non-SGP grades and courses or to use the grand mean of SGP performance for SGP grades and courses taught in the district (LEA) to determine the district (LEA) mean growth percentile. Another choice given by the state was the option to use Student Learning Objectives or other similar pre- to post-test measures. The Keller School District has chosen to use the School Mean Growth Percentile to determine the SGP for all teachers of non-SGP grades and courses at each school (GADOE, 2016). This choice is an effort to make all teachers at a school responsible for all student learning that takes place on a particular campus (GADOE, 2016).

Ultimately teachers will receive a Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) consisting of the TAPS rating, 50%; Professional Growth, 20%; and Student Growth, 30% (GADOE, 2016). These three components contribute to the overall TEM score for each teacher. Student growth shall not include the test scores of any student who has not been in attendance for at least 90% of the instructional days of the assessed course (GADOE, 2016). The state of Georgia then uses a rubric with calculations to determine each teacher's effectiveness measure as Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, or Ineffective. Determining the TEM for each teacher occurs by multiplying the rating level of each component by the respective weight. Standard rounding rules will be used if needed. An example of a determination rubric used to evaluate a teacher can

be found on page 19 of the GADOE TKES Handbook located at <http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/Teacher-Keys-Effectiveness-System.aspx>.

These components allow a teacher to receive a TEM score of Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, or Ineffective on the rating scale found on page 20 of the GADOE TKES Handbook. At this time, the summative evaluations with administrators are used to inform the teachers of their TEM score and to provide job-embedded and ongoing mentoring, support, and professional development. Teachers who receive a score of Needs Development or Ineffective must receive a remediation plan. There are no additional pay or tenure decisions attached to TEM scores for teachers in Georgia at this time. Teachers are permitted to use the LEA local complaint process to file grievances related to procedural deficiencies on the part of the local school system in conducting TKES evaluations. However, there is no disputing a teacher's performance rating(s), professional growth goal(s) and or plan(s), and job performance through the complaint process (GADOE, 2016).

Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is one of the most researched factors believed to influence teacher commitment and teachers' willingness to adopt and implement reform efforts (Chestnut & Cullen, 2014). A recent meta-analysis by Chesnut and Cullen (2015) found that it is beneficial to know that teachers who believe that they are responsible for student gains can influence student development and be more effective instructors. They also stated a need for more research regarding the teacher's role in mastery experiences. This Keller School District study discovered the areas concerning mastery experiences that relate to the pedagogy practices of teachers evaluated on a VAM whose purpose is to achieve greater student outcomes.

Finnegan (2013) stated that the work of Stronge and Tucker (2003) has asserted that an evaluation model must (a) align its goals to goals of a district, (b) base the evaluation on clearly defined job duties, (c) differentiate among achievement levels of each duty, (d) use multiple sources of data, (e) use a rubric for clear dialogue, and (f) maintain a clear focus on teacher growth and accountability. Finnegan worried that if teacher evaluations are unclear, they can increase teachers' self-efficacy thoughts concerning the amount of effort needed to sustain and make corrective actions. Teacher self-efficacy can be negatively affected by using a VAM (Ford, Van Sickle, Clark, Brunson & Schween, 2015) and can lead to mistrust of the instrument by educators (German, 2014).

Nevertheless, teacher evaluations may reveal results that rekindle a sense of motivation. A recent study on what motivates people to sustain improvement asserted that the frustration of confronting obstacles is what caused setbacks (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). On the other hand, teachers feel motivated when overcoming a challenge or meeting a goal. Amabile and Kramer (2011) discovered that the power of setbacks to increase frustration is three times stronger than the power of progress. Hence, it is important that VAMS are utilized to encourage and strengthen teaching practices and not seen as a frustration or setback. Administrators are obligated to provide reciprocal accountability to remove obstacles that prevent teachers from making progress (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). The research study by Amabile and Kramer found that on days when workers had the sense they are making progress in their jobs, or when they received support to overcome obstacles, their emotions were more positive, and they were driven to succeed.

Bandura's (1997) research related that teacher self-efficacy has implications for instructional planning and development and influences the establishment of goals and objectives

by the teachers. The result is the effort teachers are willing to make to achieve optimum student learning. People who experience success have greater confidence that they will succeed in their next endeavor (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Teacher self-efficacy is also related to collective efficacy (beliefs of teaching teams to establish and implement teaching strategies), which correlates with schools' efforts in student learning (García-Ros, Fuentes, & Fernandez, 2015). Teachers can no longer work in isolation but must learn to thrive in a school community. Teachers are far more engaged in and committed to achieving goals if they have a voice in establishing the goals for themselves (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). As teachers learn to work in teams and set collective goals, then they should experience levels of self-efficacy that result in personal accomplishment, which can translate into student learning.

Pedagogical Practices

John Dewey (1963) defined the term “education” as a social process of living. Pestalozzi affirmed that education is a matter of head, hand, and heart (Brühlmeier, 2010). Pedagogy lies within the head, hand, and heart of the teacher. It was not until the early 1900s that a German researcher, Johann Herbart, sought to develop theories related to pedagogy or “the art of teaching” to make a distinction between education and the act of teaching (Hamilton, 1999). Herbart expressed that teachers need to explore the human experience of teaching, learning, and schooling. Herbart's ideas remained somewhat dormant in the United States and England until the 1970s when Paulo Freire published a book entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which prompted higher education institutions to begin to explore pedagogy (Smith, 2012). Another pivotal moment in education was Jerome Bruner's (1996) argument that teachers needed to heed the cultural contexts in which they were working and also to explore theories and pedagogies.

The term Pedagogical Content Knowledge is attributed to Shulman (1986) as he defined it in the 1980s as the unique knowledge of teaching possessed by teachers, “the form of content knowledge that embodies aspects of content most germane to its teachability” (p. 6). General pedagogical knowledge is the knowledge of how to organize a classroom and manage students during instruction (Shing, Saat, & Loke, 2015).

While there have been studies concerning correlations between teacher ratings and teachers’ ability to raise student achievement, there was little data on specific classroom practices and teachers’ pedagogy that related to teacher evaluations. In a recent study (Kane et al., 2011), the researchers sought to investigate the idea that teacher effectiveness need not be measured based solely on achievement gains, but it was also possible to build a system that incorporated measures of practice. They sought to find which classroom practices employed by teachers promoted student achievement. The authors (Kane et al., 2011) found that there was a relationship between observed classroom practices and student achievement gains, and they suggested that further research is completed to investigate the unobserved teacher characteristics as well as pedagogy as suggested by this study.

In a study by Kamberelis (2013) the researcher noted a need to focus on more of the complexities of classroom life, the multiple literacy contexts, and the activities experienced by children as directed by their teacher. Evaluation of pedagogical practices occur through the performance standards that highlight the processes of teaching: (a) Professional Knowledge, (b) Instructional Delivery, and (c) Assessment of and for Learning, and are part of the TKES (GADOE, 2013). Burrige (2014) stated that understanding teachers’ pedagogical choices could provide insight into the influences of student achievement. Pedagogical choices also correlated to teacher quality in that teachers’ understanding and pedagogical beliefs contributed to the

performance in providing explanation and teaching in the classroom (Charalambous, 2015). A study (Kobalia, & Garakanidze, 2010) sought to explore not only the professional skills necessary for pedagogical success but also the importance of a positive attitude towards innovations and reforms that reveal the interaction quality between valuable competencies and the consequences of the teaching process itself. Hill and Grossman (2013) felt that utilizing teacher evaluations to improve teaching practices must contain three features: (a) subject-specific observation instruments, (b) evaluations completed by content experts, and (c) feedback accurate and usable by teachers. These factors would ensure that teachers' learning is the priority of teacher evaluations and would affect student achievement as a result. The authors also stated they were concerned with evaluating the scope and level of detail around teaching practices as being too broad or too specific (Hill & Grossman, 2013).

Summary

Teachers' pedagogical practices are influenced by a VAM of teacher evaluation, and this may be affecting student-learning outcomes. Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory stated four subsystems of relationships exist that affect a teacher's pedagogical practices: a) macrosystem, b) exosystem, c) mesosystem, and d) microsystem. These four subsets included interactions within themselves and were illustrated with a visual representation of the connectedness.

The use of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory lens seeks to illustrate that teachers are affected and perform in relation to their environment, relationships, and what they believe about their teaching and ultimately student outcomes. Bandura's (1977) beliefs about teacher self-efficacy play a role in this study as they relate to teacher's beliefs about their abilities and

their willingness to overcome obstacles that hinder classroom practices and ultimately student learning.

This review of literature also explored the myriad of research available concerning VAMs. It was obvious there were two sides to this debate as many felt that VAMs yield accurate measures of teachers' abilities. However, there are just as many researchers who found fault with VAMs due to unreliability, lack of validity, and bias, to only name a few. VAMs are the predominate evaluation system used in the United States at the time of this study, and it is anyone's guess as to when the next form of evaluation system will be created and utilized. This literature review also extensively explained the Georgia TKES, which is VAM teacher evaluation system.

School improvement and accountability were reviewed to explain the relationship between teacher evaluation and how schools and districts have answered the call of accountability. Teacher evaluations, self-efficacy, and pedagogical practices were also explored to emphasize their importance in this research study and their correlation to pedagogical practices of teachers evaluated with a VAM.

This literature review sought to demonstrate that the ultimate goal of a VAM is to ensure that classroom teachers are highly effective. This study can provide insight into the positive pedagogical influences that can help teachers attain optimum levels of teaching to ensure the highest levels of student learning outcomes. To date, there is no such study that seeks to understand the perspectives of teachers' experiences of pedagogical influences of a VAM.

This review of the literature exposed concerns about the use of VAMs to evaluate teachers. The literature has questioned the bias of VAMs, the use by evaluators that have little experience with the curriculum of the teachers they are evaluating, and some of the literature

even questioned the importance of VAMs. This study adds to the literature as it explored the influences on pedagogical practices from the four educational systems as stated in Bronfenbrenner's (1976) model and through the lens of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as they relate to teachers evaluated with a VAM. In a practical sense, this study provided insight into the need for (a) further understanding from teachers concerning the process, assessment strategies, and uses, and (b) collaboration with administrators to provide pedagogical practices that optimize student learning.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. A VAM of evaluation will be generally defined as the process of measuring individual student learning gains and attributing them to a specific teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Pedagogical experiences will be defined as the functions, methods, and instructional practices of the classroom teacher (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011). This study provided an opportunity to hear the teachers' voices through interviews, a focus group, and document analysis of teacher evaluations. A pilot study was utilized to determine the effectiveness and to modify the participant interview questions for the participants (Creswell, 2013). The methods of Moustakas (1994) allowed the teachers to express their true heart through careful and precise data collection and analysis.

This chapter includes the research design, research questions, setting, and description of the participants. In addition, this chapter explains the researcher's role in the study, data collection, and data analysis. This chapter concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this study.

Design

This qualitative research study followed the phenomenological approach as it sought to describe the lived experiences of individuals about the phenomenon of pedagogical influences of a VAM evaluation (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenological approach was suited for this research because it is important to understand common experiences of the participants of this study (Creswell, 2013). Because this study emphasized the phenomenon, explored the phenomenon

with a group of participants, pursued a philosophical discussion concerning the phenomenon, collected and analyzed data, and ended with a description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), a phenomenological approach was warranted. The transcendental approach applied to this study because I used a disciplined and systematic approach to set aside prejudgments to research the study free from preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon and to be completely open and receptive to hearing the participants' pedagogical influences of a VAM evaluation (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) posited that Husserl's (1965) phenomenology is transcendental phenomenology because it emphasized subjectivity and discovery of the essences of experience. Husserl stated that a transcendental phenomenology study allows discovery through reflection. I set aside experiences with the VAM evaluation as much as possible to ensure a "fresh perspective" (Creswell, 2013). Moustakas stated that the state of perceiving something as if for the first time is almost impossible.

It was important that I began this study by describing my own experiences with VAM evaluation and bracketing out my views before analyzing the experiences of the participants. As noted by LeVasseur (2003), it is necessary to suspend our understanding of the phenomenon in a more reflective state that promotes curiosity. LeVasseur further noted that it might be necessary to create a new definition of bracketing to include the temporary suspension of "attitude and theory" (p. 418) that is affected by an awakened and passionate curiosity. I briefly suspended my experiences to cultivate my curiosity of the pedagogical influences of the VAM evaluation process as experienced by teachers. Bracketing does not take the researcher completely out of the study, but bracketing allowed me to set aside my personal experiences to focus on those of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

The theoretical frameworks that guided this study are Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social

ecological theory and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. Bronfenbrenner's model suggested that the relationships within an educational system account for how an individual interacts within a nested four person-environment sub-system. In addition, Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory guided this study in its relation to how a teacher acts within the classroom.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How do elementary school teachers from a North Georgia school district describe their experiences with pedagogical influences from the value-added model of evaluation?

Guiding Question One

What influences from federal, state, local, and school level policies and procedures are influencing participants' pedagogical practices as they relate to the TKES?

Guiding Question Two

What, if any, positive pedagogical influences have participants experienced with the VAM?

Guiding Question Three

What, if any, pedagogical challenges have participants experienced with the VAM?

Guiding Question Four

How have the pedagogical influences of the TKES affected participants' feelings of self-efficacy?

Setting

The location of the study was the Keller School District, a pseudonym for a North Georgia suburban school district comprised of 20 elementary schools and 1,227 elementary

school teachers. The majority of the teachers were Caucasian (96%), with less than 1% African American, less than 1% Indian, less than 1% Asian, and less than 1% Hispanic/Latino. Gender make-up consists of 93% female and 7% male (GADOE, 2015). I chose this setting because this district consistently scored above the state average on state mandated testing and was one of the largest suburban districts in the state. The participants in this study were solicited from four elementary schools with a performance score from the lowest to the second highest quartile from the Keller School District as determined from the Georgia School Reports (2016). The four different schools represented in this study had an overall performance score from three of the four quartiles as determined by the CCRPI score.

School A's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of D, and the overall performance was higher than 17% of schools in the state. This school has an enrollment of 727 students. School A has a free and reduced lunch rate of 87%. Student enrollment is 62% - Hispanic; 25% - White; 10% - Black; and 3% - Multi-racial. The percentage of students with disabilities is 10%, and 54% of the student enrollment is considered English Language Learners. School A is a Title 1 school and has consistently scored below the state average on state mandated tests for the past three years (Georgia School Reports, 2016). A Title 1 school is defined as a school with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families and receives financial assistance to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. The schools receive federal funds allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Because no school within this county has received a grade of A, I did not consider a school with an A rating for this research study.

School B's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of C, and the overall performance was

higher than 43% of the schools in the state. This school had a population of 1,259 students. School B had a free and reduced lunch rate of 22%. Student enrollment was 62% - White; 12% - Hispanic; 8% - Black, 3% -Multi-racial, and 2% - Asian/Pacific Islander. The percentage of students with disabilities was 10%, and 5% of the student enrollment was considered ELL (Georgia School Reports, 2016).

School C's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of B, and the overall performance was higher than 72% of the schools in the state. The school had a population of 773 students. School C had a free and reduced lunch rate of 11%. Student enrollment was 85% -White; 7% - Hispanic; 4% - Black, and 3% -Multi-racial. The percentage of students with disabilities was 13%, and 1% of the student enrollment was considered ELL (Georgia School Reports, 2016).

School D's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of B, and the overall performance was higher than 86% of the schools in the state. The school had a population of 330 students. School D had a free and reduced lunch rate of 32%. Student enrollment was 86% - White; 10% - Hispanic; and 3% - Multi-racial. The percentage of students with disabilities was 11%, and 5% of the student enrollment was considered ELL (Georgia School Reports, 2016).

Participants

Through purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) I solicited 12 public elementary education teachers via email. The participants were predominately Caucasian and female with one male African American teacher, which aligns with the gender and race percentages of the district. I selected three teachers from each of the four schools mentioned in the settings to represent different stages of a teacher's career. Huberman (1989) defined three major stages of a teacher's career. The first stage, survival and discovery, lasts from one to six years of teaching experience. The second stage, stabilization, includes periods of experimentation, reassessment, serenity, and

conservatism and lasts from seven years to 20 years of teaching experience. The final stage, disengagement, occurs within the last years of a teacher's career between 20 and 30 years of teaching experience (Huberman, 1989, p. 37). The participants from each school were representative of each of these stages: early career, mid-career, and late career/nearing retirement to elicit viewpoints of differing levels of teaching experience. Participants varied in age from 23 years of age to 62 years of age. Participants were contacted through the district email to obtain interest and willingness to participate in the study. I held each interview at a location of the participants' choice. I continued to obtain data until data saturation was reached (Moustakas, 1994).

Table 1

Participant Demographics (N = 12)

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Years Teaching
Megan	Caucasian	23	F	1
Wanda	Caucasian	48	F	19
Sharon	Hispanic	59	F	29
Lisa	Caucasian	48	F	4
Jenny	Caucasian	37	F	14
Joyce	Caucasian	54	F	32
Christine	Caucasian	30	F	5
Roy	African American	45	M	19
Kay	Caucasian	62	F	26
Kathy	Caucasian	41	F	1
Leslie	Caucasian	34	F	12
Joy	Caucasian	49	F	26

Procedures

First, I submitted the research proposal and secured Liberty University's IRB approval (see Appendix A). Once I obtained IRB approval, I secured approval using the Liberty University template for district approval. I obtained permission from the assistant superintendent of the Keller School District (see Appendix B), and then from the administrator at each of the four schools via email (see Appendix C). I chose this school district because students in this county continue to score above the state average on state-mandated tests (GADOE, 2015); however, student test scores on the state mandated tests vary greatly from each of these four schools (Georgia School Reports, 2016). After I had been granted permission from the superintendent and the school administrators, I conducted a pilot test (Creswell, 2013, p. 165) of the teacher interview questions to ensure obtaining deep, rich data from the interview process. The pilot test included expert review and a small-scale testing of the questions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Next, I conducted purposeful sampling to elicit 12 participants for the study via county email (see Appendix D). Once the participants agreed to participate, I obtained consent (see Appendix E) and conducted the interview. Willing participants also provided their TKES evaluation scores for the TAPS to use as evaluation documents for analysis (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were recorded using audiotaped recordings and transcribed by a professional transcriber. After data analysis, I conducted a survey (see Appendix F) using an online focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2009) of all teacher participants. This focus group allowed me to solicit participants' views of the credibility of the findings and my interpretations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checking to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility, and this allowed participants another opportunity for reflection. In addition, the

online focus group of participants allowed the participants to confirm the accuracy of my account and discovery of themes generated in this study.

The Researcher's Role

I have 27 years of teaching experience, and I have been evaluated using a VAM for five years, as I was also part of the pilot program. During the pilot phase in 2013-2014, I took extensive notes and created a five-inch binder as documentation of my efforts. As a requirement of the pilot program, I gave input to the state department of education regarding the evaluation and its components. My administrator at the time felt compelled to tell me that he was instructed not to give Level IV scores. He knew that this information would cause concern on my part, and he wanted to prepare me. This information was unsettling to me as I realized no matter how much effort a teacher made, it might not receive recognition in the new evaluation process. I saw this as a challenge and worked even harder the following year; however, many of my colleagues felt defeated before they even started. I feared that some teachers might internalize this as the proverbial unreachable carrot and allow the negativity to influence their pedagogical practices. My administrator did not conform to this request and gave Level IV scores during the pilot test.

In the summer of 2015, without prior knowledge, teachers who scored at a Level IV (the highest ranking) on the evaluation were given a monetary bonus. Teachers who scored at a Level III received a lesser bonus. The teachers who received these bonuses were instructed not to reveal this information, nor that a bonus even existed. This stipulation goes against all that good teachers do in the name of achieving high student outcomes: collaborate. Teachers who should have felt pride and were willing to share their positive pedagogical practices were forced to conceal their pride, practices, and professionalism.

If the goal of VAM evaluations is to improve student learning outcomes, then it is imperative that teachers share what is working in the classrooms: their pedagogical practices. The governor of Georgia is currently proposing a merit pay system for teachers that will do away with the current pay schedule based on experience and education. If legislators approve this bill, then teachers will not be willing to share their best practices. It is important that teachers share what they have found to be effective practices in their classroom. I have bracketed any bias I may have towards this phenomenological study because of my knowledge of current research on teacher evaluations, my participation as someone who evaluated with TKES, and the recognition of my pedagogical efforts by receiving a monetary bonus. My relationship with the participants is that I am an educator within the same district.

This study allowed teachers to describe how VAMs have influenced what they do in the classroom. The setting of this study was within a Georgia district as I am familiar with the TKES process, and I am familiar with the expectations for elementary school teachers within this state. I am concerned with teachers sharing the positive influences of an evaluation system where teachers have little choice and less voice. The phenomenological design of this research allowed me to discover the essence of what teachers are truly experiencing in a VAM evaluation. It is my hope that this study will help teachers in this district and throughout the United States in discovering teachers' best teaching practices under a VAM evaluation. I was most diligent in bracketing myself in this research as to reveal the voice of the participants to encourage high learning outcomes by teachers evaluated under a VAM evaluation. I bracketed my opinions, experiences, and biases in the data collection and analysis procedures utilizing the "epoche" process (Moustakas, 1994) through journaling (see Appendix G) and memoing (see Appendix H). In conclusion, I kept a journal throughout the research and included a sample written a few

days before I conducted my first interviews (see Appendix G).

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, I requested and received IRB approval from Liberty University (see Appendix A), permission to conduct research from Keller School District (see Appendix B), and administrative consents (see Appendix C). I received consent from the participants (see Appendix E), conducted semi-structured interviews, and took field notes during the interview (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Next, I utilized an online survey for a focus group of teacher participants for member checking and to determine the validity of themes I derived from data collection. Lastly, I gathered any documents related to teacher evaluation that the participants were willing to share such as walkthrough and formative assessment evaluations and documentation included in the teacher's evaluation portal.

Interviews

I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with 12 elementary classroom teachers evaluated with a VAM. The interviews were audio-recorded with two audio devices, and I took notes during the interview sessions to make note of any nonverbal communications that may help in understanding the participant (van Manen, 1990). I also created my own notes after each interview to bracket my feelings and emotions. All participants were allowed access to the transcribed interview to verify the accuracy of the interviews. Pseudonyms were used for each participant to ensure privacy and to protect the identity of the participants. The questions allowed for interpreting the social meaning and personal significance (Moustakas, 1994) of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. Moustakas (1994) stated that a phenomenological interview involves an informal and interactive process to allow the participants to share their full story. The questions were prepared to reveal the essences and

meanings of the human experience of pedagogical influences of a VAM as well as to uncover the qualitative factors in behavior and experience. The questions of the interview were also the focus of a pilot study to refine the questions to ensure deep, rich, and thick data. Also, the questions engaged the total self of the research participant, and they seek to identify accurate renderings of the VAM experience (Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher, I facilitated the interviews by asking participants to expand on their answers when necessary and probed the participants to maximize understanding. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist.

Standardized Open-ended Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself-your family, interests, and hobbies.
2. Please describe a typical day in your life at school if there is anything unique about your situation or placement that would make it different to any other elementary school teacher in this county.
3. Please explain why you chose to pursue a career in elementary school teacher.
4. Teacher evaluations have been a part of the culture of public education for hundreds of years. As you know, we currently use the Georgia TKES evaluation system. Can you describe the feelings, thoughts, or emotions that you associate with the words “Teacher Keys Evaluation System”?
5. What are your feelings, thoughts, or emotions when your administrator is in your room for evaluation purposes?
6. What are your feelings, thoughts, and emotions when you analyze student test score data that is attributed to your teaching?

7. Explain your feelings, thoughts, and emotions when you complete the summative evaluation with your administrator?
8. How has TKES influenced how you teach?
9. How has TKES influenced your teaching methods?
10. How has TKES influenced your classroom management?
11. How has TKES influenced your planning for instruction?
12. How has TKES influenced your relationship with your peers?
13. We have seen many changes in federal and state policies and procedures in regard to TKES. What federal and state policies have affected your classroom practices in regard to TKES, and how?
14. Policies and procedures have changed at the district and school level under TKES. What district and school level policies have affected your classroom practices in regard to TKES, and how?
15. What are the positive classroom practices that have emerged because of TKES?
16. What are the negative classroom practices that have emerged because of TKES?
17. What have you gleaned or learned from the TKES system?
18. How do you utilize the self-evaluation piece at the beginning of TKES each year?
19. If you haven't already, would you mind sharing your scores with me?
20. What, if anything, do you think is missing or should be added to TKES?
21. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you would like me to know about your experiences with your pedagogical influences of a VAM of teacher evaluation?

Questions one, two, and three allowed the participants to feel at ease and set the stage for a conversation as opposed to a question and answer session. Questions four through seven sought to arouse the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the participants regarding TKES to better understand the mindset of elementary teachers being evaluated with a VAM model. In addition, these questions allowed the participants to understand that the interview was to determine their voice in the VAM evaluation process.

The next five questions, eight through 12, sought to identify specific pedagogical practices that have been influenced by the TKES. Questions 13 and 14 used Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory lens to determine teacher's interactions within his/her educational environments that may affect participants' pedagogical practices.

Questions 15 and 16 were used to determine teachers' self-efficacy and what participants felt they could address to meet the needs of the students while being evaluated with a VAM model (Klassen, & Chiu, 2010; Putnam, 2012). In addition, these questions were specifically related to the understanding of what the participants felt was the positive and negative pedagogical influences of a VAM and helped to refine the themes in this study as seen through the lens of Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory. Finally, questions 17 through 21 allowed the participant to divulge anything not addressed by me or the TKES process. It was the purpose of the final questions to allow the participants time to reflect, clarify answers, and relay other information the participants felt should be added to the interview.

The questions in this interview attempted to derive the noematic and noetic correlates of intentionality (Moustakas, 1994) as well as to create meaning and determine the essence of the phenomenon. The participants all experienced the phenomenon of pedagogical influences of the

TKES evaluation. I hoped to obtain true, accurate, and complete descriptions to discover the hidden meanings for the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Focus Group

Focus groups provided an opportunity for me to interact with multiple participants and were advantageous because the interactions among the participants likely yielded the best information (Creswell, 2013). Focus groups provided deep and rich insight into a phenomenon and allowed the participants to discuss a topic of similar interest to all involved. A focus group of the participants after the interviews and preliminary data analyses allowed for member checking and confirmed identified common themes within the group. The participants were not willing to participate in a face-to-face focus group; however, they were willing to complete a survey of questions that (a) addressed the need for any further comments or inclusions from participants, (b) allowed participants to check the study for accuracy, and (c) determined if the themes developed by me were congruent with the participants' experiences.

After initial data analysis of the interviews, a survey (see Appendix F) was administered to elicit responses from the participants as a whole. Participants were asked to respond either (a) I agree with this statement, or (b) I do not agree with the statement. The participants were also provided with a prompt to elaborate on their answers.

Focus Group Survey

1. After reading and analyzing all the data from the interviews, I have determined four main themes: a) understanding the evaluation process, b) documenting the evaluation process, c) manipulating the evaluation process, and d) internalizing the evaluation process.
2. In regards to the first theme, understanding the evaluation process, data revealed that

- most participants did not know the origins of TKES, nor were they positive how student growth was to be calculated or used in terms of the TKES process.
3. In regards to the second theme, implementing the process, the data revealed that the most positive pedagogical influences are teachers' awareness and use of data for planning and instruction and the use of differentiated strategies. Negatives revealed are based on what most called a "dog and pony" show, not being their true selves during an evaluation, and feelings of anxiousness and stress.
 4. In regards to the third theme, documenting the evaluation process, the data revealed that the participants felt that a great deal of their time focused on creating documentation and analyzing and recording student data. Participants were then required to record that data either in data notebooks, or in OneNote, an online informational format, necessary information for the TKES. Participants felt documentation could be redundant and took away from time better spent teaching and planning lessons for optimum student achievement.
 5. The final theme, internalizing the evaluation process, is based on teacher self-efficacy. The data reveals that most teachers do internalize the evaluations of their administrators. The participants expressed feelings of pride when receiving good scores and disappointment when they received lower scores, which may affect future efforts of the teachers.
 6. All 12 of the participants felt that accountability is a necessity in public education. Most of the participants did not feel TKES as it is utilized today is the most effective evaluation to lead to optimum student success.

7. In finality, the teachers feel that TKES does have some merit and has brought the need for data reflection to light. In that respect, TKES may have a positive effect on student achievement.

Documentation Analysis

Document analysis, provided at the discretion of the participant, included TKES teacher evaluation documentation that included walkthrough and formative assessments, teacher feedback, and teacher documentation as part of the teacher evaluation process. This documentation provided the participant's TKES evaluation levels for the 2015-1016 and 2016-2017 school years. Teachers received a final rating of Level I, Level II, Level III, or the highest Level IV.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used phenomenological data analysis created by Moustakas (1994) and simplified by Creswell (2013). The procedure consisted of (a) bracketing, (b) creating and organizing files for data, (c) reading through text, making marginal notes, and forming initial codes, (d) describing personal experiences through epoche and the essence of the phenomenon, (e) developing and grouping significant statements into meaning units, (f) developing a description of the phenomenon, and (e) presenting narration of the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013).

Bracketing

First, I bracketed my bias and experiences (Moustakas, 1994) by describing my background and personal experiences related to the VAM of teacher evaluations and any assumptions that may overshadow the research. Moustakas (1994) posited that through epoche the researcher sets aside everyday understandings, judgments, and what they already know, and

the phenomena studied is seen through a fresh vantage point. I bracketed bias through journaling (see Appendix G) and memoing (see Appendix H) and using the Atlas.ti software.

Organization of Files

After data collection, I utilized the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method by Moustakas (1994) as simplified by Creswell (2013). I created and organized the files for the data. I utilized a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews. I also utilized the Atlas.ti software package to code the transcripts.

Memoing

Next, I read the transcripts from the focus group and interviews and began memoing. I wrote down ideas about the evolving essence throughout the process of coding (Creswell, 2013). Atlas.ti software served as a instrument for memoing.

Data Description

I used “horizontalization” (Moustakas, 1994) to examine the data and highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes to provide an understanding of how the participants experienced pedagogical influences under the use of a VAM evaluation. I then developed these statements into “clusters of meaning” (Creswell, 2013).

Codes and Themes

Next, I used “clusters of meaning” (Creswell, 2013) to classify the data into codes and themes. Coding involved the aggregation of the text into smaller categories of information. First, I sought evidence for the code and then assigned it a label (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). These codes and themes were developed into significant statements and grouped into units. This process allowed me to interpret the data to develop the essence. The themes of this research formed the common idea. I wrote a description of the content or setting that influenced how the

participants experienced the phenomena through imaginative variation (Creswell, 2013).

Moustakas (1994) also suggested that the researcher reflect on his own experiences concerning the phenomenon. Codes and themes were identified using the Atlas.ti software program.

Essence

Finally, the last step was to represent the essence of the phenomenon with the use of data, tables, figures, and narrative discussion (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994) to present the description of the phenomenon. The essence was the combination of the textural and structural descriptions of the study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The essence focused on the common experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness

I assured trustworthiness of this phenomenological study through various forms of data collection (Creswell, 2013). A study is trustworthy if it includes credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study included triangulation of data, peer review, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich, thick-description, and external audits that ensured trustworthiness.

I used triangulation of data (Moustakas, 1994). The focus group data, interview data, and document analysis were utilized to gain perspectives of teachers' experiences with pedagogical influences of a VAM evaluation. In triangulation of data, researchers make use of varied sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). In addition, I used member checking throughout the study to discourage any personal bias. Rich, thick description allowed me to describe in detail the experiences of the participants as this allowed the reader to fully understand the phenomena of pedagogical influences of a VAM (Creswell, 2013).

Credibility

Credibility was addressed with the use of corroborating evidence of 12 participants to identify a theme or perspective. The use of quotes from these participants ensured that the findings accurately described reality. In addition, the use of a focus group (Creswell, 2013) assured credibility of the study by ensuring accuracy of the data analysis. Member checking also gave all participants an opportunity to judge the accuracy of analysis by examining the initial transcripts. The observations of the participants provided me clarification of interpretations as well as any suggestions for further research (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability was addressed using rich, thick descriptions of the participants' experiences and the context of the setting. I provided a description that is rich in detail through the physical, movement, and activity descriptions (Creswell, 2013).

Confirmability was addressed using an external audit to examine the process and the product. This external consultant had no connection to this study and determined the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2013). An external auditor examines both the process and the product to assess the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2013). I used a reflexive journal (see Appendix G) throughout the research process to record information related to this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Rich, thick description allowed readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). I described settings and experiences in such detail as to allow the reader to transfer information to other settings (Creswell, 2013). This ensured the replication of this study at another site.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained IRB and then district and site approval. Member checking throughout the study discouraged personal bias, and I protected the privacy and confidentiality with the use of pseudonyms for all participants and the locations of the research. I, and the dissertation committee were the only persons to have access to the data. All recorded, electronic, and written data were kept in a secure, locked, and password-protected file cabinet (Creswell, 2013) and kept for three years per IRB instruction. Also, an external audit was used to verify the accuracy of the findings of this study.

Summary

A transcendental phenomenological study was utilized to provide a deep, rich account of the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in North Georgia evaluated with a VAM. Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological model and a secondary theory, Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, I identified the pedagogical influences of a VAM. Triangulation of data, as outlined by Moustakas (1994), from interviews, a focus group, and TKES documentation was utilized to develop the essence of the shared experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. A phenomenological design was chosen to identify the positive aspects of a VAM that may increase student achievement through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory.

Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) urged the researcher to describe the participants of a phenomenological study in such detail as to evoke a sense of familiarity. The transcriptions of the interviews lacked the laughter, the dialect, the shrugs, and emotions expressed only through the eyes of the teller. I read pages and pages of transcribed interviews and sought to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation (Riessman, 1993).

This chapter contains three main sections: participant summary, themes, and a summary of findings. The participants' experiences were analyzed based on data from the interviews, an online focus group survey answers, and documentation of their TKES evaluations.

Participants

A total of 12 elementary school teachers participated in this study. After permission was granted by Liberty University's IRB (see Appendix A), and the school district (see Appendix B), an email was sent to possible participants (Appendix D). Twelve participants agreed to take part in this study. The experience levels of the participants ranged from 1 to 32 years of teaching. Eleven of the participants were Caucasian females, and one participant was an African American male. The participants provided a diversity level that matches that of the school district. Each participant referenced in this study was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Each

interview took place within the participant's classroom, which also gave me a glimpse into their unique personality.

Table 2

Participant Demographics Per School (N = 12)

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	School	Age	Gender	Years Teaching
Megan	Caucasian	A	23	F	1
Wanda	Caucasian	A	48	F	19
Sharon	Hispanic	A	59	F	29
Lisa	Caucasian	B	48	F	4
Jenny	Caucasian	B	37	F	14
Joyce	Caucasian	B	54	F	32
Christine	Caucasian	C	30	F	5
	African				
Roy	American	C	45	M	19
Kay	Caucasian	C	62	F	26
Kathy	Caucasian	D	41	F	1
Leslie	Caucasian	D	34	F	12
Joy	Caucasian	D	49	F	26

School A

School A's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of D, and the overall performance was higher than 17% of schools in the state. The school had an enrollment of 727 students. School A had one administrator and two assistant administrators, due to its size population. The TAPS evaluation scores for all the teachers at School A for the 2016-2017 school year, as published in May 2017 by the Keller School District (2017), are as follows:

Table 3

TKES TAPS Ratings - School A

TKES TAPS Standards	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Grand Total
1. Professional Knowledge	0.00%	1.39%	61.11%	37.50%	100.00%
2. Instructional Planning	0.00%	0.00%	84.72%	15.28%	100.00%
3. Instructional Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	48.61%	51.39%	100.00%
4. Differentiated Instruction	0.00%	0.00%	87.50%	12.50%	100.00%

TKES TAPS Standards	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Grand Total
5. Assessment Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	91.67%	8.33%	100.00%
6. Assessment Uses	0.00%	1.39%	93.06%	5.56%	100.00%
7. Positive Learning Environment	0.00%	0.00%	30.56%	69.44%	100.00%
8. Academically Challenging Env.	0.00%	1.39%	87.50%	11.11%	100.00%
9. Professionalism	0.00%	1.39%	69.44%	29.17%	100.00%
10. Communication	0.00%	1.39%	54.17%	44.44%	100.00%

Table 3 indicated a low percentage (one teacher) received a score of Level II in four of the 10 performance standards. The performance standards for instructional planning, differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, assessment uses, and academically challenging environment revealed the lowest amount of Level IV performance ratings for School A.

School A – Megan. Megan, aged 23, had always known that she would become a teacher. She was a bright, young, and energetic first-year teacher who thought she could change the world. Her classroom was very student-centered, bright, and cheerful, much like Megan herself. She had tables in her room instead of desks, the room decorated in vivid colors. Megan taught 17 kindergarten students in a Title 1 school, with 11 of those students identified as English as a second language (ESOL). It was obvious that Megan was born to be a teacher as she shared her many memories of playing school when she was little. She had never varied from that dream and was so excited to have her own classroom finally. Megan felt her undergraduate courses prepared her for teaching; however, they did not prepare her for TKES. She was up-to-date with the most current research regarding curriculum, instruction, and pedagogy; however, TKES was something new and different. Megan expressed feeling intimidated when administrators were in the room for evaluation purposes and questioned her own classroom strategies. As a first-year teacher, Megan had four walkthrough evaluations and two formal evaluations. Megan explained that she would like more feedback from administrators:

Megan:

You put on a show while they're in here, they walk out, you go back to what you normally do and when I think about it, I wish that they were just in and out of our classrooms all the time, just would pop in whenever they want to and I feel like it would help us if it wasn't that they had these certain observations they had to do. If they came in all the time, I feel like it would help to better establish a relationship with your administration instead of like – I'm going to come in these few times, I'm going to watch you, I'm going to judge everything you do. I feel like it wouldn't be as intimidating if you knew that they were just coming in all the time and then I don't know – I just feel like it's very – like I'm going to put on an act while you're in here. (Meghan, interview, March 15, 2017)

Megan insisted that ongoing feedback, especially as a new teacher, would be the most beneficial instead of a one-time summative evaluation at the end of the year. She stated that TKES affected the way she planned her lessons in that she was most aware of the differentiation standard, and she expressed a desire for additional help with learning to differentiate effectively in her classroom. She was frustrated that the federal and state government expected her students to perform at grade level on a standardized test when 11 of them did not speak English upon entering kindergarten. Megan stated that the most positive aspect of TKES was that fact that teachers must keep data on student progress. However, she commented that the negative aspects concerning TKES were the amount of time she had to spend to provide documentation for a TKES evaluation. As a recent college graduate, Megan felt she knew all the current educational research, but she was frustrated that no one could answer her “why” questions concerning TKES.

School A – Wanda. Wanda, aged 48, had taught for 19 years. Wanda’s classroom was also very student-centered. The posters and anchor charts were heavily based on science and math standards. There were also many charts related to self-esteem, and her desks were arranged in groups of six. She was most happy teaching at a Title 1 school as her heart was geared toward disadvantaged students. Wanda knew this was where she could make the most difference in the life of a child. She had taught at three different schools, two of which have been a Title 1 school, so she felt she had found her heart. Wanda remained frustrated by the public perception of her school of 54% ELL students as the school has only recently been removed from the Focus School List, a designation from the state of Georgia as part of the waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Georgia Office of Student Achievement, 2012). She expressed feelings of stress when asked her initial reaction to TKES.

Wanda stated:

Stress is the first word that comes to mind. I am a good teacher, but the moment they say it is time for us to come around, I feel it’s almost like a dog and pony show every day because you have to be on your “A” game the minute they walk in. I think the kids have started to realize what’s going on at 3rd grade so they’re like – oh the principal is coming in. They’re either going to be on their best behavior or they’re going to be on their worst behavior; there’s no in between. (Interview, March 12, 2017)

Wanda believed that if administration were in the classrooms more they would understand the teachers and the students better. She also felt the summative evaluation at the end was just another necessary evil: short, quick, and to the point with no time for discussion. Wanda also expressed that federally mandated high stakes testing was not appropriate for third-grade students, and she should not be held accountable for test grades. She was upset that last

year on her TAPS evaluation she received a total of four ratings of Level IV, and this year she only received one rating of Level IV. She was told that administrators were instructed not to give so many 4 ratings. Wanda felt that the public perception of her school was that since her school was low performing none of the teachers could earn Level IV ratings.

School A – Sharon. Sharon, aged 59, was in her 29th year of teaching and retired at the end of this school year. Sharon had a kind, gentle, and patient presence, and she was the epitome of a true Southern lady. I met with Sharon in her office as she traveled to many classrooms throughout the day. She shared this office with five other teachers, yet her space was homey and comfortable in contrast to the other five desks. Sharon, an ESOL teacher, utilized a push-in model to assist in six different classes covering three grade levels. She felt her role was instrumental in shaping some of the successes of the ESOL program at her school because of her years of experience in many different classroom settings. Sharon admitted that even after all these years of teaching, she still experienced some stress during evaluations. She also felt that she had a unique situation as an ESOL teacher as it related to TKES. In addition, she expressed that she had no idea how student growth measures affected TKES score. She felt that she had overcome most of her fears related to evaluation but expressed how she once felt about them: Sharon advised:

There was a time that I would plan my lessons when I knew they were coming in and I had the opportunity to plan, I wasn't going to write on the board because I would shake like a leaf so I never wanted to write on the board when I knew they were coming in and so it's been kind of fun the last couple of years to not feel that and feel more of – oh it's an opportunity for them to see some things that I am doing and TKES is a little different from in the past. (Interview, March 14, 2017)

Sharon felt a positive aspect of TKES was the reflection piece for teachers. She stated that TKES either affirmed what you are doing in the classroom, or reminded you of what you should be doing in the classroom. She stated that TKES had altered her methods of planning instruction as the standards are ingrained within her. Sharon also stated that administrators received feedback that they were giving too many Level IVs in evaluations and that they had to change that practice. She felt that the directive not to give many Level IVs was a slam to teachers.

In addition, Sharon specified that federal and state mandated standardized testing has had detrimental effects on her school's reputation due to the student population and their test scores. She felt that there should not be a comparison of ESOL students to English speaking students of the same age and saw this as a disadvantage in reporting state mandated test scores and in the TKES student growth rating. Sharon thought that TKES had merit and that teachers should be held accountable and measured in some fashion.

School B

School B's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of C, and the overall performance was higher than 43% of the schools in the state. The school had a population of 1,259 students. Because of its size, School B had one administrator and two assistant administrators. The TAPS evaluation scores for the teachers in School B for 2016-2017 school year, as published in May 2017, by the Keller School District (2017) are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 indicated that no teachers received any Level I or Level II ratings in any of 10 performance standards. The performance standards for differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, assessment uses, and communication revealed the lowest amount of Level IV performance ratings for School B.

Table 4

TKES TAPS Ratings School B

TKES TAPS Standards	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Grand Total
1. Professional Knowledge	0.00%	0.00%	35.14%	64.86%	100.00%
2. Instructional Planning	0.00%	0.00%	55.41%	44.59%	100.00%
3. Instructional Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	16.22%	83.78%	100.00%
4. Differentiated Instruction	0.00%	0.00%	85.14%	14.86%	100.00%
5. Assessment Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	66.22%	33.78%	100.00%
6. Assessment Uses	0.00%	0.00%	60.81%	39.19%	100.00%
7. Positive Learning Environment	0.00%	0.00%	14.86%	85.14%	100.00%
8. Academically Challenging Env.	0.00%	0.00%	59.46%	40.54%	100.00%
9. Professionalism	0.00%	0.00%	37.84%	62.16%	100.00%
10. Communication	0.00%	0.00%	70.27%	29.73%	100.00%

School B – Lisa. Lisa, aged 48, was a second career teacher and had only been in the classroom for four years. Her classroom was arranged in rows and sparsely decorated. She had a few posters related to character. Lisa was very successful in the business world and felt comfortable with high-pressure presentations to clients; consequently, she was accustomed to being watched and evaluated. She recently realized her longtime dream of becoming a teacher, and this career also gave her time off to spend with her two sons. She was a perfectionist and very analytical. She expressed that she used any, and all data related to her students, and she sometimes was even teased about how much data she knew about her students.

Lisa taught four segments of fifth-grade reading. Two of the segments had students in the Education Intervention Program, one segment was regular students, and one segment contained gifted students. Lisa interpreted most of the interview questions on a very literal basis. She was very positive and appeared most hesitant to say anything negative or that might be perceived that way in our interview. When asked about her first response to the word TKES, she responded that it was hard to maneuver.

Lisa remarked:

Well, the principals come in and evaluate us and then they go and put in all their comments and the scores and everything; that part's easy because you get an email and you can go in and see your comments but it's like you have to go to 2 or 3 different places to accept it; like you read it and click save and a lot of times –there's at least 1 or 2 teachers in each grade level that gets that email –you haven't done it yet and it's because we've had to go somewhere else. I shouldn't say it's really hard to maneuver, that's kind of harsh; but it's not really user friendly. (Interview, March 16, 2017)

When asked about using student growth as a factor in her evaluation, she felt that was not fair due to the students she has for two of her segments. She stated that some of the students' home life, lack of food, and lack of motivation play a part on a student's ability to perform on the state standardized tests. While she stated that some of her students might not be on the same playing field, she says it was her job to even that playing field.

Lisa saw merit in TKES for being the causative factor for teachers to be more data driven and to concentrate on differentiation in the classroom. She also found the feedback from her administrator as useful to her in the classroom. She only experienced stress as related to TKES when an administrator was actually in the room for the evaluation. It was evident that she did not find any negativity or find fault with TKES as it related to her evaluation feedback. Lisa expressed that she was somewhat disappointed with her very first evaluation where she received ratings of Level II. She was quick to explain that her administrator told her that a new teacher could never receive a Level III as then there would be little opportunity for growth.

School B – Jenny. Jenny was a 37-year-old teacher with 14 years of experience. Jenny was a most fervent advocate for special education students. Her heart truly belonged with

special education students. Jenny's classroom was somewhat overwhelming with posters, bins, and storage containers everywhere. There was nowhere to rest your eyes, as there was not a spare inch in the classroom that did not have something covering it. Jenny's classroom seemed indicative of her personality; filled with potential to reach all the children at their level.

Jenny was a fervent collector of student data that guided her planning and instruction on a daily basis. She never wasted an educational minute in her classroom. She was an advocate for meeting children's needs and worked to identify all her students' strengths. This past year, the majority of the students in Jenny's classroom were identified with a learning disability whether, math, reading, language arts, or other health impaired. The remaining students were regular education students with only two identified as gifted. Two EIP teachers came into the classroom throughout the day to assist the EIP students. A special education teacher co-taught with her for half of the school day, a speech therapist assisted in the classroom two days a week, and an occupational therapist visited one day a week. When asked to describe what she thinks of when she hears TKES, she stated:

Stress, trying to prove yourself. I think of a lot of extra work using a portfolio-type model to prove what you're doing every day. I have no problem being observed; I would rather just have somebody come and observe and see what I'm actually doing in my classrooms and all the extra work that goes along with it. I have no problem with all the categories they rate you in but I think that can be done without having to again, provide portfolio information and prove you're doing what you should be doing. (Jenny, interview, March 6, 2017)

Jenny was one of the teachers who received merit pay, and like the others was asked to keep this fact a secret. She felt that teachers who could have learned from her example were

denied that opportunity because no one knew the identity of the recipients. Jenny also had heard that administrators were told not to give many Level IV ratings to teachers this year. She shared that her husband, an assistant administrator in the county, verified this statement. Her husband relayed that the county felt that there were not enough teachers receiving Level Is and Level IIs as ratings. In addition, Jenny felt as if she had to prove everything she did in the classroom by keeping notes, data, logs, and entering everything into OneNote, a process that she said took a great deal of time. Jenny also felt that TKES has led to a horse and pony show for the sake of the public eye.

Jenny felt that the positive aspects of TKES were data collection and analysis, and differentiating for students' specific needs. However, she felt that TKES has created a sense of competition instead of collaboration among teachers. She stated that teachers were not willing to share in order to look better than another teacher to their administrators. Jenny expressed frustration that the students she taught may not show as much growth as other students but that her heart was with the special needs children and would not change a thing.

School B – Joyce. Joyce, aged 52, had been teaching for 32 years. Her room is indicative of her personality: no nonsense and centered on her preferences, not necessarily student academics. She taught three blocks of English and Language Arts to fourth-grade students. She was the kind of teacher who volunteered for every training and committee at the school and county level. Joyce was humorous and sometimes sarcastic. She seemed to enjoy the interview as she was allowed to give her opinion in a format not normally afforded her. She loved teaching fourth grade, as she was able to joke around and be her true self.

She stated that she felt that TKES does not allow her administrators to see her true self. She has “been around the block” for a long time and has seen many educational trends come and

go. Joyce admitted she could be skeptical about the latest and greatest thing to come into education and felt that TKES was just another one of those things. She does not sweat the small stuff, and to her, TKES is somewhat some of the small stuff. She stated that TKES was just one more thing that may stick around or may go as is the case in the educational world.

Joyce stated that nervous, subjective, showcase, and organization comes to mind when asked about TKES. She stated that a TKES lesson was a showcase lesson where you give the administrators what they want to see. She admitted that she prepared her lessons differently if she knew when the administrators were coming for evaluation. She left every piece of data the administrators might want to see on her desk in plain view and in a certain order. Joyce expressed concern that during an evaluation any of her fourth-grade students could sabotage a lesson.

She felt that the evaluations are subjective and can vary from administrator to administrator depending on what each administrator values in the classroom. Joyce felt that using student growth to measure her as a teacher may not always be valid.

Joyce shared:

I'm not too threatened by student growth scores because if they are going to hire and fire on test scores, then they're going to have to let us pick our students and so that's the growth mindset – you know you're looking at the growth, not at the test scores. So, if you have had a lot of growth, it's good. I also don't worry about it too much because I know how I'm instructing the kids. I know where they need to be and I just know that you're going to have the bell curve of life where some are going to get there, some aren't and some are going to be in the middle. (Joyce, interview, February 3, 2017)

Even with her bold personality, Joyce expressed she felt nervous when she completed her summative evaluation at the end of the year with the administrators. She feared she would say the wrong thing when she is in the presence of her administrators and is very careful not to say the wrong thing. However, she stated that she expected respectful treatment by all those she encountered. She stated the positive aspects of TKES are the fact that she is aware of the expectations through the 10 standards and formative assessments that she used to evaluate students. Joyce also stated the outside influences of state mandated testing are necessary, but the yearly changes are frustrating.

Joyce related that the student growth aspect of TKES, based on the state tests and attributed to her teaching, created stress. She commented that she did not receive testing results back until the next year, and therefore the results not as beneficial to help the students she was presently teaching. In addition, Joyce did not feel the student growth scores are a true reflection of her as a teacher and that parents are the ultimate factor in the growth of a child.

School C

School C's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of B and the overall performance was higher than 72% of the schools in the state. The school had a population of 773 students. School C had one administrator and one assistant administrator. The TAPS evaluation scores for the teachers in School C for 2016-2017 school year, as published in May 2017 by the Keller School District (2017), are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 indicated that no teachers received any Level I or Level II ratings in any of 10 performance standards. The performance standards for differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, assessment uses, and communication revealed the lowest amount of Level IV performance ratings for School C.

Table 5

TKES TAPS Ratings School C

TKES TAPS Standards	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Grand Total
1. Professional Knowledge	0.00%	0.00%	39.13%	60.87%	100.00%
2. Instructional Planning	0.00%	0.00%	54.35%	45.65%	100.00%
3. Instructional Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	45.65%	54.35%	100.00%
4. Differentiated Instruction	0.00%	0.00%	65.22%	34.78%	100.00%
5. Assessment Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	89.13%	10.87%	100.00%
6. Assessment Uses	0.00%	0.00%	86.96%	13.04%	100.00%
7. Positive Learning Environment	0.00%	0.00%	6.52%	93.44%	100.00%
8. Academically Challenging Env.	0.00%	0.00%	26.09%	36.96%	100.00%
9. Professionalism	0.00%	0.00%	69.44%	73.91%	100.00%
10. Communication	0.00%	0.00%	54.35%	45.65%	100.00%

School C – Christina. Christina, aged 30, was in her fifth year of teaching. She taught in a private preschool for three years and a fifth-grade classroom last year, and this year she taught kindergarten students. Her classroom was that of a typical kindergarten class: bright, cheery, and reflective of her personality. She was young, energetic, and full of vitality, the perfect kindergarten teacher.

Christina was moved, unwillingly, from fifth grade to kindergarten for this past school year. She was moved solely because of student numbers, and because she was the last one hired. Unfortunately, she fell in love with fifth grade and there lies her heart.

She approached the year with much trepidation and had some hiccups along the way. She was straightforward and did not hesitate to tell parents her thoughts and feelings about what transpired in her classroom. This communication at times caused difficult moments with some parents who felt their child could do no wrong. Christina learned a great deal in how to manage parental communication this year. She felt that she was offered little help from administrators at

the beginning of the year, and she persevered because of her teammates' willingness to help her succeed.

This year Christina taught a general education kindergarten class of 18 students. The words she associated with TKES were stress, pressure, nervousness, anxiousness, dread, doubt, and worry. She also stated that during an evaluation, her anxiety levels were different depending on which administrator was in the room. Christina stated that TKES has influenced her to be very "by the book." She was frustrated that she was not afforded the time to allow her students to be kindergarten students:

I would love to do more like projects, hands on, the stuff that really gets them excited and I don't feel like I get to do it – I do a little bit, don't get me wrong, we have a little leeway but nothing like what I would like to do. I feel like they need to get in and get dirty and explore and play and then kind of go back to the book after they have done that. I don't feel like we have time to do that. (Christina, interview, February 28, 2017)

Christina felt that TKES was always at the back of her mind when she was planning, teaching, or managing her classroom. She commented that everything must be in order in her lesson plans because the administrators looked at them to see if she had met the TKES standards. In addition, she felt that she must prove herself to the administrators in that she must "sing for her supper" in keeping all her data in the TKES OneNote application. Christina felt that TKES had put a greater emphasis on data although this did not personally affect her because of her placement in kindergarten.

The positive pedagogical influence of TKES that Christina had found was that it kept teachers accountable for planning and instruction. In contrast, Christina found that the negative aspects of TKES were the need for the abundance of data and assessments, which were

necessarily a staple of a kindergarten class. She felt that one administrator was more upbeat and positive, while the other was “looking for something wrong” and that these biases played a part in her evaluations.

School C – Roy. Roy, aged 45, has taught for 19 years. His classroom was very sparse, with no decorations of any kind. Roy’s desk was messy, and so was the rest of the classroom. It is apparent from his interview that he felt unfairly judged in the past, and he also indicated that his colleagues have “told” on him in the past. He is distrustful of administrators and many of his colleagues as he repeatedly shared. Roy stated that he had come to a point in his career where he just goes through the motions and is not trying to change the world one student at a time anymore. He had become cynical and had commented that TKES is just another way to “get ‘em” (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017).

Roy taught fifth-grade math and science to EIP, general education, and gifted students. He admitted he became a teacher to change the world; however, he felt that the world had changed him instead. Roy stated that he had transformed over the years from his initial job until now, 19 years later. He was the warrior, the light, and the inspiration, the one that would make things better for all African American boys of poverty. Roy stated it did not take long for him to realize those aspirations were short lived and not grounded in reality. As a male African American educator, Roy knew it was his obligation to make a difference:

I wanted to be like a world changer. I guess I was going through a phase, and I thought the best way to do that was to reach children before they kind of solidified their personalities. So, I thought they would be more impressionable in elementary as opposed to middle or high school. When I actually started teaching, it was at majority African-American schools because it was them that I wanted to reach more than all others. That

got to be a little more over-whelming than I thought, and it seemed like they were doing more of changing me than I was changing them. (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017)

Roy had taught at a number of schools and always felt burdened with the male students who were behavior problems. He knew he was supposed to be a positive role model for these students, but he admitted that he could not live up to the expectations. He expressed that many times as a male elementary educator, and especially because he is African American, there were undue expectations placed on him. School C, where Roy teaches now, had very few African American students, and there were only two African American teachers. Many of the African American parents request their child to have Roy as their homeroom teacher in hopes that he would be a role model.

When asked about his feelings towards TKES, he responded that it is “just another way to micromanage teachers”. He felt that teachers were held accountable, yet parents were not. Roy felt that TKES required him to prove himself and that he was “guilty until he proved himself innocent” (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017). He was frustrated because administration never saw the real Roy, as he puts on a façade when they are in the classroom. In response to the question concerning student test scores and growth, Roy acknowledged that children will be children, and they will not always try their best on any given day. He felt that the TKES had influenced his planning and instruction as he had a constant awareness of the TKES standards.

In conclusion, Roy felt that the positive pedagogical influences of TKES were that teachers must “act happy” (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017) in fear that they will be marked low on the positive environment standard. He felt that if you act happy, that might translate to your teaching and your students. He also felt that differentiation was a positive influence of TKES as teachers attempted to meet the individual needs of students. Roy felt the negative

pedagogical influence was the amount of time that TKES required that took away from everyday planning and teaching. He stated that he could have spent the time teaching students instead of worrying about TKES (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017).

School C – Kay. Kay, aged 65, had been teaching for 26 years and retired at the end of this school year. She decorated her classroom in her favorite college colors, and the few academic posters were all related to social studies. Teaching was also a second career as she related that she worked in the business world before becoming a teacher later in life. Kay had been at the same school for 25 years and was known as the matriarch of the school. She was witty, loved to laugh, and loved history. Kay admitted she was never the first to volunteer for anything as she knew others would. She stated that she had learned that the eager beavers would get out all the kinks before any new action or directive became a necessity in her life. It was apparent from her colleagues who stopped by her room that everyone in the school loved Kay. One reason appeared to be because of her laissez-faire attitude. One of her colleagues related that Kay's students were spellbound by her stories relating to all things concerning fifth-grade social studies.

Kay taught English Language Arts and Social Studies to fifth-grade EIP, IEP, general education, and gifted students. It was also evident from her interview that Kay had been deeply hurt and offended about what has transpired in her last year of teaching. Kay described the TKES process as demeaning and a pony show. She felt that the TKES evaluation process could be subjective and that teachers received different scores from one administrator to another:

Some administrators I've had – I love it when they come in because they are glad to be there and they even participate sometimes in class, either during the observation or after. They're pulling for you. And then I've had some that I felt like are out to get 'cha.

They're looking for you to do something wrong and that makes you very, very nervous.
(Kay, interview, February 8, 2017)

Kay expressed frustration that she heard that administrators would not be giving any ratings of Level IV and stated that Level IVs were unobtainable and it was not right. She was especially frustrated when in October of this year she was told her student growth scores in social studies were the worst in the county. If she had not been retiring this year, she would not have been allowed to teach social studies next year, which she had done for 17 years.

Kay felt that the TKES had made her aware of the standards and made her more conscious of her planning and the curriculum she had taught. In addition, Kay stated that TKES had put differentiation at the forefront of her teaching. In contrast, she feels that TKES has taken the creativity out of her teaching and that she may take her stress of TKES out on her students.

School D

School D's 2014-2015 CCRPI score was a grade of B, and the overall performance was higher than 86% of the schools in the state. The school had a population of 330 students. Because of the population at this school, there was only one administrator. The TAPS evaluation scores for the teachers in School D for 2016-2017 school year, as published in May 2017, by the Keller School District (2017) are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 indicated that no teachers received any Level I or Level II ratings in any of 10 performance standards. The performance standards for instructional planning, differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, and assessment uses revealed the lowest amount of Level IV performance ratings for School D. All of the teachers evaluated at School D attained a Level IV rating for professional knowledge and positive learning environment.

Table 6

TKES TAPS Ratings School D

TKES TAPS Standards	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Grand Total
1. Professional Knowledge	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
2. Instructional Planning	0.00%	0.00%	63.64%	36.36%	100.00%
3. Instructional Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	45.45%	54.55%	100.00%
4. Differentiated Instruction	0.00%	0.00%	90.91%	9.09%	100.00%
5. Assessment Strategies	0.00%	0.00%	90.91%	9.09%	100.00%
6. Assessment Uses	0.00%	0.00%	86.36%	13.64%	100.00%
7. Positive Learning Environment	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
8. Academically Challenging Env.	0.00%	0.00%	59.09%	40.91%	100.00%
9. Professionalism	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	100.00%
10. Communication	0.00%	0.00%	22.73%	77.27%	100.00%

School D – Kathy. Kathy, aged 41, returned to the classroom after 14 years as a stay-at-home mom. She only taught for one year before she decided to stay home with her last child, so she felt like a first-year teacher all over again. Subsequently, Kathy must follow all the guidelines related to TKES as a first-year teacher. Kathy’s classroom was a dull and dingy mobile trailer, the age of the trailer overshadowed any attempt to decorate it. It was evident that Kathy did not take the interview seriously as she allowed her second-grade daughter to sit at her desk about five feet away and ask her questions, and she even answered her phone during the interview.

Throughout the interview, Kathy appeared confused about the questions and unsure of her answers. Most of her answers revealed that she did not have any experience with what I was asking her. Because she is considered a first-year teacher by the county, she had four informal walkthrough observations, two formal 30-minute observations, and one summative conference. At the time of the interview in February, she had only had two of the informal observations, and she had received some positive although limited feedback.

Kathy taught language arts and science to mostly general education third-grade students. Kathy had no negative emotions concerning TKES, except for what she heard from her peers. In her terms, she was “blissfully ignorant” (Kathy, interview, March 13, 2017) when it came to the matter of TKES. Kathy had little feedback from her administrator and she stated that she was not affected by the TKES evaluation at all. She feared that what others were telling her may change her mind about TKES and that her emotions may change after her summative conference. Her only concern about TKES was related to student growth:

I don't think any of it should go with our test scores. Now that being said, if they could come up with a specific – there does need to be accountability. Everybody and everything needs to be held accountable, especially when you're teaching children, but if a teacher was consistently underperforming in relation to her peers, I can understand almost putting her on a work plan, I can. But I think it's unfair because you can't help who is in your class and the best teachers cannot get certain children to a certain level. (Kathy, interview, March 13, 2017)

Kathy was not concerned about TKES this year and stated she was concentrating on what she felt was best for her students.

School D – Leslie. Leslie, aged 34, had taught for 12 years. It was evident from her classroom, her answers, and what she shared that Leslie was a true professional. Her classroom was a model for student-centered learning, was organized, and was well thought out in every detail. Leslie was a determined, analytical, and hard-working teacher who did what was best for her students, not what was easiest for her. Leslie had implemented many new and successful programs in her grade and her school. She was the one that the administrator turned to whenever they needed something done. Leslie was the sponsor for many of the extracurricular activities at

her school, attended workshops and professional development opportunities, and provided professional development for her peers.

This year she served as the math and science teacher for second grade. Her classroom segments consisted of students in general education as well as students with IEPs in addition to a few students with 504 plans, mostly for ADHD. The words Leslie associated with TKES are stress and anxiety. Because she taught second grade, her student test scores did not reflect in her evaluation, but she was empathetic to teachers of upper grades. Leslie felt that her anxiety level about having an administrator in her room for evaluation purposes diminished as the year progressed.

Leslie identified that the positive pedagogical influences of TKES are definitely the move toward differentiation and assessment use to identify student needs. In addition, she believed that the reason we have TKES is because of federal mandates:

Well, I think the reason we have that is because of those programs. If there wasn't No Child Left Behind or anything like that, then I don't think we would have TKES. I think we're doing TKES because of the federal aspect of it so that they know we're held accountable. (Leslie, interview, January 27, 2017)

Leslie relayed that some of the negative aspects of TKES were that it was a stressor for teachers as it required more paperwork because everything is data driven. She also felt the burden of proof was the responsibility of every teacher to document everything they did in the classroom. Leslie was required to keep a data notebook as well as a goals notebook for documentation of each student's growth. In addition, Leslie felt the stress and anxiety caused by TKES had taken the creativity and fun out of teaching. Leslie was also a recipient of the pay for performance bonus and was asked to keep it a secret from her colleagues. Her final concern was

that when the administrator was in the room for an evaluation, the administrator only saw one small snapshot of her as a teacher. In conclusion, Leslie felt even with all the documentation that she had to produce, her administrator did not see the whole picture.

School D – Joy. Joy, aged 48, had been teaching for 26 years. She was an EIP reading teacher who served children in second through fourth grade. Joy’s classroom was a hodgepodge of books and disorganization, yet very child-friendly. A huge rocking chair in her story time area seemed to overtake the entire classroom. Joy was the type of teacher who saw the good in all people, young and old. She played the devil’s advocate in the entire interview, and searched and ruminated until she found something positive to say. It was evident in her interview that she had a true and deep love for all her students. She commented that she worked incessantly to find and build upon the strengths of her students.

While Joy thought that TKES caused teachers to put on a show, she was the only participant who truly attempted to find a positive about the process, and she had some understanding of its origin. Joy was very savvy when it came to all things related to the laws and policies related to public education. She was a strong advocate for public education although she attended a parochial school throughout her entire elementary, middle, and high school education. Joy described the TKES process as “jumping through hoops” (Joy, interview, March 22, 2017). She stated what she felt about the evaluation:

You’re evaluated on a packet portfolio-type thing that you can assemble online and put together as opposed to necessarily the true relationships you have with your students, their parents, the community around you, and the connection you have with all of them, and what you are doing with students on a day-to-day basis rather than these snapshots that you can put into a computer. (Joy, interview, March 22, 2017)

Joy felt that the TKES evaluation was subjective and depended on the administrator completing the evaluation. She stated that the administrators' optimism or pessimism was evident in their evaluations of teachers. Joy stated that a positive pedagogical influence of TKES was that teachers were data driven. In caution, she warned that although teachers were more data driven, that student growth might not be a fair measure of a student's ability. She further explained that low growth for one student might be all one can hope for, whereas the "sky is the limit" for others. Joy felt that there were too many variables for a teacher to be held accountable for all of their students' growth or lack thereof.

Joy thought TKES was a necessary tool for evaluating teachers, and that TKES has done a great deal to focus teachers on collecting and assessing data on students to best meet their needs. She had no negative experiences about the TKES process itself, because she has had a positive experience with this evaluation system. Joy commented, "TKES makes you stop and think-how could I have done this better" (Joy, interview, March 22, 2017).

Focus Group

The participants were not willing to meet in person, but all agreed to participate in an online anonymous focus group in the form of an online survey. The survey was utilized to check and confirm the data and themes established in this study. The survey also provided a platform for further comments from all participants of this study (see Appendix I). The Survey Monkey format allowed participants to remain anonymous to me, which may have allowed some additional freedom in their comments. Qualitative data collection via the Internet had the advantages of cost and time efficiency and allowed for more open exchanges (Creswell, 2013).

The results of the online focus group survey revealed that 92% of the respondents agreed with the four identified themes from this study, and none of the participants had any further comments to add to the question. One participant did not answer the question.

Question two of the survey related to understanding the evaluation process and 100% of the participants agreed that they did not know the origins of TKES nor were they positive how student growth was calculated for their TKES level score. One of the participants commented that the origins were a mystery, and participant number six stated that “each year the TKES platform seems to change regarding high stakes testing. I feel as though the ‘bar’ is forever changing.” In addition, the eighth participant felt that “if they use student growth, it should be for everyone, and at this time lower grades have no method of being able to show classroom growth”. Finally, the twelfth participant stated, “It is hard to hit a constantly moving target.”

All participants felt that the second theme, implementing the process, revealed that the most positive pedagogical influences of TKES were the awareness and use of data for planning and instruction. The negative pedagogical influences were based on the “dog and pony” show, not being their true selves during an evaluation, and feelings of anxiousness and stress. Participant number three’s additional comment was “True!” In addition, the sixth participant responded, “Because administrators are only seeing a ‘snapshot’ of time in a lesson, they do not always get the true gist of the lesson.”

Eleven of the 12 participants agreed with question four regarding documenting the evaluation process and the time and redundancy involved. Comments included from participant number three, “Too much paperwork involved,” Participant number five commented, “Yes!” Similarly, the tenth participant added, “It is becoming increasingly obvious that documentation is

more important than doing”. Furthermore, the twelfth participant stated, “It makes the teacher feel as though he/she is considered lazy until proven otherwise.”

All 12 of the participants agreed that the final theme, internalizing the evaluation process, elicited feelings of pride when receiving good scores and disappointment when they received lower scores. In addition, all 12 felt that this could affect their future efforts in the classroom. The sixth participant commented, “The fact that the state has informed counties that a score of a IV should be almost impossible to get has a negative impact on teachers too.” The ninth participant stated, “Unfortunately, in this sense, fresh starts are rare in education.” And finally, the tenth participant commented, “Too many human factors such as personal preferences and prejudices come into play when scoring teachers.”

All 12 of the participants felt that accountability was necessary in public education. However, the participants felt that TKES might not be the most effective evaluation to lead to optimum student success. The third participant completely agreed. The tenth participant commented, “There should be greater standards for teacher preparation. Make teaching more of an elite profession with tougher criteria for teachers’ colleges.” Finally, the twelfth participant stated,

With at least 25 sets of eyes on us daily, as well as parents always ready to complain, I feel that observations should only be for teachers that receive consistent complaints.

Also, teachers tend to be former ‘teacher’s pets’ always seeking acceptance and approval.

That being the case, most teachers will ‘rat’ on one another anyway, so teachers hold each other accountable. (Focus, April 25, 2017)

Finally, 11 of the 12 participants felt that TKES has some merit in that it brought the need for data reflection to light. Ten of the 11 participants who responded agreed with this statement.

The third participant commented, “I don’t think TKES has a positive effect on student achievement” (Focus Group, April 25, 2017). The ninth participant disagreed and stated, “I do not believe TKES is the only or best way to show the need for data reflection. Good solid teacher trainings do that” (Focus Group, April 25, 2017). In conclusion, the eleventh participant commented, “I think teachers have always reflected on data before TKES and will continue to do so long after TKES is a thing of the past” (Focus Group, April 25, 2017).

Document Analysis

I obtained documents for analysis from the TKES platform, an electronic platform the state of Georgia utilizes for documentation of all aspects of the TKES evaluation. All walkthrough, formal evaluations, conferences, student growth (where applicable) scores, as well as documentation provided by each teacher are stored in this platform (see Appendix I). All participants were willing to verbally share their TKES Level scores from last year and this year; however, only one participant was willing to share the documentation provided on the TKES platform.

Table 7

Participant TAPS Levels (N = 12)

Pseudonym	TAPS Level 2015-16	TAPS Level 2016-17
Megan	NA	III
Wanda	III	III
Sharon	III	III
Lisa	III	III
Jenny	IV	IV
Joyce	III	III
Christine	III	III
Kay	III	III
Kathy	NA	III
Leslie	IV	IV
Joy	IV	IV
Roy	III	III

The TKES platform consisted of electronic documentation of Orientation Component Ratings for Professional Growth (20%), Student Growth Rating (20%), Observations one and two, and the Formative Evaluation (see Appendix I). When asked about the TKES electronic platform, 10 of the 12 participants used the platform to check their level ratings for the walkthrough and formative assessments. Only two of the 12 participants stated that they perused the other information available to them on the platform. Participants stated that the lack of understanding of all the elements on the platform discouraged them from further investigation into their ratings and TKES portal.

Results

Theme Development

At the conclusion of the data collection, including interviews, the focus group survey, and documentation of participants' evaluation data, four preliminary themes were identified. The significant themes include (a) understanding the evaluation process, (b) documenting the evaluation process, (c) manipulating the evaluation process, and (d) internalizing the evaluation process. After the themes had been determined, I arranged them for discussion based on Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory and the participants' interactions within the nested four person-environment sub-system. In addition, the themes lent credence to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory and the participants' feeling of self-worth.

Theme 1: Understanding the evaluation process. The first theme I identified in this study was *Understanding the Evaluation Process*. This theme emerged through several statements throughout the data collection. I explored this theme through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory.

Macrosystem (federal mandates). The Race to the Top initiative was the driving force behind revamped teacher evaluations and has remained in the public media spotlight since 2009. Only two of the 12 participants in this study were aware of the origin of the value-added evaluation system used predominantly throughout our country (Aldeman, 2017). Roy stated:

Yeah and I guess we should have stuck with the devil we knew because then you know, President Obama, the reason he got elected by so many teachers is because he said well if I get in office, I'm going to tell those parents they need to turn off those televisions, turn off the video games and all that so people said okay, hallelujah, finally George Bush's program with "No Child Left Behind" because then you know, you constantly had to get together all this evidence all the time. (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017)

In addition, another participant, Leslie, stated:

Well, I think the reason we have that is because of those programs. If we didn't have No Child Left Behind or anything like that, then I don't think we would have TKES. I think we're doing TKES because of the federal aspect of it, so that they know we're held accountable. (Leslie, interview, January 27, 2017)

Seven of the participants acknowledged that because of public scrutiny, teacher accountability was necessary. Joy stated that "teachers need to be graded or evaluated in some regards, and we do need to be held accountable" (Interview, March 22, 2017). Christina believed that "TKES holds teachers accountable" (Interview, February 28, 2017) and Joyce stated, "Expectations are part of everybody's job, everybody's life and everybody's continuum of growth" (Interview, February 3, 2017). Overwhelmingly, participants agreed that teacher evaluations were necessary, yet Roy described it as a "necessary evil" (Interview, February 10, 2017). Sharon stated:

I think we all need a bar, and it just means we want to try to reach that bar. It doesn't mean we're always going to do it or every day is going to be perfect, but it just gets us thinking. (Interview, March 14, 2017)

The macrosystem subsystem, as noted by Bronfenbrenner (1976), is the subsystem wherein federal policies and the public eye on education influence a teacher. Wherein all the participants were affected by the macrosystem, for the majority of the participants, they remain oblivious to the ramifications of this subsystem.

Exosystem (state and district policies). Georgia's answer to the Race to the Top Initiative was the development of the TKES by Stronge and Tucker (2003). The participants expressed a great deal of knowledge as to the components of the evaluation. However, none of the participants knew the origins, foundations, or reasons why the state of Georgia adopted the TKES model as the evaluation choice of the state of Georgia. All participants were aware of the TAPS portion of the evaluation based on the 10 quality performance standards of the TKES, a student growth percentile, and the performance goals sections of the TKES. None of the 12 participants were aware of how student growth was determined, what the percentage was at this time, or how it applied to their evaluation. Joy expressed her naiveté to the origins of TKES. She stated,

I question how it was created and who it was created by and then once it was implemented through some test environments, what the results were and if there were any changes or what kind of utopian schools they tried this in. (Joy, Interview, March 22, 2017)

She further expressed her frustration in the fact that testing mandates and TKES criterion experience a yearly change from the GADOE. Joy stated:

Well the student growth part, they keep changing. We have not had the same growth instrument for the last – I don't know how many years. They threw out a whole grade level one year – the scores were invalid – I don't know if they ever really said why – there were too many questions on there that I believe the children weren't supposed to know the answers to – I'm not sure what happened but it seems to me that as a profession, we look incompetent when we hype up these culminating measurement tests that are a snapshot of a child's performance in a tightly confined number of days. Everybody knows that it's going on and there were years when we were very wishy washy about the results and I think that makes us look – and it should . . . make us look a little silly. (Joy, Interview, March 22, 2017)

Student Growth Measure. It was evident from the data collected that none of the participants felt that student growth on state mandated tests is a valid instrument measure of teacher effectiveness. When asked what they feel about student growth being part of their evaluation, Christina, a kindergarten teacher, stated, “I figure out the kids' reading level, but that doesn't apply to TKES.” Kathy, a first-year teacher, indicated, “This year I'm kind of coasting in a little bit of blissful ignorance, I guess” (Interview, March 13, 2017).

When asked about using student growth as a determining factor in teacher evaluation, Joyce commented, “I don't think it's a true reflection of me as a teacher.” Lisa felt that a student's motivation and home situation can play a huge part in the success of a child: “I can teach an EIP class all day long and if they don't want to learn, they're not going to.” When asked the same question, Joy stated:

There is so much that a test does not measure. I don't think every student is accountable for the exact same amount of growth because there are some students that in their

circumstances that are beyond a school's control, a more moderate growth model might be beyond what you could expect; whereas others you would see– the sky is the limit.

(Interview, March 22, 2017)

The kindergarten through second-grade teacher participants of this study will have a student growth mean for the entire school attributed to them because they do not use state mandated tests for student evaluation at this time. The TKES handbook (GADOE, 2016) stated that teachers of third through fifth grades would have the earned student growth measure attributed to their evaluation, yet not one of the participants understood the student growth component of TKES. Roy stated, “I do not know how my score is determined on TKES. I never look at the student growth number, as it really hasn't been explained to me” (Interview, February 10, 2017). Sharon, an ESOL teacher who retired this year, stated, “I don't know what is happening regarding student growth this year, as it changes all the time” (Interview, March 14, 2017).

Mesosystem (school and community). The participants at each school have described the uniqueness that exists at the four different schools in reference to TKES. All 12 participants expressed thoughts concerning the objective or subjective nature of the TKES evaluations. In addition, the participants expressed concern when administrators were in their classrooms for evaluation purposes.

Administrative visits in the classroom. Two of the participants from School A expressed wanting their administrators to just visit their classrooms for other things besides the evaluation. Megan stated, “The administrators are going to come in those few times, they're going to watch you, they're going to judge everything you do . . . but then they don't come back to watch you any other time” (Interview, March 15, 2017). Wanda affirmed the same feelings:

The administrator is only in my room usually for evaluations, I wish – there’s so much fun that we do in the classroom. I wish they were in there more often just to see some of the unique things that we are doing. (Interview, March 12, 2017)

In addition, Sharon, the third participant from School A, felt that at one time she was not visited enough but that TKES had forced administrators to be more visible. She stated that “TKES has allowed administrator to get more than one snap shot of you – and that, I think is good” (Sharon, interview, March 14, 2017).

Feedback. School B’s participants expressed conflicting feelings about the TAPS component and the feedback they received from the administration. Lisa stated that she utilized the feedback given to her by administrators after each evaluation: “So after every evaluation when I go in there to see what the administrators say and they give me those comments, I take it to heart and definitely use it” (Interview, March 16, 2017). Jenny stated that teachers never questioned the evaluations of the administrators because “it’s just an awkward situation all around as it makes the administrator see you negatively” (Interview, March 6, 2017). Joyce, a teacher for 32 years, stated, “that you don’t want to say the wrong thing, so the summative is usually is pretty short and sweet – they already know what they’re going to say, they’re not going to change anything that’s on there” (Interview, February 3, 2017).

Subjectiveness. When asked the question regarding whether the participant felt the TAPS score was a true reflection of their teaching, many responded that the evaluation process might be somewhat subjective. Christina from School C who has had two different evaluators this year stated:

One of them I feel like they are very positive and upbeat and if there is a problem, we discuss it and I have positive feedback. The other, I feel like it depends on the type of

day that person is having when they walk in your room and if that person is having a terrible day then unfortunately TKES scores are going to be lower because of the frustration level – which is not right, but it’s human nature, it happens. I feel like it depends on who is evaluating me. (Interview, February 28, 2017)

At the same school, Roy stated, “I just think that’s human nature that you see what you want to see, even if it’s not actually what’s taking place” (Interview, February 10, 2017). Kay, the other participant from the same school, stated that she welcomed some administrators, and some were out to get “cha” and were looking for you to do something wrong (Interview, February 8, 2017).

The feelings and emotions concerning administrators and the TAPS portion of TKES of the participants of School C were very different. Kathy, a first-year teacher, had no emotions yet as she stated after question 10: “These questions are kind of flooring me. I can’t think of anything. TKES has not been – it’s really not at the forefront of my mind. To me, TKES has been a separate – it’s my observation time” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Leslie stated that the summative conference allowed her to share ideas with her administrator: “I’m hoping that she will be able to share her points and listen to mine and hopefully we can come to agreement” (Interview, January 27, 2017). Joy expressed some concern over the power administrators hold with the TKES format when she stated:

I think TKES could be used by some administrators as a tool of – it’s too easy to manipulate TKES both ways. It’s too easy to make a mediocre teacher seem fantastic and it’s too easy to make a teacher that is really a good teacher seem undesirable, based on numbers. (Interview, March 22, 2017)

Microsystem (classroom and students). Each participant expressed concerns that play an integral role in the TKES evaluation system regarding the students in their classroom. The participants' anxieties related to TKES and student growth centered on students' home life, ability to learn, and testing where they felt they had little control.

Home environment. Many participants expressed concerns about student home environment and behavior and the effects they may have on student performance in the classroom, state mandated testing, and teacher observations. Joyce expressed her anxieties during observations:

I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing but you know, somebody could break bad anytime. That can throw things off – plus I worry about the kids wanting to show off or be the class clown when administration is in my classroom. (Interview, February 3, 2017)

Lisa worried about her students' home environment and the effect on student performance: "You see that it's home life or just pure motivation, things like that, where they're undiagnosed and parents don't have the means or just don't get them diagnosed" (Interview, March 16, 2017).

Roy felt that a classroom student population was an outside determining factor and may affect student performance: "We teach them all, but they all have different situations going on and human behavior – you can't calculate that with $A + B = C$; because humans, especially children, they come from different experiences" (Interview, February 10, 2017). In addition, Kathy commented, "It's unfair because you can't help who is in your class and the best teachers cannot get certain children to a certain level" (Interview, March 13, 2017). Finally, Joy stated, "variables that we can control are so few – attendance, home life, background knowledge,

language, that to think – I think the ultimate answer lies in selection of teachers” (Interview, March 22, 2017).

Student Growth. All participants felt that student growth should not be used as a determining factor of a teacher’s effectiveness and called into question the many variables that can affect student test scores. Joy stated, “We look incompetent when we hype up these culminating measurement tests that are a snapshot of a child’s performance in a tightly confined number of days” (Interview, March 22, 2017). Kay felt that a series of tests was not a true measure of a student’s capabilities: “That is one day in the life of one child and everything hinges on that. You can make teachers and students feel totally worthless on that data alone” (Interview, February 8, 2017). She further stated,

I’ve only had two children since the GCRCT was first given that didn’t pass reading and it was because there was a death in the family and the child was all tore up, and the other child was very sick, but came for testing anyway. (Kay, interview, February 8, 2017)

Leslie at School D felt that the student growth data has affected her classroom in a negative way. She stated, “I think teachers are so worried about having the scores that they need, it’s kind of taken the fun out of teaching– there is so much testing involved” (Leslie, interview, January 27, 2017).

Another universal frustration that was evident in this study was teachers’ unwillingness to teach lower performing students because student growth was a factor in the teacher evaluation. Jenny was frustrated that teachers may not want to teach low-performing students as she does because those students may not show high growth.

Jenny offered:

My students might not show – they might show growth, but not the same amount of growth necessarily. It's not fair to those kids who are lower performing; it's not fair to those sub groups, special Ed. I want the best teachers for my kids, you know, and I don't want those people to not want that group of students because it's harder to reach those goals. (Interview, March 6, 2017)

Joy felt that more and more teachers would want the students that are easier to teach and show growth. She expressed her concern:

I think it would be much easier to say I want the easy class of kids – I want the kids that are going to be able to show the most growth, and I don't think that's always best for kids. (Joy, interview, March 22, 2017)

She worried that the best teachers will shy away from teaching the most difficult learners as they do not want lack of student growth expressed in their teacher evaluation.

Theme 2: Implementing the evaluation process. The second theme evident from all the data collected is *implementing the evaluation process*. The data in this study revealed positive and negative pedagogical practices as a result of the implementation of the TKES process.

Positive pedagogical influences. The one positive effect of TKES experienced by the majority of the participants was their use of data to address the 10 performance standards involved in the TAPs portion of the evaluation. Use of data is critical in six of the 10 performance standards that address planning, instructional delivery, and assessment of and for learning. None of the 12 participants have received a rating of IV in the standard that addresses assessment of and for learning, and, therefore, this standard has remained on their self-assessment as an area in which all the participants expressed a wish to grow. Joy felt that TKES

has forced teachers to be more accountable for the data they obtain, assess, and use to drive instruction. She stated:

I think because data is such a key component to TKES and keeping track of student progress, that I am much more in tune to the progress monitoring instruments that I choose and whether or not they are a direct reflection for the goals for those students. I want to make sure that how we are measuring student growth and accumulating data – not just for the sake of accumulating data but if you're going to do something and it's going to take some energy and some time, do it so that it does positively impact the student. (Joy, interview, March 22, 2017)

Joyce also felt that TKES has helped teachers work together toward a common goal, which is implemented with the PLC model. She concurred, “I would say that the formative movement was really pushed by the TKES movement, and it has helped a lot of teachers in dividing and conquering” (Joyce, interview, February 3, 2017). Leslie knew this was an area of weakness for her, and consequently this was at the forefront of her teaching methods. She stated:

I also need to improve upon the assessment strategies – the different ones that we should be using and that kind of thing so those areas I constantly feel like I'm trying to improve upon and I always make comments when I'm filling out the TKES evaluations on-line that those are the areas that I know I struggle in or my weakness that I'm trying to do better in. (Leslie, interview, January 27, 2017)

Jenny was vocal about the fact that TKES had initiated the PLC movement, which was a step in the right direction for optimum student learning. She felt that both TKES and PLCs attempt to achieve the same goal:

TKES is making us look at the data, analyze the data and it's not really a choice. I think that sitting down with other teachers and collaborating, I think that's beneficial to share common goals and what can we do, I do think that is beneficial. (Jenny, interview, March 6, 2017)

Eleven of the 12 of the participants believed that the TKES process has merit in that teachers must self-reflect on their evaluations. All participants with more than five years' experience mentioned in their answers that they could show the administrators what they want to see in the classroom observations and in the documentation. So, while authors of the Georgia TKES (Stronge, Tonneson et al., 2011) attempted to provide an objective platform for true teacher performance in a classroom, the teachers have learned over the past four years what was expected, and what exactly they needed to do to "beat the system" and receive a Proficient score. The participants used the terms "dog and pony show," "cart and pony show," "jumping through hoops," and "being ready for the administrator to come into the room."

Negative pedagogical influences. The Georgia TKES Handbook (2016) stated that Georgia developed the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) to provide teachers with more meaningful feedback and support so they can achieve the goal of increasing academic learning and achievement for all students. The data revealed that in the short time of utilizing TKES, teachers have realized that they could deliver a showcase lesson for their administrators, create data to document addressing the standards, and as Roy stated, "Give them what they want to see" (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017). TKES may not be as objective as it was designed to be, and in four short years, teachers have already determined how to "jump through the hoops" according to Kay (interview, February 8, 2017). One of the purposes of TKES is to identify teachers who are not effective, and if teachers can manipulate the major part of the evaluation,

TKES may be a futile attempt to identify substandard teachers. Dr. Lawrence (a pseudonym for an administrator from this school district), recently stated that out of the current 2,634 teachers in Keller County (a pseudonym), only five received a Level II rating. This information would lead one to believe that the TKES process is not identifying ineffective teachers, or that the remaining 2,629 teachers are highly effective.

Several of the participants expressed how their behavior was different when an administrator was in the room for evaluation purposes. Kay stated that she is very cautious in how she even speaks to her kindergarten students when an administrator is present for evaluation. She stated, “I would say the same kind of thing all day, the kids and I are fine, and everything is fine, but I feel like they’re kind of looking at like – oh, she shouldn’t have said that” (Kay, interview, February 8, 2017). Jenny was ready for her administrators when she knew they might be coming. She stated: “Usually I know the weeks that they might be coming, and I can have everything laid out but normally my stuff would be filed” (Jenny, interview, March 6, 2017). Leslie said her school was usually aware of the week the administrator was coming and, therefore, she was “definitely on the ball when you know it’s coming up” (Interview, January 27, 2017). Megan, a first-year teacher, worried about her students’ behavior while being observed. She commented that when an administrator was in the room she felt the following:

Let me get my act together, and then I feel like when a child misbehaves or something in your classroom I’m like okay, how would they handle it? So, I handle it based on what I think they would want to see and I think a lot of times I’ll do something just because I feel like oh, this is what they would want me to do and it’s not really how I would normally react. (Megan, interview, March 15, 2017)

Roy believed he was not his true self when an administrator was in his classroom, and therefore, they never saw the true Roy. He stated, “I’m never my natural self when someone’s watching me. I don’t like people looking at me to begin with, and then when you add that extra element to the classroom, I’m not my natural self” (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017). Sharon stated that her comfort level had gotten better over the past four years. She admitted, “I wasn’t going to write on the board because I would shake like a leaf, so I never wanted to write on the board when I knew they were coming in” (Sharon, interview, March 14, 2017). Only one participant, Joy, stated that she did not change the way she taught or acted when an administrator was in the room.

Theme 3: Documenting the evaluation process. The third theme to emerge from the data was the documentation of the TKES evaluation process. All participants expressed particular frustration due to the time involved in documentation necessary for the TAPS process of TKES. In this section, teachers were required to keep some form of data to show evidence of the 10 performance standards.

The least experienced participants used a more literal translation of the questions of the interview which affected their answers. Kathy, a first-year teacher, was not concerned with documentation and stated, “I’ve learned to always be on your toes and have complete lesson plans all the time” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Lisa, another newer teacher, stated that the TKES platform was “hard to maneuver” and “not user-friendly” (Interview, March 16, 2017).

Proving yourself. The more experienced participants had a great deal to say concerning the documentation of their efforts. Roy felt that he is proving himself every day. He stated:

You’re gathering up so much evidence, you don’t have time to teach anybody because you’re just constantly getting evidence. You’re making parent logs and typing up nine

million groups on a sheet of paper and emailing 1 note and all this other stuff. You're gathering up this case so you don't really have the time to devote to the children and it seems like it takes so much away from your soul that it makes you unhappier. (Roy, interview, February 10, 2017)

Leslie also felt that she had to prove everything she did in the classroom. She stated, "I think we are held accountable for so much that we have to make sure that we have the data or the proof to show everything" (Leslie, interview, January 27, 2017). Jenny stated that she had a tremendous amount of documentation and found herself helping others with their TKES documentation. She was adamant about documentation and had even taken pictures of herself giving a student a certificate as evidence of meeting the TAPS standards. She stated:

I mean the paperwork is outrageous! I would rather be observed every week instead of going through a checklist of me proving what type of teacher I am. I can't tell you how many teachers I've helped upload six months' worth of lesson plans right before an observation. (Jenny, interview, March 6, 2017)

Time consuming. Many of the participants felt that the documentation was redundant, time-consuming, and not beneficial to student learning. All participants expressed frustration regarding the time involved in TKES documentation. Jenny felt that having to post documentation in three or four steps took away from the act of teaching. She stated:

When we write a newsletter, you have to send it to administration, you have to send it to your parents, you have to put it on your email, and then you have to upload it in OneNote. That is four extra steps I have to take, and to me, that doesn't say I'm any better at communicating with my parents doing those extra four steps. (Jenny, interview, March 6, 2017)

Christina expressed her concern for attaining data for use in the TKES platform and taking away from her interactions and instruction with her kindergarten students. She stated:

Everything's data driven and that needs to be uploaded for TKES – you know, how did you get this group and why are these kids together and why are these kids not together and why are you teaching it this way? You have to use data, data, data and not what you know about your children. (Christina, interview, February 28, 2017)

In addition, Joy expressed that “TKES takes a tremendous amount of time; time that could be better spent preparing lessons and finding resources and doing some background for lessons and instead there's a lot of documentation that goes into TKES” (Interview, March 22, 2017).

Theme 4: Internalizing the evaluation process. The final theme to emerge was internalizing the evaluation process. This theme was explored using Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as it related to teachers' beliefs in their ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage their pedagogical practices in the classroom to optimize student learning. Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs hinge on experiences and the physiological and affective states of teachers (Bandura, 1977). Teachers judge their own self-efficacy by how they perceive their anxiety level in different situations. People with low self-efficacy doubt their abilities, shy away from difficult tasks, have low aspirations, have weak commitment to goals, and dwell on personal deficiencies (Bandura, 1994).

Performance accomplishments. Bandura (1977) stated that successful experiences will raise mastery expectations, and failures will lower them as failures decrease. A teacher will utilize successful pedagogical methods that increase student learning and lessen pedagogical experiences deemed a failure. The participants in this study were quick to point out that one

student test does not portray a student's capabilities, nor should one evaluation portray all that comprises a teacher. As of April 2017, teachers in Georgia received word that student growth scores will not be taken into account in the final TKES rating until 2021. This study has shown that teachers are still judged by student growth scores and these scores may be used to make personnel decisions (GADOE, 2017).

In October of 2016, one of the participants, Kay, was told in a meeting with her administrator that her student growth scores for social studies were the lowest of any fifth grade in the entire county. She learned she must change the way she teaches the subject, or she would not be teaching social studies next year. Kay stated, "I will not change how I have taught for 27 years, and I just don't care anymore" (Interview, February 8, 2017).

Christine dreaded her last summative evaluation after her first year in a new grade level. She acknowledged she did not have the training necessary to teach her new grade, and she felt she "was left to her own demise" (Christine, interview, February 28, 2017). She felt her team, and not administration, offered her the help she needed to make it through the year. Christine admitted that her self-confidence, self-worth, and level of self-efficacy was at an all-time low when faced with the demands and pressures of TKES when she felt little or no support from her administrators.

Verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion in this study referred to the feedback teachers received through the TKES process by administration. The TKES process allowed teachers several avenues to receive information about their performance and internalize the information. This is accomplished through the TKES platform (see Appendix I). Some of the participants expressed that the TKES platform and the summative evaluation with the administrator allowed for feedback that they truly took to heart and put into action. Christine stated, "I felt like it was a

positive thing. You know we talked about some things that I needed to do and the ways I could get help and the ways that they could help me for this year” (Interview, February 28, 2017).

Lisa, a newer teacher, valued the feedback given to her during her summative evaluation. She stated:

I really like that because they do give us very good constructive criticism and I’ve learned a lot about it – like I know and didn’t realize it until my first summative and other things throughout the years – like classroom management, I’m not stern enough. They’ve given me ideas on how I can do that, it’s not necessarily raising the voice but – I’ve learned that more and more through the years – how to handle that better and other things. (Lisa, interview, March 16, 2017)

Some of the participants felt that the summative evaluation process was just one more item to check off the list. Wanda stated, “It’s usually a quick 10-minute evaluation – hey, you did great. You know it seems there’s a generic comment, do you have any questions – no – okay great, thanks. Bye. It’s an in and out process, drive-thru” (Interview, March 12, 2017). Kay noted that contrary to what she was told this year about her lack of student growth, her summative evaluations were “they always tell me that everything’s great, you’re doing a great job, keep it up, you know, you always put the kids first” (Interview, February 8, 2017).

Jenny felt that the TKES format may not always allow for true and constructive feedback; however, the feedback in general nudged her to hone in on her challenges. She stated:

Most teachers are perfectionists and I think teachers in general are kind of perfectionists, and there can be all good things on there and one thing to improve on and you’re going to zoom into that one thing to improve on. You know, I think the way that TKES is set up

is a lot of standard feedback. Instead of true feelings of feedback, it's more of a menu the administrator has to follow. (Jenny, interview, March 6, 2017)

Vicarious experience. Vicarious experiences come from observing other teachers and their successful actions as well as actions deemed as a failure (Bandura, 1977). Vicarious experiences in this study came from the participants' observations and interactions with their colleagues as they related to the TKES process. The participants of this study informally created a community of colleagues that experienced TKES in the same way. While the interactions of the participants were not directly related to any evaluation section of the TKES, their common experience with the evaluation played a role in a relationship with their colleagues.

Some of the participants felt that TKES has united them and created a sense of camaraderie in positive and negative ways. Christine expressed that she and her teammates work together for consistency in meeting the standards. They shared ideas related to documentation for the TAPS portion of the TKES: "What are you doing that shows this standard? Help me, I don't have anything for this" (Christine, interview, February 28, 2017). However, she also stated that she and her peers have bonded over the dislike of the TKES instrument. Leslie also felt that TKES has created a sense of camaraderie in common negative feelings:

We talk about how stressful it is. We try to make sure that we are all on the same page when we do things or things are assigned to us to make sure that we fill out or that we accept those buttons and if they're not accepted and we don't get that green check, we have each other's back so to speak to make sure that we're not falling behind on certain things that we have to fill out. (Interview, January 27, 2017)

Kay stated, “Well, we find that we’re all in the same boat and we all hate it, basically!” (Interview, February 8, 2017). On another note, Jenny felt that TKES created an unhealthy atmosphere of jealousy and competition. Jenny stated:

I think it has created a little bit of maybe jealousy and competition but not in the sense of a positive way because I don’t see – I’ve never told anybody what I’ve gotten on my TKES – I think it will just rub people the wrong way. I think that it creates a negative atmosphere almost. People, if they get a three, they think they deserve a four – I’m not good enough and you know, it is very much an attitude. (Interview, March 6, 2017)

Physiological states. Bandura (1977) felt that people read their failures as a reflection of personal deficiency and those beliefs could hinder or enhance student motivation. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) stated self-efficacy is one dimension of self-perceived competence. Recent research utilizing the lens of Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory as it related to self-efficacy beliefs found that these beliefs heavily hinge on experiences and physiological and affective states of teachers (Brown, 2012). The data analysis for this study overwhelmingly revealed an emotional response from every participant regarding their physiological state as it related to TKES.

Christine stated that TKES is a “pit in the stomach” (Interview, February 28, 2017) while Jenny felt that TKES has caused her feelings of “stress, and trying to prove myself” (Interview, March 6, 2017). In addition, Joyce felt that TKES evoked feelings of “nervousness” and her belief that she must exhibit a “showcase lesson” for administrators (Interview, February 3, 2017). Kay felt that TKES was “demeaning – and can make me feel that everything I have accomplished up to this point doesn’t matter” (Interview, February 8, 2017). Leslie stated that TKES made her experience feelings of “stress and anxiety” (Interview, January 27, 2017).

Megan, a first-year teacher, felt that TKES “was intimidating” and that administrators were judging “everything I do” (Interview, March 15, 2017). Finally, Roy felt that TKES was a way to “micromanage all that he does in the classroom” (Interview, February 10, 2017).

It is obvious from this study that TKES evoked varied emotions from the participants. When asked what words came to mind when I mentioned the word “TKES”, the participants’ responses were “stress, nervousness, pressure, anxiousness, jumping through hoops, showcase, organization, demeaning, pony show, anxiety, not a fan, putting on a show, micromanage stressful, and hard to maneuver.” It is obvious from these responses that TKES evoked a myriad of physiological states and emotions that may have had an effect on the participants’ actions within the classroom.

Four of the participants in this study were recipients of a one-time Pay for Performance bonus in the summer of 2015, but only one of the participants was willing to express her feelings. Recipients of the bonus were not told about the bonus and found out by email from the county the day before the money deposited in their checking accounts. Administrators immediately sent an additional email to all recipients. In this email, recipients were told not to disclose this information to anyone in his or her schools so as not to cause any negative reactions. In addition, the recipients had not received any regarding calculations, when it was determined, or any other information. Jenny felt this was a lost opportunity for modeling what an effective teacher does, and stated:

I was kind of irritated. I thought the purpose of it was to say wow – look, you did everything you’re supposed to do, you did a good job, and I think you should be recognized for that good job, good work and I think if you were recognized for that work, then maybe more teachers would want to follow that model. But instead, it’s almost like

it's creating the best of the best to hide and the teachers that could benefit from that are just being pacified. (Interview, March 6, 2017)

Kathy stated, "The people that I work with and the people that I care about and respect and love have gone through emotional feelings related to TKES – and that can be devastating to your self-esteem as a teacher" (Interview, March 13, 2017).

Kay dealt with some emotions of failure as it related to student growth. She was a history major, taught social studies for 27 years, and has had some of the highest student test scores in the county from year to year. But, as stated in this study, her student growth was the lowest in the county and was told she would not be teaching Social Studies next year. At first, Kay was in disbelief, but replaced that with a feeling of helplessness and apathy. She retired at the end of the year and stated this incident was the nail in the coffin. She stated:

My administrator even said, we've seen you teach, we know you're doing a great job and I've had kids come out of social studies and say I hated it when I came in – I love it now or they go on to middle school and high school and come back and say I wish I had your class again – you made it fun, you made it relevant, and I made the connection. (Kay, interview, February 8, 2017)

Now, Kay was bitter and thought from then on, that the administration was out to get her. Kay was an example of how failures in performance accomplishments breed more failures as she admitted she had given up and did not care what she accomplished in her classroom the rest of the year.

Research Questions Results

One central and three guiding questions were developed in this study to identify the pedagogical influences of a value-added model of evaluation.

Central Research Question. How do elementary school teachers from a North Georgia school district describe their experiences with pedagogical influences from the value-added model of evaluation?

The central research question was answered by the analysis of the three guiding questions through data collected from the interviews, survey, and TKES documentation from participants. Ten of the 12 participants described their experience as a negative experience, while two of the participants described their experience as somewhat positive although time-consuming and redundant.

Guiding Question One. What influences from federal, state, local, and school level policies and procedures are influencing participants' pedagogical practices as they relate to the TKES?

The 12 participants expressed little knowledge of the origins or intent of the Georgia TKES process. Overwhelmingly, the local and school level policies and procedures most directly influenced the participants pedagogical practices as related to the TKES evaluation process. These influences correlated to administrative practices and participants' feelings of lack of objectivity by administrators. The data also revealed an inconsistency among administrative feedback and ratings throughout the four school sites as perceived by the participants. These inconsistencies were also evident in each of the school sites as experienced by the participants. Overwhelmingly, the participants were most affected by the scores of the TAPS portion of the TKES as they expressed feelings of anxiety and stress concerning administrator evaluations more than any other portion of the TKES process.

Guiding Question Two. What, if any, positive pedagogical influences have participants experienced with the VAM?

All participants expressed that the most positive pedagogical influences of the TKES was the necessity to use and analyze student data in all things related to planning and instruction. Only one participant felt that she utilized data assessment to drive her instruction before TKES; however, TKES encouraged other teachers to use data. Two of the 12 participants felt that TKES, while not the best instrument, may be an effective tool in holding teachers accountable for their performances.

Guiding Question Three. What, if any, negative pedagogical influences have participants experienced with the VAM?

All 12 of the participants expressed negative pedagogical influences of TKES as they relate to time-consuming and redundant tasks associated with the evaluation. The participants felt that the documentation required for TKES was an exhaustive process that took precious time from classroom planning and instruction, and was, in many cases repetitive in nature. The participants expressed concerns that TKES, in of itself, robbed them of time better spent on addressing the needs of students to obtain optimum student learning.

Guiding Question Four. How have the pedagogical influences of the TKES affected participants' feelings of self-efficacy?

Negative emotions related to TKES were evident in all 12 participants and expressed through feelings of stress, anxiety, and apathy. The participants expressed that these emotions correlated with their willingness or unwillingness to perform tasks related to their planning and instruction in the classroom. Ten of the 12 participants felt that the TKES experience negatively affected their self-efficacy. Many admitted that the negative emotions led to feelings of apathy.

Only two of the participants did not express an overall negative connotation towards TKES. It was interesting to note these two participants were both Pay for Performance bonus recipients.

Summary

For this study, 12 participants from three different levels of teaching experience provided information about their shared experience of being evaluated with the Georgia TKES evaluation system. Provided in this study are descriptions of all participants, as well as their experiences with TKES. Four major themes emerged from data analysis. The themes included: (a) understanding the evaluation process, (b) documenting the evaluation process, (c) manipulating the evaluation process, and (d) internalizing the evaluation process.

The central research and four guiding research questions were answered based on the four themes that emerged in this study. Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory provided the lens to explore the participants' experiences.

The central research question asked: How do elementary school teachers from a North Georgia school district describe their experiences with pedagogical influences from the value-added model of evaluation? The majority of the participants' experiences with TKES was a negative experience and created feelings of stress and anxiety. Two of the participants, while they also expressed feelings of stress and anxiety, felt that TKES may have some merit.

Guiding Question One asked: What influences from federal, state, local, and school level policies and procedures are influencing participants' pedagogical practices as they relate to the TKES? Overwhelmingly, participants felt that influences from the local and school level had the most influence on their pedagogical practices and possessed little to no knowledge of federal and

state policies that influence TKES. Participants perceived the influences of the local administrators as subjective as it related to feedback and evaluation scores.

Guiding Question Two asked: What, if any, positive pedagogical influences have participants experienced with the VAM? The data analysis revealed only one positive pedagogical influence of TKES expressed by the participants and that was the impact on the use of student data. All participants felt that TKES has required them to explore student test score data to guide instructional planning, assessment, and student instruction.

Guiding Question Three asked: What, if any, negative pedagogical challenges have participants experienced with the VAM? The challenges expressed by all the participants were related to frustrations involved with time-consuming and redundant documentation for the TKES process.

Guiding Question Four asked: How have the pedagogical influences of the TKES affected participants' feelings of self-efficacy? Ten of the 12 participants expressed feelings of doubt, anxiety, stress, and a need to perform. Student growth data, administrator feedback, and evaluation scores were causes of participants' feelings, or lack thereof, of self-worth and the desire to perform their classroom expectations to the best of their ability. Participants with Level IV ratings had high levels of self-efficacy. Those participants with lower level ratings had lower levels of self-efficacy and were affected the most by negative administrator feedback.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Twelve elementary school teachers evaluated using TKES, a value-added model of evaluation, provided data to study their lived experiences with the evaluation system. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. This study utilized the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory to explore the participants' experiences. This chapter summarizes and discusses the findings in light of relevant literature and theory. In addition, this chapter explains the implications, outlines the delimitations and limitation, and holds recommendations for any further research. This chapter concludes with a summary of this study.

Summary of Findings

Data were collected from 12 participants (11 females; one male) and analyzed for significant statements and themes. The participants' interviews, focus group survey, and TKES documentation identified themes within the context of the study. Four themes emerged from the data analysis and identified as the following: (a) understanding TKES, (b) implementing TKES, (c) documenting TKES, and (d) internalizing TKES. The themes are addressed through the central and guiding research questions of this study.

The Central Research Question asked how teachers described their experiences with pedagogical influences from the value-added model of evaluation. Overall, participants described their experiences with pedagogical influences of the TKES as a negative experience. The participants expressed many common experiences of stress, anxiety, frustration, and time-consuming actions. In addition, the participants expressed a mutual concern for lack of objectivity from

administrators and a futile attempt to receive top-rated scores, all of which may affect self-efficacy.

Guiding Question One asked what influences from federal, state, local, and school level policies and procedures are influencing participants' pedagogical practices as they relate to the TKES. All 12 of the participants expressed a lack of knowledge regarding origination and intent of the TKES. Only the local and school level of influence were factors in the participants' experiences with the TKES with little or no regard to state or federal influences in their daily lives as a teacher.

Guiding Question Two asked the participants if there were any positive pedagogical influences of the TKES. Two of the participants expressed only one positive of TKES as it related to the need for understanding and use of student data to direct planning and instruction. The other participants did not express any positive pedagogical influences of the TKES.

Guiding Question Three asked if there were any negative pedagogical influences that the participants experienced with the TKES. All participants expressed that the TKES required an excessive amount of time devoted to meeting the Performance Standards section of the TKES. The participants felt that the necessary documentation was superfluous and in most cases diverted time they felt better spent on lesson planning, student data analysis, and teaching.

Guiding Question Four asked how the pedagogical influences of the TKES affected participants' feelings of self-efficacy. This study revealed those participants' levels of self-efficacy were affected the most by those teachers who received evaluation scores less than a 4 rating in each of the TOPS performance standards. In addition, the participants felt student growth scores were not indicative of their teaching practices. This study also revealed that the longer the participants had been teaching, the less their self-efficacy was affected. However, it is important to note that apathy towards the TKES was apparent in the participants with the most teaching experience. In addition, the majority of the participants felt that administrators' lack of

objectivity played a role in their evaluation scores, thus affecting feelings of self-efficacy. It is interesting to note that the participants with the higher TKES evaluation scores did not feel that lack of administrator objectivity was an issue. In conclusion, the three participants who received the Pay for Performance bonus, the ones with the highest scores, had the least amount of negative feelings of self-efficacy.

Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the pedagogical influences of the value-added model of evaluation as experienced by elementary school teachers in a North Georgia suburban school district. This discussion addresses the relationship between the study's findings, the empirical research, and the theoretical framework that is the foundation of this study. The literature review connected to the four themes that were identified with the data analysis of this study. The four themes were (a) understanding TKES, (b) implementing TKES, (c) documenting TKES, and (d) internalizing TKES. The section below will support the identified themes as they related to the literature review.

Empirical Discussion and Findings

Understanding TKES. The data analysis of the interviews, survey, and TKES documentation revealed teachers' need for better understanding of the value-added model of evaluation. This study confirmed that there were no significant differences in teachers' perceptions of the new value-added model from the previous evaluation for teachers with longer periods of classroom experience (Bogart, 2013). However, the participants expressed a preference for the former evaluation format because of the ease of understanding of the expectations. Participants with little or no experience with TKES did not fully understand the expectations of TKES and merely followed the directions of their administrators and peers. This

lack of understanding was evident in their literal translations of interview and survey questions. This study corroborated Bogart's (2013) study that stated strategies used by teachers of a new evaluation system would most effectively be discovered after the third year of implementation. In addition, my study also found that stakeholder buy-in and feedback is paramount to a successful evaluation process (Balch & Koedel, 2014; Finnegan, 2013; Heaton, 2014; Leger, 2014; Mize, 2015). My study confirmed that a lack of participant buy-in has contributed to the lack of understanding of TKES and all its proponents. As Ehlert et al. (2014) noted, there is value in the recently developed teacher evaluations; however, teachers may be more likely to use these measures to improve their instruction if they are more comfortable with the development process of the evaluation. It is evident from this study that more understanding of the origins and intent of TKES by the participants may lead to acceptance and intent to improve student achievement.

Implementing TKES. The participants expressed a lack of understanding of TKES and its components as well as of the implementation process of the evaluation system. This study corroborated the findings of Hewitt (2015) when he suggested that educators need to increase experience with a value-added model. This study found that even after the third year of TKES implementation, participants were still unclear about how student growth was determined, what scores were used to determine student growth factor, and whether or not student growth played a part in their evaluation. This study agreed with the findings of Hansen (2013) who asserted that states currently only generate value-added estimates for teachers of reading or math in grades four through eight. This revelation means over half of VAM measures are driven by assessments of student learning that are partial and not effective at measuring: critical thinking, ability to

engage in rigorous academics, or students' social and emotional development (Grossman et al., 2013).

Many of the participants of this study feared that student behaviors might affect implementation of TKES. This research confirmed studies that students who cause classroom disruption and students with disabilities may unfairly affect teacher evaluation scores, and students with disabilities may also affect teacher evaluations (Horoi & Ost, 2015; Buzick & Jones, 2015). Participants expressed concern that special education students, ELL students, and students who decide they may want to be a disruption during a teacher evaluation could have unfair effects on teacher evaluations.

The participants in this study also expressed concern about the student make-up of their classrooms and their lack of choice in the student make-up of their classroom. The review of literature found that using student growth data comprised of state tests were poor predictors of learning for ELL, students identified with learning disabilities, and students living in poverty. The literature further insisted that the tests are fraught with inconsistencies (Jones et al., 2013; Papay, 2010). This study extends the literature related to teachers shying away from teaching the students with the most need. Many of the participants in this study were concerned that better teachers would not want a classroom of disruptive or special needs students for fear of lower student growth scores. They expressed fear that less effective teachers would be given students with the most needs.

Documenting TKES. The documentation process involved in TKES provided the most concern for participants in this study. My study confirmed that participants found the documentation process tedious, redundant, and overwhelming. Hill and Grossman (2013) suggested that the large number of teacher evaluations should be lessened for satisfactory

teachers and to concentrate time and resources to teachers demonstrating a need for crucial feedback. This suggestion was also made by many of the participants as they felt a need to lessen the amount of time and effort they felt was necessary to “prove themselves.” My study extended the research in that it discovered the participants with the highest TKES ratings, Level IV, considered this the most time-consuming aspect of TKES. These participants demonstrated that they worked an inordinate amount of time in the documentation component of the TKES as compared to those participants with scores of Level III.

Marzano (2012) insisted that current VAMs are missing references to the teacher-student relationship and classroom management, recognized in research as the most important aspects of effective teaching. He also argued that once a teacher reaches competence in student-teacher relationship and classroom management, it is only then that a teacher can have a positive influence on student achievement. This study corroborates Marzano’s beliefs in that the participants felt that the documentation required robbed teachers of time better-spent planning, instructing, and interacting with students. This study adds to the field of research pertaining to teacher evaluations in that participants with lower TKES ratings exhibited more frustration but less effort on their part in relation to documentation of the evaluation process.

Internalizing TKES. Internalizing TKES was the most personal and emotional aspect of this study. This study confirmed many of the studies related to self-efficacy in addition to the personality of the participants. This study corroborated a study conducted by Chandler (2015) on the potential influence a teacher’s personality has on student valued-added results and determined those teachers whose personalities were much like their students as measured by a personality inventory were more likely to see higher levels of student achievement. Those participants with a positive personality were more likely to exhibit higher TKES evaluation

scores. In addition, these participants also expressed higher self-efficacy levels than those with negative TKES experiences.

Marzano (2012) insisted that a teacher evaluation system should foster teacher learning and will differ greatly from one whose aim is to measure teacher competence. Hallinger et al. (2014) agreed with Marzano. They conducted an extensive meta-analysis of literature and found that “the current use of VAMs offers limited utility for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of an individual teaching working with a specific set of students (p. 17). Participants in my study exhibited that the current TKES evaluation system did not foster teacher learning. In fact, the participants felt that the measure of their teacher competence overshadowed any need for teacher learning. In addition, TKES contributed greatly to the participants’ self-worth or lack thereof in the classroom.

This study adds to the literature regarding teachers with low levels of self-efficacy. Participants found TKES to be “just one more thing” added to their long list of must-dos. The majority of the participants did not utilize TKES as a learning tool. Instead they saw it as an exercise in stress, anxiety, and an attempt to find fault in their teaching practices. This study illustrated that participants felt the negative aspects outweighed and ignored the positive aspects of their teaching practices.

Theoretical Discussion and Findings

Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) social ecological theory was evident in this study as it related to the participants’ understanding, implementation, documentation, and internalization of the TKES process. This study corroborated and extended the theory by showing how the relationship of the four subsystems affect the pedagogical practices of a teacher who is evaluated using a value-added model. These four subsystems, a) macrosystem, b) exosystem, c) mesosystem, and d)

microsystem, each proved as a factor in the participants' pedagogical influences and practices related to the TKES.

The participants were aware of the macrosystem subsystem and the public perception of teachers and the evaluation process. Participants, while aware of the exosystem subsystem, consisting of the local, state, and federal policies, had little knowledge as to the origins and intent of the TKES. The mesosystem, which includes the school and community influences, had the most effect on pedagogical practices of the participants. Administrators, perceived administrators' lack of objectivity, and the demands of documentation and implementation of the TKES process influenced participants. In my study, the microsystem, which included the teacher and students within the classroom, affected teachers' pedagogical influences as related to teachers' lack of control over student population, student and parent behaviors, and subsequently teacher self-efficacy. This study further confirms and extends Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social ecological theory. The influences of the four subsystems were evident on all aspects of the pedagogical influences of the TKES.

This study also confirmed and corroborated Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory regarding participants' perceived self-efficacy levels. Participants read their failures as a reflection of personal deficiency, and those beliefs hindered or enhanced teacher attitude and performance motivation (Bandura, 1977). This study further added to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory in that participants with higher scores were more willing to work to maintain those Level IV ratings. Brown (2012) related that self-efficacy beliefs hinge heavily on experiences and the physiological and affective states of teachers. The negative experiences of participants led to perceived lower levels of self-efficacy, which in turn led to stress, frustration, and too with some of the teachers in this study, a sense of apathy towards their work in the

classroom. While the foundation of Bronfenbrenner (1976) and Bandura (1977) provided the lens to conduct this study, it is now apparent that this study identified further implications to better the TKES process in the hopes of optimizing student learning.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

Bronfenbrenner's social cognitive theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1976) social cognitive theory was utilized to determine teachers' interactions within his/her educational environments that may affect participants' pedagogical practices. The phenomenon of being evaluated with the TKES system under the auspices of the four subsystems in Bronfenbrenner's theory reveals the following:

1. The macrosystem – The public's perceptions of teachers in the United States is at an all-time low. Social media and media in general fixate on the negative aspects of all things related to public education. It is the burden of public educators to prove themselves in the public eye. Strong, caring, empathetic teachers can accomplish this by continuing the battle to do what is best for students and not for themselves to “look good” on an evaluation.
2. The exosystem - The state of Georgia has missed the opportunity for stakeholder buy-in, so it is necessary for teachers to understand all aspects of the TKES process. The lack of understanding exhibited by the participants in this study has created confusion, frustration, and emotions of apathy. It would benefit all concerned to ensure that teachers have complete and total understanding of all the components of TKES, especially as related to how student growth is measured and determined.

- School districts should institute measures that would identify misunderstandings and confusion on the part of teachers.
3. The mesosystem – The school administrators must work to eliminate bias and personal preference in their evaluations of teachers. It is also necessary for administrators to provide consistent and critical feedback, which in turn will result in optimum student achievement. In addition, administrators should spend more nonevaluative time in classrooms to eliminate stressors and the one time “snapshot” of teachers.
 4. The microsystem – It is important that student disabilities, home life, parental involvement, and motivation are taken into consideration regarding the TKES evaluation. Equally important is the need to encourage the best teachers to be willing to teach the most difficult-to-reach students. The TKES evaluation at the present time does not reward those teachers who are willing to work with the students who may show the least amount of growth. TKES may eventually discourage the best teachers from working with that population of students.

Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Equally important in this study was Bandura’s (1976) social cognitive theory as it related to teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy. Participants found it difficult to separate negative experiences related to student growth, feedback, and TKES scores from their pedagogical actions. It is important teachers believe in themselves to be able to provide an atmosphere of optimum student learning. This study provided an insight into ways to improve self-efficacy of teachers:

1. Performance accomplishments – Teachers should utilize not only previous student data but also, to correlate ongoing student data to reflect on planning and instruction in the classroom. Use of common formative assessments to check for understanding will allow teachers to optimize student learning. Higher levels of student achievement will in turn,

- increase levels of teacher self-efficacy and teachers' willingness to utilize pedagogical practices to enhance student learning.
2. Verbal persuasion – Administrator feedback is one aspect that is crucial to teachers' levels of self-efficacy. Positive and negative feedback that will enhance a teacher's performance is imperative for providing guidance in a teacher's actions. Feedback should also be given on a continuous and informal basis, not only for evaluation purposes. This feedback should be given in a nonthreatening environment where the goal is to enhance student learning and not be punitive in nature.
 3. Vicarious experience – The pedagogical actions of teachers receiving the highest level ratings on TKES should be shared with those teachers needing additional help. Concealing the efforts of top-rated teachers is not only detrimental to those teachers, but it is also robbing teachers who could learn the most from an opportunity to enhance their teaching. In addition, it is necessary for administrators to foster an atmosphere of collaboration among teachers and not one of favoritism or competition.
 4. Physiological states – Because public educators feel that they are constantly be scrutinized by the public, it is important that teachers do not feel threatened by the TKES evaluation. Feelings of stress, anxiety, frustration, dread, and a “pit in the stomach” do not transfer well to the classroom. It is important that the district and administrators relieve teachers' negative feelings towards TKES. Teachers should welcome TKES as an opportunity to grow and enrich the lives of their students and not perceive it as something to fear.

Empirical Implications

This study does confirm that teacher influence on the evaluation development could change

stakeholder buy-in and possibly the context of teacher evaluation. Harris and Herrington (2015) suggested that the use of teacher value-added measures could have greater influence on classroom instruction, “for good and for ill,” than perhaps any single reform in decades. Ten of the participants felt that TKES had an influence on classroom instruction for ill. It is important in this time of scrutiny that we make attempts for teachers to see TKES for the positive influence it can have on student achievement. This feat can be accomplished by further educating teachers on all aspects of the TKES process.

Further empirical implications of this study relate to a need to continue to work to eliminate bias in value-added model evaluations. The literature review of this study suggested that all commonly estimated models are biased to some degree. In addition, teacher evaluation assessments utilizing student growth can vary from state to state, or even from district to district (Popham, 2013; Sass et al., 2014).

Practical Implications

The TOPS ratings of the four schools and data analysis of this study suggest that there is a definite need for professional development in the areas of differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, assessment uses, and academically challenging environment. This school district will now be offering less professional development as it is no longer needed for teacher recertification. Georgia teacher recertification now requires work in a PLC. Shober (2012) noted that hours of professional development could no longer assure improvement in student success, and many even doubted that traditional teacher certification is an indicator of instructional quality. However, it is clear from this study that the need for additional professional development or work in PLCs exists in these four areas of performance standards.

Since the teachers in each school drive PLCs, the PLCs could emphasize the three main components: (a) a relentless focus on learning for all students, (b) a collaborative culture and

collective effort to support student and adult learning, and (c) a results orientation to improve practice and to drive continuous improvement (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). The PLCs could seek to understand better and implement assessment uses and strategies. The PLC movement lended itself to a platform for collaboration that could overflow into the TKES evaluation system where teachers would be more willing to share their successes and, therefore, benefit all involved: administrators, teachers, and, ultimately, students.

In addition, in June 2017, I was afforded an opportunity to study the 2016-2017 TOPS ratings for all 40 schools for Keller County (pseudonym). Over half (22) of the schools reported that 10% or less of their teachers received Level IV ratings for assessment strategies and assessment uses. The Keller school district should address this apparent need for additional professional development to ensure student learning and success.

Delimitations and Limitations

The focus of this phenomenology was to study the pedagogical influences of a value-added model of evaluation through the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in a north Georgia school district (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The study sought to provide a rich and descriptive voice of the elementary school teachers who share the phenomenon: being evaluated using the Georgia TKES evaluation system. The delimitations in this study included the use of elementary school teachers who are over the age of 18 and who teach in one particular north Georgia school district. I chose this district because it historically scores above the state average on the state-mandated testing (Georgia Milestones) for elementary school students.

Although the population of the participants of this study correlated to that of the district, gender and race may limit the results of this study. Further limitations may include (a) researcher skills, (b) accurate descriptions of the phenomenon, (c) data analysis, and (d) potential biases. There is one additional factor to consider in that I was an educator at one of the sites

used for data collection. I made a conscientious effort to eliminate any bias as revealed in the journaling and memoing. I also utilized member checking throughout the focus group, pilot testing, and peer review to minimize any bias.

Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for further research is a quantitative as well as qualitative study to focus solely on teachers receiving the highest TKES ratings in order to identify more of the positive pedagogical influences and fewer of the negative pedagogical influences. In determining more of what is working for teachers with high ratings, the implications could have greater influences on all stakeholders of value-added model teacher evaluations. At times in this study, 10 of the participants felt that this was their opportunity to vent and discuss all the negative aspects and emotions related to TKES. Future research that involved only those teachers with exemplary ratings could identify positive influences that would benefit student learning.

Another recommendation would be to replicate this study in a school district with test scores below the state average. This suggestion for a study might identify further needs of teachers to be addressed to ensure optimum student success. The research could identify a lack of understanding, commitment, or fault with administrator evaluations that have a direct correlation to student achievement. This study only analyzed data from a school district with scores above state averages, which may have a bearing on the data collected.

A final recommendation is a study concerning the objectivity and subjectivity of administrators' feedback, evaluations, and attitudes towards teachers regarding the TKES. Overwhelmingly, the participants in this study had opinions regarding their administrators' objectivity and the influence it may have on participants' evaluations and scores.

Summary

Although I anticipated some of the results of this study, there were many that surprised me. I

did not anticipate the power of the Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System over the participants' feeling of self-efficacy. TKES brought joy to just a few, but heartache and feelings of inadequacy to many. Just the mention of the word, TKES, brought forth moans, groans, sarcastic laughter, a smile or two, and a look of confusion by some. Little did I know that TKES wielded such a myriad of emotions over a highly educated group of professionals.

The positive pedagogical influences of TKES are steps in the right direction as evidenced by this study and the literature that purports the use of student data for planning and instruction. However, this study indicated that not only the participants in this study, but teachers at every one of the school sites, need additional instruction and professional development in assessment strategies and uses. Every participant in this study has scored a Level II or III on assessment uses and strategies. This fact in itself should prompt the district to provide additional and ongoing professional development. This professional development, in turn, would positively affect student learning and achievement.

The other important take-away from this study was that a value-added model evaluation, such as TKES, could have a detrimental effect on teachers' feelings of self-efficacy. It is important that teachers embrace the evaluation process as a means to learn and to grow and not a means to find fault. Non-threatening conversation and ongoing constructive feedback from administrators could lessen feelings of inadequacy, stress, and anxiety. It is also apparent that administrators must strive to be objective in all evaluations of teachers. This study has shown the administrators should work with the teachers and not against them to optimize student learning. This study could prove to illuminate teachers' feelings concerning TKES to administrators and thereby encourage a different school environment related to the TKES process.

Chad Aldeman (2017), a policy member of the No Child Left Behind Waiver Initiative and a guiding force in spreading the Teacher Incentive Fund, admitted that the new evaluation systems have done little to identify teachers as below proficient. He stated:

We should take to heart the adage that the federal government can make states and districts do something, but it can't make them do those things well. And they should be ambitious in their aspirations for educational improvement in the United States but humble about the potential unintended consequences of their work. (Aldeman, 2017, p. 68)

It is imperative to do things well for the children in the care of public educators. It is equally important that federal bureaucrats do things well for the teachers, the administrators, and all those who have an influence on students in the classroom.

Epilogue

How do we truly measure the quality of a teacher? Can it truly be done in 100 minutes of administrator evaluations and two days of student testing? TKES and every other VAM evaluation cannot measure empathy, compassion, or the relationships teachers form with their students.

It was God's will that the sermon in church today was centered on heroes, and I spent the hour thinking about this dissertation and all the participants. All who choose to become a teacher enter the field to be someone's hero. We have all heard the slogan, "I teach. What is your superpower?" Our superpowers involve compassion, understanding, and belief in our students; none of these measurable with an evaluation tool. Our students measure us in their eyes. We are their heroes. I can think of no other profession that allows one to be a hero to so many. Extraordinary faith makes heroes out of ordinary people. "And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:1, NIV). "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness," (James 1:2-4, NIV).

My prayer is that all teachers persevere and hold steadfast.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 24, 2017

Kyle Shugart

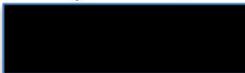
IRB Approval 2717.012417: The Pedagogical Influences of a Value-Added Model of Evaluation System from the Perspectives of Elementary School Teachers in North Georgia: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Kyle Shugart,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix B: Permission to Conduct Research in District



DR. BRIAN V. HIGHTOWER
Superintendent of Schools

KYLA CROMER
School Board Chair

PATSY JORDAN
School Board Vice-Chair

MIKE CHAPMAN

JOHN HARMON

CLARK MENARD

KELLY POOLE

ROBERT RECHSTEINER

20 January 2017

Kyle Shugart

Dear Kyle Shugart,

After careful review of your research proposal *THE PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCES OF A VALUE-ADDED MODEL OF EVALUATION SYSTEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NORTH GEORGIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY*, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at the following [REDACTED]

Data must be provided to the researcher stripped of any identifying information, and a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication must be sent to the Office of Student Assessment, [REDACTED] County School District.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Director, Office of Student Assessment



Appendix C: Permission to Conduct Research in School

1

CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Name Kyle K. Shugart

CCSD Employee: Yes No If *NO*, list employer: _____

College/University Supervising Activities Liberty University

Degree in Progress(Level/Area) Doctor of Education (Ed.D)

Locations for Data Collection [Redacted] Elementary Schools

Date of Request 11/8/16 Requested Date(s) for Data Collection January - April, 2017

Professor's Name Dr. Fred Milacci Phone #/Email fmilacci@liberty.edu

Include with this request:

- A letter from your supervising professor on college or university letterhead indicating support for your research and his/her confirmation of data collection validity.
- A brief summary of the issues being researched and the type of data collection you are requesting to conduct. (Page 2 of this form).
- Method of data collection assessment (Page 2 of this form); Number of respondents, etc.
- Copy of interview questions, surveys, etc. that will be used. If student data/videos are used, a notarized "Release of Educational Records for Research Purposes Confidentiality Statement" and a copy of a letter requesting parent permission to use the data will be required.

I, Kyle K. Shugart do hereby submit to **not** hold the Cherokee County School System liable for any findings, or commentary involved in this research. I understand that without the express written permission of the Cherokee County Board of Education, I am not authorized to conduct any data collection involving system employees or students and/or any other information that is protected by Federal or State Law. **Furthermore, a copy of all findings and data collection instruments will be made available to the Cherokee County Board of Education. All research is to be sent to the Office of Assessment upon completion of the project.**

Signature [Redacted] Date 1-5-17

Signature of Principal (if applicable) [Redacted] Date 1-11-17

Send completed form to: Dr. Jennifer Swain, Director, Office of Assessment, ESA, Building G

Staff Use Only

[Redacted] Permission given Permission denied

Conditions of Permission: _____ Denied due to: _____

Appendix D: Invitation Email sent to possible Participants

Elementary School Teacher
[REDACTED]

Dear Teacher,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the perspectives of elementary school teachers who are evaluated using a value-added model to identify positive influences on teachers' classroom pedagogy, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older and an elementary school teacher in [REDACTED] County, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. It should take approximately 1 hour for you to complete the procedure listed. I will also ask you to be a part of an online focus group after I have completed preliminary data analysis for you to look over my findings. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

To participate please read the attached consent document and email me at [kyle.shugart@\[REDACTED\].k12.ga.us](mailto:kyle.shugart@[REDACTED].k12.ga.us) to indicate your willingness to become a participant in this study. I will then contact you to schedule the interview.

The consent document contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it. I will give you the consent document at the interview for your consent and signature. I will also give you a copy of the consent document.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a \$50.00 gift card to thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Kyle K. Shugart

Appendix E: Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
1/24/2017 to 1/23/2018
Protocol # 2717.012417

CONSENT FORM

THE PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCES OF A VALUE-ADDED MODEL OF EVALUATION
SYSTEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN
NORTH GEORGIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Kyle K. Shugart
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the pedagogical influences of a value-added model of evaluation. You were selected as a possible participant because you are over 21 years of age, are an employee of _____, and are evaluated using the Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Kyle K. Shugart, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine how elementary school teachers from a North Georgia school district describe their experiences with pedagogical influences from the value-added model of evaluation.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an approximately one-hour-long interview that will be recorded. Responses will be kept confidential.
2. Participate in an approximately one-hour-long confidential, online focus group discussion board to determine the accuracy of the researcher's data analysis and to respond to the other participants' answers and comments.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

There are no benefits to participating in this study.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study with a \$50.00 gift card.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be securely stored in a password-protected computer and only the researcher will have access to the records. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each participant and kept in a notebook in a separate locked file cabinet. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a separate locked file cabinet and only the researcher will have access to this data. All audio recordings, transcripts, and data will be disposed of after three years. Participants will utilize pseudonyms when participating in the online focus group discussion board to ensure confidentiality.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
1/24/2017 to 1/23/2018
Protocol # 2717.012417

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or . If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Kyle K. Shugart. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 404-580-0764 or kyle.shugart@cherokee.k12.ga.us. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Rick Bragg, us.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix F: Focus Group Survey

TKES Focus Group Survey

TKES Data Analysis Survey

Participants,

I have enjoyed reading, rereading, and rereading your twelve interview transcripts and have determined four themes for my dissertation.

1. Understanding the evaluation process focuses on your understanding and/or confusion concerning the origins of TKES, percentages used for the elements of TKES, and precisely what is being measured.
2. Implementing the evaluation process focuses on the positive and negative influences of TKES. The data revealed that the two main positive effects are that teachers are much more aware of the importance of collecting and using data to drive instruction. This is evident in teachers' work with PLCs. In addition, participants are also aware of and attempt to create differentiated learning experiences for their students. One of the main negatives is that participants may be aware when administrators are coming for an evaluation, may not be their true self while administrators are in the classroom, and that many (not all) teachers will create a showcase lesson to be utilized for the purpose of evaluation.
3. Documenting the evaluation process, focuses on the amount of time teachers must spend in keeping data, OneNote notebook, and documentation to prove that you are fulfilling the needs of the ten performance standards.
4. Internalizing the evaluation process, focuses on what teachers believe about themselves and their abilities to perform their tasks when faced with successes, failures, expectations, and everyday life in the classroom.

At your earliest convenience, would you mind completing the survey and return to me, so that I may finish this long journey.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Respectfully,
Kyle K. Shugart

1. After reading and analyzing all the data from the interviews I have determined four main themes:
a) **Understanding the evaluation process**, b) **Implementing the evaluation process**, c) **Documenting the evaluation process**, and d) **Internalizing the evaluation process**.

I agree with these four main themes.

I do not agree with these four main themes.

I think you should add/or delete the following themes:

2. In regards to the first theme, **understanding the evaluation process**, data revealed that most participants did not know the origins of TKES, nor were they positive how student growth was to be calculated or used in terms of the TKES process.

I agree with this statement.

I do not agree with this statement.

I would like to add...

3. In regards to the second theme, **implementing the process**, the data revealed that the most positive pedagogical influences are teachers awareness and use of data for planning and instruction and the use of differentiated strategies. Negatives revealed are based on what most called a "dog and pony" show, not being their true self during an evaluation, feelings of anxiousness and stress.

I agree with this statement.

I do not agree with this statement.

I would like to add..

4. In regards to the third theme, **documenting the evaluation process**, focuses on the time involved with creating data, and documenting either in a notebook, or OneNote, necessary information for the TKES. Participants felt documentation could be redundant and took away from time better spent teaching and planning lessons for optimum student achievement.

I agree with this statement.

I do not agree with this statement.

I would like to add

5. The final theme, **internalizing the evaluation process** is based on teacher self-efficacy.

The data reveals that most teachers do internalize the evaluations of their administrators.

Naturally, participants expressed feelings of pride when receiving good scores and disappointment when they received lower scores which may affect future efforts of the teachers.

I agree with these statements.

I do not agree with these statement.

I would like to add

6. All twelve of the participants feel that accountability is a necessity in public education.

Most of the participants did not feel TKES as it is utilized today, is the most effective evaluation to lead to **optimum student success**.

I agree with the statement.

I disagree with this statement.

I would like to add

7. In finality, the teachers feel that TKES does have some merit and has brought the need for data reflection to light. In that respect, TKES may have a positive effect on student achievement.

I agree with this statement.

I do not agree with this statement.

I would like to add

Appendix G: Researcher's Reflections

February 5, 2017

I have heard such rumblings over the years concerning TKES. I participated in the pilot study and was encouraged to see that TKES was similar to obtaining national boards. It was a great deal of work, but I love a challenge, organizing, and proving what I do everyday in the classroom. As I begin my interviews this week, I am curious as to the experiences of all these teachers. Perhaps I will even find some other teachers who received the pay for performance. It will be interesting to hear what they felt about that experience. I will not prejudge these participants and truly do not have a bias, although I fear many will.

February 14, 2017 School C

Because I have not had any negative emotions or evaluations by administrators involving TKES it is hard for me to internalize such negative emotions by the participants at this school.

Do teachers with lower scores feel undue stress? Do they internalize the lower scores as failures thus affecting their levels of self-efficacy?

TAKE NOTE of the following!

- 1) participants attitudes as related to what they deem successes and failures
- 2) correlations of attitudes of participants within the same school
- 3) do administrators have that much to do with attitude?
- 4) watch for participants at each school – do they see administrators as subjective or objective?
- 5) any mention of pay for performance, only one teacher at this school, the others did not say anything about it, so I don't know if they even knew about it
- 6) notice the experience levels at the other schools and how that may affect their answers/attitude

Appendix H: Field Notes

School C

Feb. 6 - Kay! Waw! Very bitter about TKES and student growth - Going to retire this year - Meeting with admin in Oct - scores lowest in county - has to change or not teaching that next year - straw that broke camel's back! Self-efficacy affected - apathy - said doesn't care! Negative vibes! Admin - out to get her - some, not others

Feb. 8 Roy - same school as Kay - Negative in his life - wanted to save - African Amer - his job - charged him - Admin + teachers - out to get him - Prove himself - TKES - show - admin have favorites - obviously he is not one - Negative!

Feb 13 Christina - moved against will - also - admin - subjective - Not as negative as other two - but younger - less exp. - ?? Perhaps - why? Eval depends on who is doing it - Only knows TKES - no comparison

Appendix I: TKES Documentation

Component Rating for [REDACTED]

Date Printed: 04/17/2017

Component Rating

1.

Professional Growth Rating (20%)
District determines rubric for Professional Growth.

Professional Growth Rating (20%)
Level III

Student Growth Rating (30%)

SGP Grades and Courses
(External Import)
Unofficial student growth data results

SGP Mean	48.34
SGP Rating	Level III

If SGP rating is not present, indicate Non-SGP rating below.
If SGP rating is present, click SGP Applied in **twp** drop down menus below.

Non-SGP Grades and Courses
SGP Applied

Measure utilized for Non-SGP Grades and Courses
SGP Applied

Comments must be provided if measure used is Other.

Comments

Page 1 of 1