UNDERSTANDING HOW PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' TRUST PERCEPTIONS AFFECT INNOVATION IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

Catherine Nichole Hampton

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand organizational distrust that led to a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers at five elementary schools in the Knight School System. The theory guiding this study is Homans's social exchange theory as it applies to organizational trust. The central research question explored how public elementary school teachers' organizational trust perceptions affect innovative educational practices. This multiple case study explored 10 teachers' experiences in three elementary schools within Georgia. Data were collected from individual interviews, focus group interviews, and journal prompts. This study used qualitative data analysis methods to understand how elementary school teachers' perceived organizational trust influenced their ability to implement innovative curricula, pedagogy, and digital practices. This involved theorizing and integrating the data to understand teachers' lived experiences regarding organizational trust. Data analysis revealed themes from interviews, focus groups, and journal entries and was based on the work of Yin. Two themes and nine subthemes emerged. These themes corresponded to the theoretical framework of the study. This study did not confirm that elementary school administrators were the barrier to innovation. The barrier revealed by participants' negative organizational trust experiences occurring on grade-level teams, as that was where most of their time was invested in social exchanges.

Keywords: organizational trust, distributed leadership, innovation, elementary school.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, who supported and cheered me on to the finish line. "No," was never in her vocabulary...only, "What can I do to help?"

To my husband, who said, “Yes!” when I shared a secret dream and traveled the second mile with me.

To my son Coulter, who first taught me how to be brave despite my darkest fears.

To my children: Annika, Tinley, Lexie, Toby, and Willow. May you pursue knowledge throughout your lives and dream big!.

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List of Abbreviations

CEO- Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19- Corona Virus Disease 2019

ELA- English Language Arts

ESEA- Elementary and Secondary Education Act

LSS- Lead Support Specialist

PLC- Professional Learning Community

STEAM- Science Technology Engineering Art and Math

STEM- Science Technology Engineering and Math

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

It has been conjectured that change is the one constant in our existence. If that is true, why do people resist it? With more available educational innovations, educators hesitate to implement new technologies and methods in their teaching practices (Averill & Major, 2020). To understand this phenomenon, Chapter One discusses the background necessary to understand the situational context. Explaining events in American education which led to current practices frames the historical context of this issue. The social context describes the social innovations that led to educational constructs in the past and present. George Homans' social exchange theory leads to a discussion of organizational trust and builds the study on an established foundation. The problem and purpose statement defines the intent of this study. The research questions guide the interview, focus group, and journal prompt inquiries. The research questions consists of a central research question and three sub-questions. Definitions provide a universal understanding of key terms for all readers.

Background

The background section summarizes the most relevant literature and provides the phenomenon's historical, social, and theoretical background. The educational development of American education is relevant to the issue of rapid innovation. Society has driven this rapid innovation with many digital innovations that have entered the educational sector. The literature on innovation is rich. However, it does not specifically discuss elementary-level educators.

Historical Context

The purpose of education is to teach children skills and expose them to cultural knowledge so they can be prepared for adult society (Urban et al., 2019). In the context of a

national timeline, American education evolved its educational practices slowly (Genelza, 2020). From the colonization of America in 1607 to the first major educational reform in 1820 with the founding of the common school, and now to the current day, societal changes drove educational reform (Schroder & Kruger, 2019). The Common School Movement promoted public education paid for by the public for the good of all citizens and represents a firm movement away from privately funded education (Persky, 2015).

From 1865 to 1910, another revolution in education occurred as a steady stream of immigrants came to live in America. The country became more urban, and society moved to a more industrial age. High schools became common, and school attendance mandatory (Keppel, 1972). In 1867, the Lanham Act provided loans to construct educational facilities (Keppel, 1972; Porter, 1951). John Dewey became a prominent academic voice and advocated for child-centered educational practices (Keppel, 1972; Sikandar, 2016).

Equality in education was the major innovative force from 1960-1980 (Alexander, 1986). The Equality of Education Opportunity Study (Coleman Report) considered educational access for children of various races, religions, and national origins (Coleman, 1968). Before this study, the primary determiner of school success was the amount of money spent per student. After the Coleman Report, importance was placed on student learning outcomes such as long-term employability and future earning potential (Atteberry & McEachin, 2020; Hill, 2017; Kantor & Lowe, 2017). This led to busing children of color to white areas, then white flight from the area (Rivkin, 2016). President Johnson began considering instituting federally funded educational programs in response to this report (Glickman et al., 2015).

Education was again radically changed in the 1970s with the passing of the Serrano v. Priest California Supreme Court Case, which determined all schools must spend the same

amount for every pupil (Hill et al., 2021). Additionally, in 1975 Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children, ensured all children would be educated regardless of their mental or physical disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible (Kauffman et al., 2022).

In 1983, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform by the National Commission on Excellence in Education was released and called for adopting standards, more rigorous requirements, and changes in teacher preparation and pay (National Committee on Excellence in Education, 1983). Governors willingly negotiated with educators for the first time, trading regulation for results (Alexander, 1986). After a national Governors Conference in 1989, attendees backed seven significant proposals. First, teachers needed a fair and affordable career ladder. Leadership programs were created and implemented. Parental choice of where a child could attend school became a factor in determining where students attend. Report cards that illustrated the progress of schools, or lack thereof, would be made public for review, and those not meeting standards considered failing. School readiness must be a priority. Additional training was needed to improve technology usage. And finally, colleges must assess students' learning (Alexander, 1986). The Nation at Risk Report changed the direction of education and moved toward a business model of accountability previously not seen on a national level.

The twenty-first century introduced governmental legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (an updated version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) to the U.S. educational system. The 1965 version created Title 1 funding and officially inserted the federal government into K-12 educational policy (Simpson et al., 2004). President G. W. Bush sought to create an internationally competitive workforce by focusing on English language learners, special education students, and minorities (Staton & Peeples, 2000). Unsuccessful schools would lose Title 1 funding (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000). This legislation paved the way

for the third version of ESEA and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, signed by President Obama. This version continues to ensure protection for vulnerable students, requires high standards, shares information with stakeholders, supports local innovations, encourages preschool programs, and sustains accountability for low-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Social Context

The social context of organizational trust in education centered around introducing educational accountability. Contemporary academic responsibility began in 1965 with the ESEA and continues today (Alexander, 1986). Education transitioned from a slow-moving institution under state leadership to a federal agency following a business accountability model (Hunt & Stanton, 1996; Schwartz & Robinson, 2000). For most of America's educational history, trusted teachers educated the nation. However, twenty-first-century globalization was outpacing education, and America was falling behind (Hunt & Stanton, 1996; National Committee on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Underperforming schools impacted the workforce and America's position as a global power. School accountability showed where the deficits occurred and who was responsible. Business models detail how accountability influences employee behaviors, cultural understandings, and social dynamics (Brees et al., 2020). While educational and governmental efforts created accountability, the school model operated in a construct that did not have consistent input and output.

Not every student gave their best effort or showed yearlong growth on one test. Judging a school within this business model was equivalent to measuring a retail business on one day's sales. Furthermore, if the goal was to educate every student, educators should not be forced to

participate in a competitive marketplace where some schools are winners and others are losers.

When accountability emerged, organizational trust became an issue for educators and institutions as data showed they failed to reach preset standards. The fallout from being labeled a failing school was a loss of confidence in the teachers in that institution (Ballantine et al., 2018). Educators in failing schools were labeled failures due to association, regardless of their effort or expertise. One innovative solution to this problem was developing high-performance educational teams. Defining trust and trust barriers related to innovation can assist future leaders who wish to create high-performance teams open to innovation.

Theoretical Context

Bernard Bass' (1985) theory of transformational leadership communicates the idea of leadership as a collaborative practice rather than focusing on a few individuals in positions of power or authority. This theory promotes trust behaviors which are necessary for innovation to succeed because it enables knowledge transfer and encourages risk-taking behaviors (Xavier Molina-Morales et al., 2011). Educational research about organizational trust has primarily been done in the upper grades and college levels (Serrano-Archimi et al., 2018). Trust studied in these settings have shown that a lack of trust impacted attitudes, knowledge sharing, cooperation, and productivity (Hung et al., 2021). Faculty trust was directly correlated with student achievement (Schwabsky, 2019). This research will extend knowledge regarding organizational trust to teachers in elementary school settings.

Problem Statement

The problem is that K-12 educators distrust leadership resulting in a lack of innovative support. Societal change drove educational innovations that required a workforce competent in new skills and mindsets (Lyons & Bandura, 2020). The world economy, driven by digital

innovations, resulted in the “fourth industrial revolution” (Spottl &Windelband, 2020, p. 29). Individual educators accept or reject innovations based on their level of trust within an organization (Rahmadi, 2021). Educators who experienced a strong sense of organizational trust felt emotionally safe and willingly exhibited ownership, effort, and problem-solving behaviors (Clark, 2020). Educators and administrators demonstrating trusting relationships encouraged risk-taking behaviors such as knowledge exchange and co-worker empowerment (Da’as, 2020).

Societal change drives innovation. Since the early 1980s, there has been a push to move the American educational system toward accountability and rapid innovation (Alexander, 1986). This movement changed education in America by introducing a business model into an educational institution construct. The connection between education and the economy made educational institutions vulnerable to interventions through government funding (Tymms & Peters, 2020). There was a great deal of research regarding trust and innovation in middle school and beyond, but the K-5 setting received little attention. This study seeks to illuminate why K-5 public school teachers find innovation challenging based on their past experiences with organizational trust.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand leadership distrust that creates a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers in the Knight School District. Organizational trust was defined as the teachers’ confidence in the school administration’s actions and an employee’s vulnerability to the actions of their employer based on positive expectations regarding employer intent (Serrano Archimi et al., 2018). Educational innovation was understood as new ideas or practices in curriculum, pedagogy, and technology.

Significance of the Study

There was a considerable amount of research on education innovation and organizational trust. However, little research was conducted specifically on K-5 public schools. By analyzing organizational trust and its effects on innovative support in K-5 public schools, this study explored the connection between trust and innovation in the elementary setting. The study expanded upon current literature when combined with George Homans' social exchange theory (1958).

Theoretical

The theoretical significance of this study was the expansion of George Homans' social exchange theory (1958). This study aided educators by better understanding how all human interactions influence our trust perceptions of other individuals. The results of this study helped further research on innovation and organizational trust. This study revealed important trust behaviors elementary public schools can implement to create greater confidence and willingness to innovate.

Empirical

The empirical significance of this study was its contribution to current literature. This multiple case study added to the existing literature a better understanding of how leadership distrust can affect innovative practices. Previous research identified a greater sense of organizational trust as a predictor of success for high-performance teams (Serrano Archimi et al., 2018) but was limited to upper grades and college-level examinations. There was little to no research in grades K-5. Because of this deficit, research was warranted and would help fill a gap in the literature.

Practical

The practical significance of this study was its ability to initiate conversations regarding a lack of innovative support based on a lack of leadership trust. This study aided in identifying how to prevent a deficit of organizational trust and how to empower employees to support innovative efforts. Identifying strategies and understanding the 'why' and 'how' behind corporate distrust aided leaders in creating trusting and innovative cultures (Bass,1985).

Research Questions

This study utilizes research questions to analyze the lived experiences of educators in the K-5 public education setting who have used innovative practices. Because participants have been chosen based on their negative experiences, I hope to glean the root causes of innovative failure. These questions focus on three main areas of innovation: digital innovation, curriculum innovation, and methodological innovation.

Central Research Question

How do public elementary school teachers' organizational trust perceptions affect innovative educational practices?

Sub-Question One

How do organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to implement curriculum innovations?

Sub-Question Two

How do organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt digital innovations?

Sub-Question Three

How do organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt methodological innovations?

Definitions

1. *Curriculum Innovation* – a teacher's ability to use a new program according to changes required at various stages of development (Gonta & Tripon, 2020)
2. *Digital Innovation* – new combinations of digital and physical components to create novel products to be utilized in an educational setting (Andersen, 2020; Hund et al., 2021)
3. *Methodological Innovation* – a teacher's ability to use resources not usually found in the classroom and that are interesting to the students (Pozo Sánchez et al., 2020)
4. *Organizational Trust* – an employee's vulnerability to the actions of their employer based on positive expectations regarding employer intent (Serrano Archimi et al., 2018).
5. *Pedagogical Innovation – the* introduction of new things or ideas (Hardie et al., 2022; Hiep & Tram, 2020).

Summary

Globalization of the economy led to a realization that American students were not competing with their peers globally (Hall & Stanton, 1996). A business model of accountability became the standard for judging and managing educators. Academic results directly reflected the community's perception of teacher job performance (Stanton & Peeples, 2000). The problem was that K-12 educators' distrust of leadership resulted in a lack of innovative support. This multiple case study's purpose was to understand leadership distrust that led to a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers in the Knight School District. This model

created a sense of wariness, distrust, suspicion, and doubt among educators implementing innovative solutions (Schultz, 2019).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This systematic literature review explored trust's role in fostering innovation in highly innovative elementary schools. This chapter offers a review of the research on this topic. George Homans' social exchange theory is discussed in the first section, followed by a review of how social exchange theory leads to qualities that develop organizational trust. Next is a review of recent literature on faculty trust, team effectiveness, and innovation in practice. Lastly, there is a discussion about the literature surrounding an administrator's role in promoting trust as a tool for supporting innovation. Most information reviewed was gathered from the middle school level and above.

Theoretical Framework

George Homans' social exchange theory communicates the concept that all human interactions are an exchange of tangible and intangible goods. The social exchange theory marries behavioral psychology, economics, the dynamic of influence, and small group structure. This theory sought to understand what occurred when people could influence others. Homans explored relationships in a laboratory setting, generalized their understandings, and then sought to apply them to larger groups (Homans, 1958). Educationally, this translated into leadership at all organizational levels within a school. This theory depends on individuals' organizational interactions and practices at various leadership levels rather than a singular, formal leader (García Torres, 2019). In one of the few studies that mentioned elementary schools, researchers described innovation in Sweden as teacher-led instead of driven by directives from the state (Hulten & Larsson, 2016). Leaders were encouraged to monitor goal achievement and share

knowledge with other organizational branches to create connections between behaviors, attitudes, and values (Canterino et al., 2020).

Trust is essential in the workplace and specifically for high-performing teams. Homans social exchange theory promotes trust behaviors (Yang & Tsai, 2022). Elements such as work and task performance, contextual performance, and job satisfaction are all related to trust-based exchanges in the workplace. This trust can lead to greater organizational citizenship behavior such as social exchanges, organizationally based self-esteem, occupational self-efficacy, self-determination, and conservation of resources exhibited in the foundations of organizational trust.

Organizational Trust

Organizational trust is the identification and willingness of employees to enter an extended relationship with an organization. This extended relationship has been shown to provide a competitive advantage in organizations and is necessary for effective communication. Organizational trust is critical to the well-being and performance of employees as it promotes innovative and social behaviors. When leadership is trusted, employees feel led to reciprocate the exchange (Salanova et al., 2021).

Salanova et al. (2021) stated that organizational trust provided a proven competitive advantage and is a prerequisite for functioning team dynamics. The organizational trust model developed out of the social exchange theory. When an employee received a benefit from the organization, they felt led to reciprocate favorably, in this case through greater job performance. Described as a psychological mechanism, organizational trust is a mediator between organizational resources and practices and organizational effectiveness and performance.

Organizational trust occurs when competence, integrity, and dependability exist between the organization and the employee (Qin & Men, 2022). Schools are operating systems where

trust exists on all levels. Organizational trust is nurtured through positive practices (Salanova et al., 2020). Healthy organizational practices combined with providing resources at all levels develop trust relationships, leading to better outcomes (Qin & Men, 2022). Integrity within the organization denotes the perception that the organization is fair. Dependability is the feeling that the organization can meet its obligations. Organizational competence is when an organization can fulfill its goals.

Organizations exhibiting positive organizational practices are healthy and resilient (Salanova et al., 2022). These positive practices yielded performance improvements and desirable social environments. This was a result of three variables. First, the institution had healthy organizational practices such as innovation and feedback. Second, they had healthy employee relationships through engagement and trust-based exchanges. Third, they exhibited healthy organizational outcomes, as evidenced by their results.

When employees felt physically and psychologically safe, they performed well. This supported the idea that organizational trust was a psychological state made real by performance and based on social exchange theory. An employee's psychosocial well-being was described as the effective and purposeful state people experience at work (Qin & Men, 2022). The practices and resources provided by the organization contributed to the employee's feeling of trust (Salanova et al., 2022). Organizational practices were planned resources and activities that help the organization reach its goal. These practices included but were not limited to creating a sense of work/life balance, career development, open and positive communication, and perceived equality.

Vertical trust exists between an employee and a supervisor, and this will result in increased work performance in a healthy organization (Adebayo et al., 2021). The employee felt

the strategies being implemented improved the employee's overall well-being. The employer was reciprocated for that exchange by being perceived as benevolent. It was noted that these behaviors led to organizational attachment and were predictors of performance. These types of social (trust-based) exchanges helped employees do well in their jobs (Su et al., 2020). As a result, they increased interactions and interdependence in team interactions, leading to improved performance.

Horizontal trust is developed between group members. Horizontal trust facilitates positive interactions in collaborative work, which generates increased team success (Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020). This trust between coworkers is imperative to high-performing teams. If employees trust each other, they will look for opportunities to interact. This inspires a greater sense of belonging, lowers employee turnover, and increases commitment (Murray & Holmes, 2021).

Related Literature

The topic of this study was the role of trust in promoting innovation in elementary schools. This topic had timely relevance to current educational issues. To understand how innovation failed in elementary schools, the factors that played into the success or failure of school innovation must be understood. Several themes emerged in the literature, such as varying definitions of innovation, the role of educational professions in planning and implementing change, trust as an imperative practice for innovation success, and planning considerations for educational innovation. This review defines educational innovation and standard practices that lead to the successful implementation of innovation in the elementary school setting and connects the themes to George Homans's social exchange theory (1958).

Innovation

Social innovation leads to educational innovation (Maldonado-Mariscal & Alijew, 2023). Social innovation requires educational advances to meet future economic requirements regarding workplace skills and socialization. Without strong trust between administrators, community members, faculty, and school systems, sharing knowledge and problem-solving will not occur. Leaders must establish a powerful sense of communal trust among stakeholders before asking them to innovate.

Educational innovation is necessary to resolve various problems faced by twenty-first-century educators. Educators are producing innovative curricula to respond to social pressures (Leow et al., 2021) and address environmental challenges as an alternative to traditional science education (Fischer et al., 2022). In another example, students were working cooperatively with their community stakeholders who were seeking to prepare students to work locally and globally to solve environmental degradation (Aikens, 2020).

To address citizenship, conscientization, and civic agency, college professors are innovating how they deliver the latest programs utilizing student ambassadors. This pedagogical change allowed them to create service-learning projects for their current students, providing real-world experience and problem-solving (Mtawa & Nkhoma, 2020). This change was also the result of societal pressure, which demanded more focus on social consciousness (Wamsler, 2020).

Innovation extended beyond teaching and into educational leadership. Innovative practices like shared leadership and democratization of decision-making have reduced absenteeism. This absenteeism was linked to negative student performance. The shift from leaders as sole performers to facilitators has directly impacted employee attitudes and perceptions as well as job satisfaction (Da'as, 2020). Additionally, innovative professional

development practices which consider participants' individual needs over external constraints are proving highly effective in remediating teachers' practice methods (Tymms & Peters, 2020).

Hiep and Tran (2020) reported teachers in China are moving away from traditional rational choice theory methods and choosing to be innovative in their practices. To achieve maximum benefit for students, they shifted their focus to student choice models. This innovative practice caused teachers to rethink how they teach. The teacher is not just a knowledge holder but also a guide. The teacher is a facilitator, problem-raiser, and collaborator in finding solutions to social needs (Nunez & Oliver, 2020). Another innovative consideration was the connection between teacher creativity and self-efficacy in professional learning communities (Liu et al., 2022).

The high-performing professional learning community (PLC) is considered a conduit for teacher innovation. The PLC can uniquely cultivate and support innovative thinking (Gurr et al., 2020). Teacher innovation can be viewed as generating and implementing current ideas, which is important for teachers to feel emotionally valued and rewarded. The ability of teachers to drive student creativity can mean the difference between schools that are unable to improve and those that are thriving (Liu et al., 2020).

Recent literature focused on K-5 system usage, lightly addressing innovation as a change agent in elementary schools. It focused on STEM or digital initiatives but did not address trust as a critical element for successful implementation (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020; Hiep & Tram, 2020). Societal changes created the need for new skill sets and types of employees (Lyons & Bandura, 2020). As the world's economy relies on digital advances, children will need to be educated in a manner that allows them to work in what is being called the "fourth industrial revolution" (Spöttl & Windelband, 2020, p. 29).

High-performance educational teams are needed to address societal changes. How we educate students must also change when we evolve as a society. Our current society demands we produce students with skills and experiential learning over those who possess knowledge (Chan, 2022; Christian et al., 2020). They must emerge from the educational system ready to deliver new ideas and solve global challenges. Schools must teach critical thinking and engage in active learning and problem-solving skills (Mihail, 2022).

For educators, these changes came in digital, methodological, and pedagogical innovations. Educators had to meet students where they were because students as young as kindergarten were technologically savvy (Combes, 2021). School institutions embraced technology and used it innovatively to engage students (Willermark, 2021). Methodologically, teachers innovated how they delivered knowledge (Jamshidovna & Bahodirovich, 2021). How educators valued the status of an educational system needed to be viewed through an innovative lens. The physical places in which we educate students do not have to be confined to four, cinder block walls. Innovation requires that students be contextually situated and understand environmental issues beyond their current location (Dayagabil et al., 2021). Finally, resources need to be assessed, allocated, and redistributed in new ways to maximize individuals' benefits (Housel, 2020; Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2020). Viewing services and resources as pliable rather than fixed in innovative thinking allowed more students to be served.

Throughout this literature review, there is a societal shift from individual focus to a focus on group functionality. This challenged traditional thinking. However, viewing through the social exchange theory lens and the distributed leadership theory, one can easily see how one individual cannot create change. It is done in tandem through exchanges that come at a cost to

participants. Adopting trust as the basis for innovative behavior by leadership paves the way for an innovative culture.

Definition of Innovation

The literature studied for this review contained the core concept of innovation as introducing new things or ideas. Pedagogical innovations specifically were addressed by Rahamdi and Lavicza (2021) as the action of developing new learning resources as interventions for educational practice improvement. These authors note that no universally accepted definition of innovation will lead to a lack of future direction and learning. Shuhratovich (2020) argued that pedagogical innovation must be viewed as a tool to modernize the educational system. Advanced pedagogical methods must be integrated into the educational process to change both the structure and content of our current educational system.

Digital innovations are necessary due to our rapidly changing society and are the most integrated form of innovation (Shuhratovich, 2020). Digital innovation is described as change as the result or use of digital technology by Allan Anderson (2020). Educational technology companies continually provide new services in the school and home setting. These changes are more urgent due to the changes our society is experiencing due to the expanding dependency on digital information and connections. While our current model is fluid, Anderson (2020) stated that the United States educational system is outdated.

Methodological innovations can be explained in two ways. First, the extent of innovation and its connection to existing methods. This is described in three steps: inception, adaption, and adoption. An example of methodological innovations are products that assist with teaching or new procedures. The second type of methodological consideration is diffusion. This encompasses the acceptance of digital innovation within a larger context. In a real-world

application, this is expressed as utilizing technology in a new situation, implementing it across disciplines, and even creating a new method because of interdisciplinary use (Rahmat, 2020).

However, the use of innovation as an action presents multiple variables. Hardie et al. (2022) stated that innovation required six main components: consensus between teachers regarding methods, support from leadership, teacher networking, an innovative school culture, prioritization, and professional development. In contrast, Andersen (2020) proposed innovation meant changing organizational practices to change attitudes rather than physical items.

Innovation is defined as a forward movement from a previously fixed point (Ronnlund, 2020). Innovation also requires new perceptions, which would require negotiation between old and new ways of thinking (Tymms & Peters, 2020). In a completely different understanding, innovation is a human concept focusing on the individual and their belonging to a collective (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Kangas-Dick and O'Shaughnessy (2020) offer a different viewpoint. They suggest gender, age, and experience have little to do with innovative willingness. In this paradigm, human characteristics such as adaptability, locus of control, and bias toward optimism are the factors that predict innovative adoption. The type of innovation was not important. The person experiencing the innovation was of the greatest importance.

While the administration can support collaborative relationships, professional development, and student-teacher ratios, these authors purport professional networking is the determining factor for success. Professional networking, regardless of the type of innovation, would encourage emotional support, such as listening to understand. It also promotes boundary crossing by encouraging assistance sharing ideas, resources, and knowledge bases. Professional networks can honor teaching realities while providing task appreciation and gratitude (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020).

In further contrast to the previously presented ideas, innovation adds value to an individual's unique skill set (Hiep & Tram, 2020). Individuals who have the desired skill set will be in higher demand. In traditional business models, there is a drive to use new technologies driven by competition. Employees are trained to think creatively and rewarded when they employ creative, innovative solutions to problems (Yaroshenko et al., 2020).

Innovative High-Performance Teams in Industry

Lessons from traditional businesses can be applied to educational settings. Successful collaboration can lead to high-performing teams that feel safe to innovate and see theireir innovation through to completion (Ahiaga-Dagbui et al., 2020). This type of innovation is built on both inter and intradisciplinary teams sharing knowledge to create a new product (Fair & Kondo, 2020). This is possible in innovative cultures open to creativity and forward-design thinking. Innovative business cultures consider their market, technology, learning, and entrepreneurial orientations (Bascesciu & Blagu, 2020).

Bascesciu and Blagu (2020) stated the first consideration of change is market orientation. Customer’s needs must be considered first to develop a long-term business. The second consideration is the businesses’ ability to gather new knowledge (technical or traditional) to create novel solutions to the unmet needs presented in market orientation. Learning orientation is the creation and development of new knowledge that can influence the future behavior of customers. Lastly, entrepreneurial orientation is exhibiting risky behaviors specifically to exploit opportunities that could influence the behavior of others.

These four orientations presented by Balaesciu and Blagu (2020) led to questions about how innovative cultures should be managed. What type of organization should be built to enable

cultures of innovation? What kind of management style is necessary in an innovative setting? The solutions they suggest are all trust-based exchanges.

A safe place to express creative ideas must be built (Miao et al., 2020). A trust-based real or virtual area where stakeholders make their ideas known is necessary for knowledge sharing without judgment. A safe space promotes trusting behaviors and a free exchange of ideas (Zeb et al., 2020). Once those ideas are shared, employees must receive support for their implementation from gatekeepers who may exist as managers, CEOs, etc. The gatekeepers serve as the catalyst for change (Yildiz & Subasi, 2023). Gatekeepers who are active participants and facilitators in the innovation can support efforts through clear, shared, and positive presentations of the desired innovations.

Balcesciu and Blagu (2020) acknowledge innovation may lead to the necessity for new structures or methods of functioning. These may include dedicated reflections after actions (Jiang & Zheng, 2020) and openly questioning current modes of operation (Oke & Fernandez, 2020). Additionally, experimentation must be encouraged, as well as a culture of curiosity, failure as learning, and perseverance to completion (Super, 2020). Attitudes of positive collaboration must be promoted, including open dialogue, and a team approach to problems must prevail over social power dynamics (Yu & Chao, 2022).

Resistance to Innovation

When considering innovative resistance, the type of innovation matters. Digital innovation was resisted because it challenges the status quo and could be difficult to master (Al-Takhayneh et al., 2022). Pedagogical innovations challenged our universal understanding of what it meant to teach (Wilson, 2021). Teachers who traditionally impart information are asked

to transition to the facilitator role. Curriculum changes mirroring our social innovations challenged educators to reconsider what courses are relevant today (Supriani et al., 2022).

Digital Innovation Resistance

In her research, Andrea Scholkmann (2021) pointed to the rapid pace of digital change and the understanding that people need time to adjust to new circumstances. Digital advances and changes, specifically those endured by educators during the COVID-19 pandemic, changed how, when, and where learning occurred. Scholkman's work argued that resistance did not equal rejection. Resistance was noted to be a personality trait based on individual values, motives, emotions, and cultural norms. Al-Takhayneh et al. (2022) reported educators resisted digital innovations for many reasons, including not wanting to alter their perceived status quo or activities that do not align with their values or beliefs. During the pandemic, employee resistance was overcome by societal demands for education (Kerres, 2020).

Rejection is defined as a systemic resistance that values stability and internal balance. A default resistance to change is present even when the organization must evolve to be viable. An element that must be considered is whether the employee is an agent of change or a recipient of change. A change agent supports the implementation of change created by others whereas the change recipient has been told to change and has no influence in the decision-making process. Employees must internalize reasons for the change to be able to support it (Endrejat et al., 2021).

Pedagogical Innovation Resistance

Pedagogical resistance followed a similar trajectory to digital resistance. In her research, Wilson (2021) identified the main resistance to pedagogical resistance was the universal understanding of what it means to teach. She found teaching was not understood as a singular act, but rather a repeated act dependent on the number of times the act was repeated. Wilson

determined teaching was understood by educators to be an in-person interaction where an expert delivered information about a specific subject within the traditional brick and mortar setting.

A current example of this resistance was noted regarding the 'flipped' classroom model. This innovative model was developed as a solution to a lack of time during the day to not only teach content information but also allow students to engage in meaningful conversation and activities (Ajmal & Hafeez, 2021). In this model, students are responsible for learning before and after scheduled class time. During class, the teacher assumes the role of group facilitator guiding students to communicate and engage in activities related to previous learning (Al-Saimairrie et al., 2020).

Initially, trust was reported to be an issue in utilizing the flipped classroom due to a lack of evidence-based practices (Al-Samairrie et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers reported they felt the flipped classroom was in their words, "useless, impractical, and disconnected from their lived experiences" (Wilson, 2021, p. 23). Wilson (2021) determined teachers' lived experiences were not in alignment with the tenets of the flipped classroom. Because the redelivery of subject matter did not happen traditionally--teaching, as understood and experienced by the teachers--was not occurring.

Curriculum Innovation Resistance

In the educational setting, curriculum is the guide by which all other decisions are made. Curriculum is the heart of an organization directing and transferring knowledge in a specific manner that aligns with the organization's goals and values. Suprianni et al. (2022) state curricula are dynamic, responding to societal needs. This included policy changes, modern technologies, and globalization of the economy. Events driving curriculum innovation include life changes,

new goal development, national shifts in priorities, and economic demand for relevant educational processes.

Teachers are the primary agents of change concerning curriculum. They can disrupt the innovation process by ignoring changes, refusing to adopt innovation, or adjusting it to their individual personal preferences (Supriani et al., 2022). To prevent the perception that they were the recipients of change rather than agents of change, it was recommended that any curriculum changes occur as an organizationally oriented process (Lemay & Moreau, 2020). To feel empowered as agents of change teachers need to be engaged in activities like agenda setting, matching innovations with societal needs, redefining the vision or mission, restructuring departments or schedules, clarifying misconceptions, and routinizing innovative processes (Supriani et al, 2022).

High-Performance Teams in Education

In the education sector, the Tuckman model (Tuckman, 1965) outlines four stages for effective team building. While often used with students to create environments of trust, respect, and openness, it was easily transferred to adult settings to grow collaboration, community, and inclusivity (Richter et al., 2021). Trust is intertwined in all stages and is fundamental to an operational team. The first team building stage is *forming.* During this stage, members become familiar with one another. They are participating in exchanges that help them negotiate behaviors that will be associated with the performance task assigned to them. During this time, when trust is low, members may experience feelings of insecurity related to the personal benefit of their participation in the group (Pfutzenreuter et al., 2021).

In the second stage, *Storming,* group members continue to navigate communication and trustworthiness within the group (Samad et al., 2023). They experience miscommunications

which result in feelings of hostility and resistance. When members do not feel psychologically safe and are not sharing openly, relational exchanges come at a high cost versus profit ratio. This can lead to a lack of confidence in the organization and purpose of the team (Pfutzenreuter et al., 2021).

The *Norming* stage is next. Group members are learning how to communicate, work together, and form trusting relationships (Kim & Iwuchukwu, 2022). Because they are experiencing trust exchanges, they are more likely to work through differences. A result of trusting equitable exchanges is the ability to come together to complete a task or realize a vision. This stage will also highlight an increase in interpersonal relationships and group identification (Pfutzenreuter et al., 2021).

In the *Performing* stage, the group members' feelings toward shared responsibility, creativity, and productivity increase (Vaida & Serban, 2021). They are fully realizing the dynamics of team cooperation as an output of trusting relationships and innovative cultures and taking ownership of team identity (Pfutzenreuter et al., 2021). The team brings their task to fruition and increases their worth as a group and becomes even more valuable for the organization.

Prior to 1977, the sequence was limited to four steps. However, in an addendum to the original work, Tuckman and Jensen (1977) added a fifth element. They added *adjourning* as the final step in the process. In this step, members acknowledge the contributions of others. However, these four steps were not adopted universally. Miller (2009) argued that not all teams would follow a linear path through the steps. Rickards and Moger (2000) also took issue with the sequence of steps stating some groups will never complete all stages. Their position was based

on groups they observed becoming stuck in the storming stage, which led to dysfunction and failure.

Social exchanges like those in the Tuckman method led to organizational trust. When participants felt psychologically safe, they shared knowledge within the group and eventually crossed group borders (Yeo, 2020). This behavior created innovation. Businesses have been perfecting these knowledge exchanges, and they can be applied to educational settings with relative ease when trust is a valued commodity (Antinlouma et al., 20201). Students serving as the customer base have needs which must be addressed first, followed by knowledge gathering in a safe space. These advances can lead to high-performing teams who innovate in education just as they do in business.

To apply these business principles to educational settings, administrators must promote the idea of teacher leaders who are focused on organizational goals over individual ones. Principals must provide and support opportunities for leadership to be practiced, develop purposefully trusting relationships, and manage professional learning tailored to their staff (Denee & Thornton, 2021). In organizations with strong organizational trust cultures, knowledge and responsibility are shared openly within the organization (Canterino et al., 2020).

Changes within the institution of public elementary education occur due to societal changes (Carson & Given, 2021). Education in America is changing to meet demands of new developments, tools, situations, and technologies (Meyer & Norman, 2020). Globalization has caused thinking to shift from a one size fits all model to contextual solutions, networking and systems, and multidisciplinary teams (Meyer & Norman, 2020). These situations are reflected in the STEM movement and cooperative learning initiatives.

The Necessity for Innovation in Education

When the purpose of educating future citizens and workers moved to the forefront, it was easy to understand how society drove school innovation (Ismoilovich, 2021; Soldatenko, 2020). As a nation, America shifted far from our first educational innovator, Thomas Jefferson (Conant, 2021). He sought to provide free elementary schools for all citizens. As society develops and changes, so must the institutions which educate future citizens (Bergan et al., 2021).

The information technology age created unprecedented access to knowledge in the current era. This access initiated a societal shift whereby simply possessing knowledge is no longer valued. Individuals must be able to sort through their acquired knowledge utilizing critical analysis skills and obtain an independent valuation of the information (Renatovna & Renatovna, 2020). These skills are the newest in an extensive line of educational innovations, including behavioralist (Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1953; Thorndike, 1898), cognitivist (Piaget, 1954), and most recently, the social constructivist paradigms (Vygotsky, 1929). Kivunja (2014) discusses current school and social culture values as promoting critical thinking, active learning, and problem-solving strategies. Kivunja (2014) proposed innovation in education was needed to fulfill the obligation to educate students to produce innovative citizens and workers in the knowledge economy of twenty-first-century society.

Innovation as a Solution to Educational Issues

Innovation allows educational needs such as physical space issues (Aikens, 2020), engagement (Aikens, 2020; Sterrett & Richardson, 2020), resource leveraging (Aikens, 2020), and social consciousness (Mtawa & Nihoma, 2020) to be resolved. Innovation promoted student engagement in multiple ways. New strategies that invited active learning and cooperative interaction increased knowledge application by students (Eukel et al., 2020; Reguerat & Lopez, 2021)

Innovation as a Solution

When discussing universities, Hall (2020) spoke about the need for these institutions to meet society's demands through modernization, fiscal responsibility, and fulfillment of the mission statement of the organization. To do so, the university's culture must focus on unique and integrated change through educational research and public service. Schlegelmilch (2020) reiterated concerns regarding challenges facing business schools after the late 1990s. Business education needed to address changes in society, such as an economic shift to Asia, the struggle for business schools to be seen as a legitimate science, and growing competition from online platforms. Society can drive similar changes in the public-school setting regarding physical space issues, engagement of students, resource leveraging, social consciousness, and community outreach.

Physical Space Issues. Innovation allows educational needs, such as physical space issues, to be addressed. Societal evolution promoted changes in where and how we educate children. Taking students out of the four walls of their institutional setting allowed them to experience first-hand the issues stakeholders want them to understand (Campos et al., 2021). This approach encouraged engagement and investment in future issues of this nature. The issue of physical space in education can be complex and involve many elements. Creative thinking allows concerns about where students will be learning to be addressed. Aikens (2020) gives three vastly different scenarios. First, consider physical space as the environment in which we all exist. Environmental awareness is being driven by social concerns that education should partner with community organizations to find solutions for the future. An example of an innovative solution can be found in environmental education, where Forest Schools instruct students about ecology in real-time. Teachers engage students in problem-based learning focused on reclaiming

wilderness areas. Another less complex innovation is the utilization of physical space in the classroom. As educational trends shift from teacher-centered methods to focus on student collaboration, the physical set up of furniture moves away from rows and aisles to pods, table groups, and alternative seating where students focus on each other.

Second, large-scale school closings due to COVID-19 forced rapid development of distance learning and all it encompassed. Without innovative thinking and problem-solving, students would have experienced little to no formal education during this global pandemic (Caprara & Caprara, 2021). Specifically, Aikens (2020) states innovation created new physical environments for students and virtual spaces for community and faculty to participate as active agents. This same author said innovative settings allow students to imagine, create, and respond to the unexpected.

Engagement. Our current culture is one of technology. Students are exposed to digital technology in many forms from an early age and expect to experience the same at school. Meeting students where they are with technology allows teachers to use the skills students bring to school to benefit their teaching by engaging students in digitally creative and collaborative activities (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020). One innovative activity that has gained a lot of attention is the flipped classroom. This technique uses technology to both engage and enhance learning experiences (Lencaster et al., 2020). Another innovation that has increased engagement is the flexible classroom design. Creating spaces that are student-centered rather than teacher-centric encourages collaborative work and promotes engagement (Attai et al., 2020).

Resource Leveraging. The largest resource any educational system has is its faculty. Leveraging teacher resources in novel ways benefits students and the institution. Teachers can manipulate their teaching styles to meet the needs of their students with little monetary

investment. This could take the form of traditional teaching innovations, including scheduling or creative student grouping to utilize new digital platforms such as Zoom or Teams (Dua et al., 2020; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2020). Other examples of resource leveraging include the expansion of resources to serve a new population (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2020) and sharing resources through community partnerships (House, 2020).

Social Consciousness and Community Outreach. Mtawa and Nihoma (2020) raise the idea of educational innovation in a social context. This new way of educating students considers the ability of the student to alter or improve human experience through civic agency and critical consciousness. Service learning involves experiential education and addresses the community's needs during structured opportunities for student learning through first-hand experiences. This type of innovation allows students to shift their motivational thinking from grades and future jobs to overcoming challenges. This is known as a qualitative learning gain. Innovations are successful if they support employment and enterprise skills, and students can transfer skills, insights, and applications to jobs after schooling (Aikens, 2020; Tymms & Peters, 2020).

Innovation as a Solution for Meeting Educational Issues

Innovation as a solution to educational issues involves stakeholders on all levels. The literature suggests that the school-level principal functions as the key agent of successful change in innovation (Aslan et al., 2018; Da'as, 2020, Hardie et al., 2020). Some authors disagreed (Bass, 1985; Berraies et al., 2020), stating that no one entity could create success in an organization. The distributed leadership theory (Bass, 1985) contrasts this traditional thinking. Bass (1985) describes distributed leadership as sharing leadership roles with formal and informal stakeholders. Schools, like businesses, rely on various human resources contributing to the organization's success (Berraies et al., 2020). In a school, distributed leadership relies on

educational professionals' tacit knowledge and ability to exchange information in a trusted environment. Bringing individuals together to work collaboratively aligns with the social exchange theory (Homans, 1958). A successfully innovative school can withstand restructuring changes to traditional teacher roles and schedules (Mtawa & Nihoma, 2020) and more liberal learning environments (Rahmadi & Lavicza, 2021). Educators who participated fully in positive social exchanges and developed trusting relationships across organizational boundaries to embrace innovation had an enhanced sense of belonging and collective responsibility (Alblooshi et al., 2020). Students benefited from innovation and collaboration by receiving richer, more engaging experiences from engaged faculty members (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020).

Role of Educational Professionals in Innovative Change

Teachers and administrators work hard to lead students to success. In America, education has grown from a one-room schoolhouse to a complex network of structures and specialties (Berry, 2020). Teachers are a driving force in changing behaviors as they are the common factor in the growth of all members of our society (AL-Takhayneh et al., 2022). Social changes drive public education innovations in America by expanding populations and societal and technological advancements (Carayannis & Morawska-Jancelewicz, 2022). Along with the physical and curriculum changes, teachers' and administrators' roles have changed (Rosenbush, 2020). Innovative models, such as distributed leadership in the educational setting, shifted the power dynamics of the employee/ employer relationship. Empowering all employees to feel their work is needed and vital to operations is at the heart of buy-in and emotional commitment to an organization (Clack, 2020).

The Role of Administration in Establishing Trust Among Faculty Members

Leaders and their leadership styles are essential to successful organizational innovation (Hardie et al., 2020). Their primary role in innovation is to promote accepting climates by nurturing relationships and providing support. The theory of social exchange promotes boundary-crossing and shared information, puts trust in leaders at all levels, and recognizes the value of tacit knowledge in educators (Berraies et al., 2020; Sterrett & Richardson, 2020). As a form of social exchange, distributed leadership is an effective tool for knowledge creation and sharing as information circulates among leaders at all levels (Berraies et al., 2020).

Administrators focusing on team building noted that teams do not automatically function well. They go through stages of development in which trusting exchanges and relationships are built (Pfutzenreuter et al., 2021). While leaders can set the right conditions, the rate of trust is dependent on the participants and their interactions. Achieving success as a high-performance team is noted when the organization's goals are prioritized over the individual needs of group participants (Coleman et al., 2021).

Successful innovation leaders choose characteristic behaviors such as encouraging individual attempts, role clarification, providing feedback on observed behaviors, emphasizing the importance of human resources, task orientation, and creating organizational trust (Aslan et al., 2018; Berraies et al., 2020). Innovative leaders navigate tensions from all regions of the organization and strive to create shared goals (Netolicky, 2020). The literature illustrates administrators create large-scale change through vision casting, being committed to change, and supporting change efforts made by staff (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020). Effective communication of expectations from leadership promotes acceptance and normalizes change (Da'as, 2020). Innovative leaders' most critical message to stakeholders is that innovative thinking is valued, and that they are willing to risk failure to make progress (Sterrett & Richardson, 2020).

Organizational trust is an employee's vulnerability to actions of their employer based on positive expectations regarding employer intent. (Kedharnath et al., 2020). Organizational trust integrates organizational members and encourages high performance (Ha & Lee, 2022). Organizational trust positively addresses issues presented in this literature review, such as promoting cooperation (Su et al., 2020), trust through change (Doeze Jager et al., 2021), belonging (Enwereuzor, 2021), collective responsibility (Qian & Walker, 2021), crossing organizational boundaries (Xu et al., 2021), engagement (Zhou et al., 2022) and employee cynicism (Bahadir & Levent, 2022).

Successful leaders exhibit flexible leadership styles appropriate to innovation (Berraies et al., 2020). Exploratory innovation is high-risk and operates in new products or processes with the promise of yielding high returns. Exploitative innovation focuses on functionality as it utilizes current technology and techniques, focusing on short-term gains that can promote movement toward long-term solutions. Education innovation creates both simultaneously, as they can be equally crucial and complementary when customizing educational solutions.

The Importance of Faculty Training to Establish Trust in Innovation

As discussed in the previous section, leadership is essential to successful innovation. The distributed leadership style allows faculty to act outside their traditional roles without fear of failure (Hardie et al., 2020). Human resources, such as teachers, are the critical innovation catalysts. Innovative teachers utilize new teaching methods and apply design innovations that create richer student experiences. Tacit knowledge is a crucial resource for educational organizations to harness to promote and develop innovation (Berraies et al., 2020). Teachers who participate in decision-making have increased motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment due to a sense of psychological ownership of the project (Da'as, 2020).

Teachers dealing with educationally novel solutions can accept or reject innovations based on past experiences (Elhert et al., 2022). Those who immediately reject innovation have reasonings shaped by past experiences (Hardie et al., 2020). There is a direct correlation between job satisfaction during innovation, participation in decision-making processes, and trust among staff members that results in absenteeism and seeking new positions (Da'as, 2020). Workers who do not feel supported during change will exhibit negative behaviors, resistance, lack of commitment, and negative thinking. Teachers must be trained as facilitators and freed from past conceptions of traditional teachers to be more innovative in evaluating and solving problems (Andersen, 2020; Hardie et al., 2020). They require training as collaborators to generate innovative ideas, learn new skill sets, and shore up existing programs (Aikens, 2020).

The Importance of Community Investment in Educational Innovation

Innovation is rooted in societal change (Pel et al., 2020). To respond to environmental challenges, North American public education needs to address global interconnection and environmental degradation. Innovative employers seek more than the traditional public-school institute can provide in its current state, noting students are unprepared to face current issues (Aikens, 2020). Society expects schools to foster awareness surrounding social issues, promote awareness of social challenges, build imaginative problem-solving skills, and provide institutional support necessary for future innovations (Aikens, 2020; Da'as, 2020). Social innovations have long-lasting implications and become supported by communities that believe in them because what they create together is more significant than what is accomplished individually (Aikens, 2020; Pel et al., 2020; Rahmadi & Lavicza, 2021; Rönnlund et al., 2020).

Establishing Trust as an Imperative for Innovation

Schools are living systems connected to and among each other, operating as networks of human relationships (Brigandi et al., 2020). Because trust is the basis for all successful human interactions, trust among teaching professionals can only be attained when stakeholders feel psychologically safe discussing problematic issues (Bellibas & Gumus, 2021). Teachers must feel their trusting relationships with administrators are benevolent, reliable, and genuine (Bektas et al., 2020). When trust is present in a school, whether teacher to teacher or teacher to principal, distributed leadership can produce elevated levels of student learning. It has been documented that innovative teachers develop more and better instructional strategies. When teachers are in trusting relationships, instructional and transformational leadership can thrive (Bektas et al., 2020).

Establishing Faculty Trust

In educational literature, trust was essential in collaboration (Hummel et al., 2022; Palmer, 2021; Shaikh et al., 2021). Trust is the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of others trusted to perform a task without monitoring (Abdulla & Khadaroo, 2020). Analysis has shown trust impacts team attitudes. Organizational trust affects team attitudes and increases employee knowledge-sharing, cooperation, and productivity (Kadarusman & Bunyamin, 2021). This trust hinged on the employee's belief that the organization could meet goals benevolently and with integrity (Wang et al., 2022). Trust creates a positive organizational climate that encourages knowledge exchange, empowering teachers (Da'as, 2020). Developing trusting relationships promotes sustainable cooperation between groups. Trust increases teacher motivation to create a supportive workplace that quickly reacts to change (Da'as, 2020), and faculty trust is related to student achievement (Atik & Ozer, 2020).

To successfully lead staff through change, principals can build trust, know the team, and communicate effectively (Da'as, 2020; White, 2021). Administrators can modify cooperation and tailor it to the needs of the collaborating teachers (Maass et al., 2019). Affective trust and psychological safety lead to psychologically engaged teachers in education. They believe they can count on their counterparts in demanding situations (Da'as, 2020).

The Effect of Trust on Innovation in Education

Trust and control work in an exchange relationship (Homans, 1958). At its core, learning is a social and cultural interaction (Poort et al., 2020). Trust expresses the norms of our society and our expectations about another party's motives or incentives. Ehren et al. (2020) wrote that trust operates on the second party's perceived competence, benevolence, and integrity. Where there is perceived trust, there is a reduced need for monitoring (Ehren et al., 2020). In education, trust affects stakeholders at all levels (Niedlick et al., 2020). For students, trust can positively affect school performance, drive reform, and promote collective decision-making and stakeholder buy-in. For teachers, trust can improve routine work and increase the chances that they will strive to achieve school improvement.

Poort et al. (2020) discuss the connection between trust and group work in education. Of note are three areas of trust in education specifically related to group trust at all levels. Group work enhances deep knowledge (Radtke et al., 2023) and promotes communication (Pino-Yancovic &Ahumada, 2020), interaction (Ajbejule et al., 2021), and collaboration among all its members regardless of age or status in the organization (Poort et al., 2020). Culturally diverse groups allow for the sharing of current ideas, more creativity, and innovation. When groups are homogenous, members may feel a greater sense of psychological safety but experience a lack of

creativity or fail to innovate, as all the members share the same viewpoint. For groups to function, they must have some level of trust among the members.

Administrators must recognize and prioritize that trust is important for social unity (Poort et al., 2020). They must promote trusting relationships and recognize that they are the foundation for collaborative and communicative growth in the institution of public education. Innovation requires faculty to rely on one another, forcing the issue of trust upon faculty members. Teacher-learning communities did not support teacher practice innovations unless they link to monitored learning targets (Maass et al., 2019). However, accountability testing will not replace trust because it cannot address "situational circumstances and social habits" (Niedlick et al., 2020, p. 30). Most of the research on trust, education, and innovation was completed at the middle school level or above. There is a gap in the literature regarding trust and innovation in elementary education.

Considerations for Planning Successful Education Innovation

To reduce resistance to change, administrators need to build trust to meet needs of employees (Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2021; Aikens, 2020). Establishing a trusting relationship allows educators to be responsive rather than reactive (Berger, 2022). Creating a sense of organizational trust throughout the building empowers educators to participate in innovation (Niedlick et al., 2020). Reducing or removing barriers to teacher success creates a sense of empowerment and trust as teachers perceive psychological safety (Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2021).

Research regarding organizational trust and distributed leadership outlines five steps for helping staff members embrace innovation. First, leaders must collaboratively establish a vision, meeting norms and goals with their teachers (Admiraal et al., 2021). Administrators must communicate with staff about approaching and achieving the goals set (Carrell et al., 2021;

Hakro & Matthew, 2020; Susanto & Nyoman Sawitri, 2023). Doing this enables teachers to begin to feel committed to the school and its vision. They internalize the goals and give greater effort (Clack, 2020). Second, administrators need to consider individualized emotional support for staff members (Ori, 2022). School leaders must intentionally address concerns individuals express while guiding the group (Demir et al., 2020). This occurs through mentoring, delegation, feedback, and directly addressing concerns connected to the vision. Third, sharing knowledge and promoting autonomy is important for successfully implementing distributed leadership (Lin, 2022). Challenging conversations must be held to question established beliefs and daily norms. A discussion must occur regarding daily practices and whether they align with the organization's vision. Administrators can support and model how to approach challenging topics (Ilham, 2021).

Administrative Considerations Based on Trust and Team Building

Distributed leadership among school administrators positively affects teacher trust (Bektas et al., 2020). Leaders must encourage tacit knowledge sharing, which requires frequent, meaningful interactions (Berraies et al., 2020). Leaders must promote knowledge sharing that promotes creativity (Da'as, 2022), cooperative efforts (Chedid et al., 2020), and open communication to establish a psychologically safe space (Berraies et al., 2020; Da’as, 2020). Introducing change and vision casting is especially important in establishing trust as it speaks to the buy-in of employees that the organization has the competence to complete the task set before them (Da'as, 2020; Mtawa & Nihoma, 2020; Strong & Xu, 2021). During innovation, faculty depend on leaders to leverage resources and remove barriers (Aikens, 2020; Chaubey & Sahoo, 2021). Frequent and timely communication exchanges increase team trust, feedback, shared values, proactive behaviors, keeping commitments, and rule-following (Breuer et al., 2019; Da'as, 2020; Silver et al., 2019; Titu et al., 2020).

Meeting the Needs of Faculty During Innovation

Leaders need to realize limits to what most individuals can conceptualize. If the goal is to move beyond those limits, then time must be invested to support teachers (Boice et al., 2021; Mladenova, 2022; Sokol et al., 2021). The following six steps for instructional innovation can assist faculty (Maass et al., 2019). First, research the innovation topic to be knowledgeable on the subject. Secondly, identify resources that will benefit the teachers and students in their efforts. Third, create professional development that addresses teacher needs. Fourth, consider the context in which the innovation will occur. Fifth, instill cooperation as non-negotiable. Sixth, communicate results in user-appropriate formats (Maass et al., 2019).

Understanding how organizational trust affects innovation helps administrators meet the needs of teachers (Ansell et al., 2020; Berrias et al., 2020). Faculty members are the change actors. Engaging in trusting relationships reciprocally with administrators allows them to identify needs and work across organizational borders to gain new knowledge. The community engages in trust-based exchanges when they see their students emerging from the school setting ready to interact with their environment innovatively. Social exchange theory reveals that organizational interactions and practices occur on all levels of interaction: administrator, educator, and community member (Homans, 1958).

School Innovation Climate as a Predictor of Successful Innovation Adoption

AL-Takhayneh et al. (2022) state that school innovation climate refers to the shared member perceptions of policies and operations within the school and the system at large. School cultures that do not promote innovative practices are inhibiting educational experiences and eroding trust among staff and the community. Teachers are the gatekeepers to innovation implementation, and their opposition is a predictor of failure. Teachers' views of their school

settings affect their actions (AL-Takhayneh et al., 2022). When teachers perceive their school is supportive of innovation through actions and resources, they report feeling encouraged to think creatively (Pandi & Chinnasamy, 2021). These same teacher attitudes impact the implementation of innovative technology, methodology, and curriculum (Fischer & Riedl, 2020). Administrators can reduce resistance to innovation by providing frameworks that allow teachers to feel fully engaged and invested in improvements. Communication and negotiation with key players can clarify change objectives and ease personal fears related to change initiatives (AL-Takhayneh et al., 2022).

Summary

The literature review, although leaning heavily toward middle, high school, and college studies, provided information regarding the theoretical framework associated with this study. Missing from the review were significant references to elementary school settings. George Homans's social exchange theory expressed how behavioral psychology, economics, the dynamics of influence, and small group structure created a cost-and-benefit exchange between participants. Behavioral psychology and economics explained how interactions between group members are done at a "cost." Individuals balanced their costs with their perceived profits in exchanges. The dynamics of influence addressed how close the participants feel in relation to one another based on their perceived trust of other group members. Perceptions carried significantly more weight in the equation of trust than other factors. The small group structure explains how groups sought equilibrium through exchanges. Increased positive exchanges critically influenced how small group structures became flexible, trust-based organizations.

Innovation and societal changes resulted in educational modifications that were supported by trusting relationships. Through thoughtful leadership, faculty, administration, community

members, and cooperating institutions, schools foster and grow organizational trust. The literature focused on upper-grade and college-level studies specifically; therefore, extending studies on the effectiveness of trust-based innovation in elementary education was beneficial to creating a vertical alignment of innovative behaviors institutionally.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Innovation worldwide is changing rapidly, and education is searching for a way to keep pace with the world economy. The problem is that K-12 educators distrust leadership resulting in a lack of innovative support. The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers in the Knight School District. Chapter Three presents this study's research design as a multiple-case study. It also outlines the procedures used, including research questions, setting, and participants. The researcher's positionality and interpretive framework and the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions are examined. The data collection plan is explained, and participants' questions and prompts are listed.

Research Design

For this study, qualitative methods allowed holistic research of the phenomena in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This multiple case study examined one subunit of a specific issue within a single construct: decreased organizational trust leading to a lack of innovation in elementary schools (Yin, 2018). Case studies were developed in response to interest in understanding the context of a phenomenon as the explanatory factor regarding organizational behavior (Cassell & Symon, 2014). The multiple case study design is more compelling and robust than the single case study (Yin, 2018). If the data review of the individual case studies has similar illicit results, it would provide practical support for the central research question (Yin, 2018). Utilizing a multiple case study design can determine if a common theme can be developed (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative studies describe perceptions in a way that quantitative analysis cannot. The design developed around open-ended research questions that allowed the researcher to investigate everyday experiences in the real world (Yin, 2018). The study of casual relationships established generalizations among participants that would support the central research question (Yin, 2018). Each case study would be a literal replication of the one before as they produce similar results (Yin, 2018). Specifically, using teachers and schools in the same system allowed for cross-case conclusions that would reveal overarching themes relevant to the field of education.

This multiple case study consisted of semi-structured interview questions, focus group questions, and journal prompts. Interviews with each teacher consisted of 22 questions. Focus groups consisted of seven semi-structured questions. Three journal prompts were given to all. All questions created reflected the central and sub-questions of the study. All participants were chosen from schools utilizing STEM/STEAM educational programs, resulting in an increased push toward implementing innovative programs and methodology.

Research Questions

Research questions were a vital part of the dissertation process. The case study research design was based on asking good questions before, during, and after data collection. The result of the questioning was a complete understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant (Yin, 2018).

Central Research Question

How do public elementary school teachers' organizational trust perceptions affect innovative educational practices?

Sub-Question One

How do the organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to implement curriculum innovations?

Sub-Question Two

How do the organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt digital innovations?

Sub-Question Three

How do the organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt methodological innovations?

Setting and Participants

This section describes the site where this multiple case study took place. Methods for recruiting and selecting participants will be described. Specific information regarding the participants of the study is discussed. This information includes participant age, gender, and years of teaching experience.

Site

The study site was a suburban area with a county population of roughly 20,000 and about 130,000 in the city. Within the county school system, 13,700 students attend 20 facilities, including 12 elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, and one college and career academy (L. Robertson, personal communication, April 28, 2023). The district will be called the Knight School System, and individual schools, Red School, Orange School, Yellow School, Blue School, and Green School. This site was an appropriate choice for my study because it reflected a diverse population of educators who have all been asked to utilize innovative practices within the last five years.

The setting for this study was elementary schools within a single district focusing on K-5 educators. The site selected utilized innovative practices in STEM and STEAM. Teacher populations from multiple schools within the same system were necessary. Schools in this area followed a similar hierarchical structure, with numerous elementary schools feeding into a middle school and then a high school program. These operated under a single superintendent and multiple Principals/ Assistant Principals who share the system's mission statement and vision. Studying elementary schools within the same system was necessary so that leadership expectations would not impact research findings.

Participants

Participants in the study were teachers with five to 30 completed years of classroom teaching experience. This study recruited 10 participants, all females. These same participants should teach in a core content area: math, science, reading, or writing. These teachers were selected as they are all subject to state-mandated testing and acknowledge experiencing barriers to innovation, as noted on their application. The participants' ages, in general, ranged from 26 to 65 years of age. The ethnicity of the participants reflected that of the community.

Recruitment Plan

This multiple case study's purposeful sample of participants was teachers from the Knight School System, who have been asked to participate in innovative educational practices within the last five years. Purposeful sampling required each researcher to clearly explain the type of sampling used and why participants were selected to participate in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposely selecting educators who have participated in innovative educational practices within the last five years was important to provide first-hand relevant experiences. The specific type of participation and site were chosen purposefully

because of their innovative educational practices. The firsthand experiences of educators revealed and informed an understanding of the study's research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were recruited through a recruitment letter sent via email (Appendix C). The Lead Instruction Officer served as the gatekeeper in the participant selection process. Once the participants offered to participate, the research consent form (Appendix D) was provided for them to read and sign before interviews were scheduled. It would have been ideal if two educators from each elementary feeder school agreed to participate. The participation of educators was confidential, and their only identifying information was that they were part of a feeder elementary school. Participants were told the research reasoning and why they were explicitly chosen to participate.

Researcher Positionality

I decided to conduct this research to understand one of the barriers to innovation in education from an organizational trust perspective. Removing barriers such as funding and training was insufficient to overcome a lack of psychological safety. From my personal experiences in the classroom, I understood many teachers experience feelings that prevent them from committing to innovative teaching techniques. The research paradigm for this study was interpretivism. I focused on reality as perceived by the participants.

Interpretive Framework

As a researcher, I was operating under a mixed-method framework. Through constructivism, I acknowledged that reality is a product of human interactions with the real world, and our understanding of knowledge is built up from societal experiences (Dawadi et al., 2021). Through interpretivism, I understand that reality is subjective. Two individuals experience the same phenomenon in multiple ways. Participants from the same site may recall an event

differently based on their perception of what occurred. This framework does not focus on the rightness or wrongness of perception but rather that both understandings can exist simultaneously. The interpretive framework has a naturalistic background and is appropriate for data collection methods such as interviews and focus groups. Interpretivism focuses on meanings and can use more than one method to reflect different aspects of the issues discussed in this study. The meanings gathered from participant experiences will be revealed towards the end of the research process (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions are the lens through which a researcher views the world and approaches their research. Expressing my position ontologically, epistemologically, and axiologically allows readers to understand my research approach. My positionality rests on my core values and beliefs that reality is subjective and circumstantial.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions for researchers reference the nature of reality as it exists for themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers must consider that various personal understandings exist at the same time and place. My educator experience may differ vastly from that of a teacher at a school that is a geographically and demographically alike school. During the research, I will be aware of these different realities and multiple points of view. I will consider the participant's point of view as themes emerge.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumptions during research articulate how knowledge is understood through subjective experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, it was vital for me to understand the context under which participants' opinions and knowledge sets

were acquired and developed. As an educator, I am familiar with elementary school settings and understand the cultural experiences associated with educators. I felt led to understand how and why teachers were reluctant to engage in innovation. Understanding the study's participants' viewpoints helped me articulate to others why barriers exist and what they are.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions are values brought to research by the authors themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interpretivism rejects the idea that there are universal truths and understandings (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). For this study, it means I rejected shared, universal knowledge as a foundational base for truth. This led my findings to be less generalized.

I openly acknowledge that I am imposing my personal biases and experiences onto a study. I understand and disclose that my experiences are colored by my upbringing and life experiences. I have personal knowledge and biases regarding teaching methods. I have served in many capacities in the school system, including music educator, ESOL teacher, STEAM teacher, and fifth-grade regular classroom teacher of gifted students. My previous experience as a STEM/ STEAM educator causes me to have a positive bias toward this type of learning. I feel it has an intrinsic value and should be a part of the curriculum for all schools.

Researcher's Role

As an experienced teacher, I understand the emotions associated with being asked to innovate as an educator. When I began teaching music, compact discs were a modern technology, and electronic keyboards replaced traditional pianos. Later, as an ESOL teacher, I implemented cooperative learning, used iPads, and encouraged children to use language applications to extend learning. Further into my career as a STEM teacher, I used an engineering design plan when making lessons and reassured children that failing was okay as part of the

learning process. Recently, as a fifth-grade teacher, my school system utilized professional learning communities and essential standards.

I have been innovating and changing my teaching methodology my entire career. I have seen many innovations over the years, and I want to understand why some educational innovations fail and discover if the failure relates to organizational trust. The researcher is the human instrument in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, I bring my circumstantial understanding to the study. However, my role as I collect and synthesize respondent data from interviews is to comprehend their viewpoints and understandings. I have no relationship, personal or professional, with the participants. My role is to facilitate discussion and record data.

Procedures

Before beginning research, approval was obtained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A) and the cooperating school district (see Appendix B). After receiving permission from the Institutional Review Board, the approval letter and any other requested documents were presented to the school Principal and the Chief Leadership and Learning Officer for the school district. I adhered to district policies regarding contacting principals and colleagues. Additionally, district protocols such as maintaining teacher confidentiality were followed when sharing information about the study, discussing informed consent, and collecting and distributing data.

After the IRB and study site granted permission, participants were recruited. From a sample pool of 350 teachers, 10 participants were chosen. After gaining the appropriate permissions from the school system's Chief Learning and Leadership officer, I contacted potential participants via email. The school system provided the emails, and I sent the initial

email contact personally. Intentionally selected faculty members who have employed innovative techniques as educators were selected as participants. Detailed study information was provided to all potential participants, and if chosen, they signed an informed consent document (Appendix C). Potential participants completed a screener verifying they have innovation experience and are core content area teachers. I sought typical case participants to highlight the average experience for teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection Plan

There are four basic types of data collection for qualitative studies as outlined in Creswell &Poth (2018): interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual materials. Three data collection methods were implemented to understand how organizational trust affects innovation in elementary schools. For this study, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and prompted journal writing were used because they have been identified as acceptable forms of data for case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

An interview is a conversation between individuals about a predetermined topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative interviews provide a time for researchers to listen to understand the first-hand account of the participant's experience (McGrath et al., 2018). While it is preferable to conduct interviews face-to-face, technology allows researchers to explore other options when in-person interviews are not feasible. Interviews conducted online or on technology-based platforms should be vigilant when protecting privacy, data ownership, and authenticity, among other considerations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this study, the preferred interview method was face-to-face or online. Semi-structured interviews provided structure and freedom to explore topics as they arose in the discussion.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one when possible and recorded for later analysis. If in-person interviews were not possible, Zoom or a similar platform was used to conduct and record the conversation. Using pre-determined research questions, I asked every participant the same question set. This data was the first source for my triangulation of data.

After these interviews, I reviewed transcripts for initial themes. Participants with similar themes emerging from their interviews were asked to participate in focus groups. Those participating were asked to elaborate on a predetermined list of questions generated from themes created after the individual interviews. The same focus group participants will be asked to complete journal prompts to expand their experiences further.

Table 1

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career in your current position. CRQ
2. Describe your current position in an educational institution, including any meaningful content focus you may have. CRQ
3. On a scale of one to ten, with one being 'not very trustworthy' and ten being 'very trustworthy' how would you describe the level of organizational trust in your building and why? CRQ
4. On a scale of one to ten, with one being 'not very trustworthy' and ten being 'very trustworthy' how would you describe how would you define the level of organizational trust in your grade level and why? CRQ
5. What factors do you feel affect your sense of organizational trust? CRQ
6. What kinds of behaviors would increase or decrease your sense of organizational trust within your current school? CRQ

7. Who do you feel is responsible for creating a sense of organizational trust in your building? CRQ
8. What type of trust behaviors do you feel create a psychologically safe environment? CRQ
9. Please tell me about the importance your school district places on innovation in the classroom. CRQ
10. How often do you feel you are asked to implement innovative curriculum practices in your classroom? SQ1
11. How often do you feel you are asked to implement innovative digital practices in your classrooms? SQ2
12. How often do you feel you are asked to implement innovative teaching methods in your classrooms? SQ3
13. Who do you feel begins the push for innovation in your district? Does it start at the central office, principal/ assistant principal, or does it stem from peers? CRQ
14. In your opinion, why are teachers being pushed to innovate? CRQ
15. Describe a time when you were required to utilize an innovative curriculum in your current teaching role. Describe the support you received from other teachers or administrators during that innovation. SQ1
16. Describe a time when you were required to utilize a digital innovation in your current teaching role. Describe the support you received from other teachers or administrators during that innovation. SQ2
17. Describe a time when you were required to utilize a methodological innovation in your current teaching role. Describe the support you received from other teachers or administrators during that innovation. SQ3

18. What obstacles do you feel you had to overcome while implementing an innovative curriculum? How did organizational trust affect your ability to implement those innovative practices? SQ1
19. What obstacles do you feel you had to overcome while implementing digital innovations? This could be one-to-one technology, an application, a website, an intervention, etc. How did organizational trust affect your ability to implement those digital innovations? SQ2
20. What obstacles do you feel you had to overcome while implementing methodological innovations? Share a time you were asked to use a methodological innovation. This could be flipped classrooms, STEM/ STEAM, PLC, etc. SQ3
21. Describe a time when you felt supported during a time of innovation. CRQ
22. Describe a time when you did not feel supported during a time of innovation. CRQ

Questions 1 and 2 are icebreaker questions to help the participant become more comfortable with the interview process. Questions 3-8 establish the participant's point of view regarding their current experience with organizational trust and trust-based behaviors. This allows the researcher to understand the participant's reasoning for their feelings. Questions 9-14 probe the participant's experience with innovation and what they feel was required of them in their position. Questions 15-17 ask for specific experiences that could be similar across the schools being studied. Questions 18-20 are specifically aimed at the sub-question topics of digital innovation, curriculum innovation, and methodological innovation. Questions 21 and 22 are asked to explore personal feelings regarding organizational trust behaviors that are present or may be lacking.

Focus Group Data Collection Approach

A focus group is a variation of the traditional one-on-one interview conducted when participants are similar and feel comfortable sharing in a group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These interviews are a group discussion under the guidance of a facilitator (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). While this form of interaction can resemble a meeting due to preplanning on the part of the researcher, there is a degree of freedom as participants respond to the researcher and other participants (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Focus group members will be asked to participate after identifying specific themes from one-on-one interviews. The participants chosen will be selected based on their responses as they relate to the themes identified during the analysis. This data was the second source for my triangulation of data.

In the same way, individual interviews are conducted following Yin's (2018) recommendation, each focus group interview will be transcribed and saved using a focus group identification number, site, date, and the word *focus group*. Additional field notes and commentary will be arranged in data files by topic. I will continue to combine major themes into categories. These will be labeled and filed under a specific name for easy retrieval. All documents will be labeled and cataloged. Safe storage of all materials, virtual and physical, is a priority. I will develop a tracking method to ensure the text has been read multiple times to look for trends.

Table 2

Focus Group Questions

1. Talk about a time when you were innovative with people you felt were trustworthy in your organization. CRQ

2. Share a time when you were innovative with people you did not feel were trustworthy in your organization. CRQ
3. Tell me what creates a sense of psychological safety in your organization. CRQ
4. Tell me what types of innovation might flourish in your school if you felt a sense of organizational trust in your school. CRQ
5. Share a time when you were asked to be innovative with the curriculum. Discuss how organizational trust played a role in your adoption or refusal to support innovation. SQ1
6. Share a time when you were asked to be innovative with technology. Discuss how organizational trust played a role in your adoption or refusal to support innovation. SQ2
7. Share a time when you were asked to be innovative with teaching methods. Discuss how organizational trust played a role in your adoption or refusal to support innovation. SQ3

Question 1 explores a time participants felt led to engage in innovative behaviors and seeks to identify why they felt led to do so. Question 2 explores the opposite, probing into the reasons why someone would refuse to participate fully in innovation. Question 3 looks to verify whether psychological safety is an imperative element in innovation and organizational trust. Question 4 seeks to identify what teachers would be willing to try if they felt a sense of psychological safety or organizational trust. Question 5 specifically relates to the sub-question about curriculum innovation. Question 6 is directly connected to the sub-question regarding technological innovation. Question 7 relates to the sub-question regarding methodological innovation.

Journal Prompt Data Collection Approach

Journals allow self-reporting by participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These diaries can be written, voice-recorded, or videotaped (Hensen et al., 2021). Hensen et al. (2021) discuss the significance of offering prompts instead of open-ended journaling. The authors state that providing a guiding question can help direct the participant's documentation and maintain focus. This data will expand the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon. Participants will be given prompt questions in both digital and paper form. Participants can choose the method they are most comfortable with to respond. All journal prompts will be given together so they can be completed as participants have time. This data was the final source for my triangulation of data.

Table 3

Journal Prompt Questions

1. Write about when you implemented an innovative technology, new curriculum, or teaching method in the classroom and felt unsuccessful. What organizational trust factors were absent? CRQ
2. Write about a time when you participated in an innovative program or teaching method and felt successful. What organizational trust factors were in place? CRQ
3. Write about how a lack of organizational trust affects your ability to support innovation. CRQ

Question 1 addresses the sub-questions regarding technology, curriculum, and methodology innovation. Question 2 explores the personal experiences of teachers who felt successful due to organizational trust. Question 3 seeks to determine the reasons a teacher might not feel supported during innovation.

Data Analysis

As recommended by Yin (2018), data was analyzed from three different sources through explanation building. To explain this phenomenon, I started with this presumption: The problem is that K-12 educators distrust leadership, resulting in a lack of innovative support. It was my hope that the causal sequences of this phenomenon would reveal critical insights into why elementary school teachers were hesitant to implement innovative techniques. Because explanation building is iterative in nature, I hoped to hear trust and innovation themes emerge from teachers' lived experiences (Yin, 2018).

To begin, I acquainted myself with participant responses through multiple readings of the individual interviews, journal prompt responses, and focus group interview transcripts. Utilizing Taguette online, I uploaded the transcripts and began highlighting initial reoccurring ideas. This online program helped me organize the data into meaningful groups. I reviewed the initial groups once more to be sure the initial idea could stand alone as themes and made revisions as necessary (Yin, 2018).

After that, I identified possible sub-themes by measuring the frequency of each recurrence of response. The highest rate of response became my sub-themes. Participant comments about perceived feelings of belonging and cooperation related to positive organizational trust occurred in twelve of seventy-nine comments. Participant responses relating to trust through change occurred in 17 of 79 comments. Finally, participant responses related to collective responsibility occurred in sixteen of seventy-nine comments. Participants with negative organizational trust responses were grouped similarly. Belonging was mentioned in five of the 53 responses. Collective responsibility and cooperation were mentioned in nine of the 53

responses. Support was mentioned in 10 of 53 responses. Finally, authenticity was noted in seven out of 53 responses.

Next, I compared all the data from interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts for all the case studies against my proposed explanation, which was that school administrators were a barrier to elementary school innovation. Ten out of ten participants across the case studies revealed that they felt a sense of organizational trust with their administrators and would be willing to try proposed innovations. It was at this juncture that I realized I would have to revise my earlier statement (Yin, 2018). My statement would now read: The problem is that K-12 educators distrust grade-level teams, resulting in a lack of innovative support. I compared the details of all ten cases against my revised proposal. My procedure was partly deductive based on my proposed explanation and partly inductive due to the data provided by participants (Yin, 2018). Applying my revised explanation to multiple case studies made for a stronger case for the revised explanation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is an evolving idea that incorporates traditional and contemporary views (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Trustworthiness has changed from the research of LeCompte and Goetz (1982) and their focus on reliability, objectivity, and internal and external validity. Lincoln and Guba (1986) began the transformation towards credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that researchers now combine with extended field research, thick descriptions, and relationships with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility rests on the understanding that the researcher has provided an accurate picture of the phenomena based on data acquired during the research (Shenton, 2004). To ensure

credibility, I will utilize well-established research methods such as interviews, focus groups, and interviews. I will achieve credibility in three ways: (a) iterative questioning techniques to ensure informant honesty, (b) triangulation, and (c) member-checking (Shenton, 2004).

Iterative Questioning

Iterative questioning seeks to clarify and determine the honesty of a participant through rephrased questions (Shenton, 2004). As a reflective process, I will ask iterative questions to determine if participants shared their perceived experiences reliably (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). In my research, this might look like a primary question asked in the individual interview and then asked again differently in the focus group. If the responses are similar, I can assume it was a reliable response. If the responses are dissimilar, I will eliminate them from the study as unreliable. After reflection, I will revise the interview and focus group questions to have the participants revisit the phenomenon to verify that they recalled it similarly to the first interview (Arsel, 2017).

Triangulation

In this study, data triangulation is a strategy to establish trustworthiness. I will analyze data collection methods, sources, and theories to understand first-hand experiences told by teachers about their experiences with organizational trust and innovation in elementary schools. The methods will include semi-structured interviews (Smith & Harré, 2005), focus groups (Powell & Single, 1996), and journaling (Lutz & Paretti, 2019). After studying the data collected from each method individually for general themes, I will then consider them all through the lens of organizational trust. Repeating the data collection process to search for themes related specifically to organizational trust allows me to specify organizational trust as an issue or non-issue.

Member Checking

Member checking involves returning to participants to check for accuracy and correlation with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). Birt et al. (2016) reported that member checking increases validation by exploring and expanding the data gathered in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Upon completion of individual interviews and focus groups, I will allow all participants to view the transcripts of their discussions and indicate if there are misrepresentations. This will not be necessary for journal prompts as they are written firsthand by the participants. The participants will all have access to a digital version of the final draft of the research to check for accuracy before submission.

Transferability

Transferability considers the application of these research findings to future research (Shenton, 2004). I will retell, in detail, participants' stories about implementing innovative practices. I will describe what organizational trust means to participants and how it affects their innovation ability. While elementary schools have a unique perspective, this study could apply to middle and high school settings. This study may offer an understanding of organizational trust's role in creating an innovative learning environment. I will explain how this same information could apply to similar educational situations. To aid transferability, I will detail my interview, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1986) described dependability as demonstrating that research findings were consistent and replicable. I will be transparent regarding my research design, implementation, and the details related to how data was gathered. Providing a list of questions used and the methods used to analyze the data aids other researchers in faithfully conducting a

similar study. This is valuable as the reproduction of this study in middle and high school settings is feasible and appropriate to determine if the phenomenon extends beyond elementary school.

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that the research findings result from participants' ideas and experiences (Shenton, 2004). I will use three techniques to ensure the confirmability of this study. First, I will create and maintain an electronic audit trail documenting my procedures, preliminary data, analyzed data, and the final report. Second, I will maintain documents related to my study for review upon request. Additionally, the documents I create during triangulation to determine how collected data interacted will be saved for review.

Ethical Considerations

Yin (2018) shared that researchers must strive to uphold the highest ethical standards during research studies through thoughtful scholarship and behavior. Participants must be informed and protected during research studies. Providing information such as the study's nature, how to withdraw, and confidentiality ensures that participants are not harmed or misled during a study. These measures support the researcher's efforts to create a safe environment for participants to share their experiences.

Permissions

Site permission was sought from the school district. My building principal was aware of my work and expected to discuss this with me. The school district required that I complete a document outlining the study and any questionnaires or screeners. After successfully defending this study proposal, I submitted my study proposal to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB determined the study followed guidelines to ensure the ethical treatment

of human subjects. Upon receiving IRB approval (see Appendix A), I presented it to the building principal and then to the district's Chief Leadership and Learning Officer. This document is in Appendix B.

Other Participant Protections

Human participants were protected by revealing the nature of the study, voluntary participation, right to withdrawal, and confidentiality measures. The privacy and confidentiality of participants and sites were protected using pseudonyms, keyed storage of physical documents, and password-protected online documents. Participants were selected equitably. All data were destroyed after three years following Liberty University guidelines unless it is to be used for future research. The risk of harm to the participants is low, individual risk minimal, and no vulnerable groups participated. The benefit to participants is the possible revelation of organizational trust as a barrier to innovation. If identified as a cause, future educators and administrators could work to create a culture of strong organizational trust before taking on innovative tasks and methodologies to ensure successful implementation.

Summary

Phenomenology seeks to understand a lived experience on a personal level (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support. I used this multiple case study as an effective way to understand my topic better. The procedures utilized are documented and stored for future use in ongoing studies. Clearly defining my methods and viewpoints assists researchers in understanding how and why I conducted my research. Transparency, access to documents, clearly defined methods, and trustworthiness are all integral pieces to ensuring my research is valid and reproducible in different settings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

When resistance to innovation in education was perceived, the researcher explored the experiences of teachers and contributing factors. The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers in the Knight School District. This chapter outlines the research findings by the themes revealed and the research questions. The findings show that participants perceive and have experienced organizational distrust, specifically between colleagues. This chapter includes the data collected from participants.

Participants

Three school administrators responded to this initial email request and allowed me to contact their employees. It was mutually agreed that all three sites would mass email the employees with the invitation to participate. After the initial email was distributed, six individuals contacted me to participate. All but one were eligible to participate as they met the qualifications I previously established. I had multiple people approach me personally to ask about participation in the study. All these individuals declined to participate, noting they were uncomfortable with the possibility of retaliation, or their identity being discovered.

Realizing I needed more participation, I sent personal requests to individuals who might meet my qualifications at the three participating schools. I received five more participants, all of whom were able to be interviewed. I attempted to reach out to the two declining schools through personal contacts to see if they might consider participating. While this was initially received positively, there was no follow-through on the part of the potential participants. I only recruited ten participants.

The participants who showed an interest in joining the study were asked to fill out an online questionnaire that asked them to share information, including email, race, age, years of experience, gender, highest level of education, school location, and content area that they teach. The participants who met the initial screening qualifications were contacted via personal email regarding interview and focus group availability. A time was agreed upon to meet in person or through Microsoft Teams for the interview.

Table 4

Participants

Name	**Age**	**Race**	**Content**	**Grade**	**Experience**	**School**
Ms. Jaycee	44	White	ELA/Math	4	6	Blue
Ms. Darby	43	No Response	Reading	4	21	Blue
Ms.Penbert	43	White	Math	3	21	Blue
Ms. Randison	50	White	ELA/ Math	K	18	Blue
Ms. Melbrook	53	White	Math/ Science	K-5	20	Blue
Ms. Nedson	50	White	Math/ Science	4	15	Green
Ms. Kiliam	36	White	Math	5	12	Blue
Ms. June	52	White	Reading/ Math	5	19	Yellow
Ms. Jask	42	White	ELA	1	20	Blue
Name	**Age**	**Race**	**Content**	**Grade**	**Experience**	**School**
Ms. Babbit	62	White	ELA	5	11	Blue

Ms. Jaycee

Ms. Jaycee is a 44-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught ELA/ math special education for six years. She has taught her entire career at the Blue School. She

acknowledges she has experienced barriers to innovation during her teaching career. While sharing she felt most of the teachers at the school were trustworthy, she acknowledged that some people were not trustworthy. "It's important that we are colleagues and friends."

Ms. Darby

Ms. Darby is a 43-year-old female who chose not to disclose her ethnicity. She has taught various grade levels during her career but is currently teaching kindergarten. She shared the barriers she experienced during her twenty-one-year career as a teacher have changed her perceptions of trust. She stated, "There is no team to me.....these people don't want to change their old ways. They are set in stone."

Ms. Penbert

Ms. Penbert is a 43-year-old white, non-Hispanic female. She has been teaching third-grade math for twenty-one years. She has taught at various schools and currently teaches at the Blue School. Ms. Penbert shared that there were moments this school year when she felt unsuccessful in implementing new math standards. She said there were multiple causes including lack of time, navigating new resources, and not having common assessments in her school district.

Ms. Randison

Ms. Randison is a 50-year-old white, non-Hispanic woman who has taught her entire career in the same school. While she has served in various grades, she currently teaches kindergarten. She acknowledges she has experienced barriers to innovation during her career as a teacher in all grade levels. She shared that her current position was not one where trusting relationships were established. She further explained that she struggled to come to work knowing something she said would be used against her at some point.

Ms. Melbrook

Ms. Melbrook is a 53-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught various grades for 20 years. She holds a teacher support position and works directly with children learning ELA. She has taught at the Blue School for her entire career. She shared that trust plays a large role in group problem-solving. "I need to be able to get an honest answer without being penalized." While discussing her changing roles throughout her career, she said in all grade levels, she needed a safe space to talk through problems or decisions.

Ms. Nedson

Ms. Nedson is a 50-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught fourth-grade math for 17 years. She has taught at various schools during her career and currently teaches at the Green School. She acknowledges she has experienced barriers to innovation during her teaching career. She spoke of entering a new school this year. "I'm running around trying to get someone to help me, and that kind of started my year off in this place.... feeling abandoned." Her need to feel psychologically safe was unmet, leaving her feeling alone and in a position of distrust.

Ms. Killiam

Ms. Killiam is a 36-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught at both the elementary and middle school levels. She currently teaches fifth-grade math at the Blue School. She spoke about her negative experiences with innovation. She stated she was frequently asked to try innovative curricula. "Stuff that we aren't comfortable with, or they don't even know if the research is there...or if it works."

Ms. June

Ms. June is a 52-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught math at the Yellow School for her entire career. When discussing barriers to innovation, she spoke about behaviors related to organizational trust. She expressed that she understood the need for innovation. She shared that student populations were changing and felt that teaching methods should also change. She felt that teachers themselves could be barriers to innovation by "not acknowledging how different this generation of learners truly is and that they have very different needs from what we are accustomed to sometimes."

Ms. Jask

Ms. Jask is a 50-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught first-grade reading and math for twenty years at the Blue School. She acknowledges she has experienced barriers to innovation during her teaching career. When asked what kind of behaviors would affect her sense of trust, she shared issues such as other staff members not completing their responsibilities, favoritism, and equality.

Ms. Babbit

Ms. Babbit is a 62-year-old white, non-Hispanic female who has taught at various schools for 11 years. She currently teaches fifth-grade ELA at the Blue School. She acknowledges she has experienced trust barriers when working in a grade-level team. She described her feelings about distrust in her building. "I need to feel like someone is 'for' me." She expressed feelings that people have hidden agendas that prevent trust from being built. Another key issue for Ms. Babbit was communication. She felt that her situation lacked cohesive trust on all levels.

Results

The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers in the Knight School District. The data collection methods were individual interviews, journal prompts, and focus group interviews. After reviewing the transcripts and journal prompts, two primary themes and nine sub themes were developed. These themes are displayed below in Table 5.

Table 5

Primary Themes and Sub Themes

Theme	**Sub-Theme**
Positive Organizational Trust Experiences	Belonging Cooperation Trust through Change Collective Responsibility
Negative Organizational Trust Experiences	Belonging Collective Responsibility and Cooperation Support Authenticity

The data collected were confirmed using three methods: individual interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group. Individual interviews with participants lasted between forty-five to fifty minutes in length. The interviews were built around open-ended questions to allow participants to give detailed responses of their personal experiences. Participants shared personal experiences as they perceived them, allowing them to provide expanded accounts of incidences where they felt organizational trust or a lack thereof.

All participants completed the journal prompts digitally or by hand. This provided participants with the opportunity to add any additional information they may have felt they omitted during the individual interviews or wanted to expand upon. The prompts were analyzed carefully to determine if existing themes were corroborated or if new themes were emerging.

The focus group was held on a Microsoft Teams digital platform. This allowed participants who had similar responses to speak on topics shared during their individual interviews. This meeting was digitally recorded and transcribed for review. Again, the transcript was reviewed to back up existing themes or introduce new ones.

The participants provided the study with an invaluable opportunity to understand their perspective regarding events that prevent or enrich organizational trust. All participants were open about the fact that they had all experienced positive and negative trust interactions. It is important to note that because my analytic method was explanation building, I was able to revise my theoretical statement based on the participant feedback. The participants' responses redirected the focus of this study from trust issues with administrators to trust issues within grade-level teams.

Positive Experiences with Organizational Trust

Many teachers rated their organizational trust with administrators in their building very highly. Nine out of ten participants rated their trusting relationship as eight or higher on a Likert scale. Ms. June commented that she felt the administration made decisions based on the best interests of everyone. She continued, "Everyone is strongly encouraged and supported to collaborate and be active members of the school team." An unexpected finding occurred when many participants shifted the focus of organizational trust from their administrator to their team experiences.

While interviewing participants, common themes of high-performance team functioning became apparent. Common sub themes that emerged were cooperation, trust through change, belonging, and collective responsibility. These responses aligned with the business model of high-performance teams explored in the literature review section of this document.

Belonging

Many of the comments about organizational trust related to belonging touched on being accepted into a group and feeling like they belonged on the team. Seven out of 10 participants made direct references to basic kindness and its relationship to having positive organizational trust experiences when all three data sources were examined. These comments were not examples of extraordinary kindnesses that went above and beyond but rather examples of basic positive social exchanges. In her journal prompt, Ms. Babbit shared that the qualities she looked for were "honesty, good communication, open-door policy, being approachable, and authentic." Ms. Nedson spoke in the focus group about understanding different personality styles and accepting them. She shared that when you understand a person's motivation, "you can understand and accept why certain things are important to them." Ms. Penbert and Ms. Jaycee both expressed these feelings in simpler terms during their individual interviews. Ms. Jaycee spoke of simple human respect, stating, "If they are nice and kind to me, I feel seen." Ms. Penbert shared she had been fortunate to be with people "I can get along with."

Cooperation

The importance of cooperation as an integral part of teamwork was mirrored in my interviews with participants. Eight out of 10 respondents mentioned cooperation as part of their understanding of positive organizational trust. Their experiences were united in that participants expressed there was trust if the stakeholders were cooperating.

Ms. Kiliam shared during her individual interview that her team was able to break apart new tasks and come together later to assemble the final project or figure out problems. Ms. Melbrook wrote in her journal prompt that even though her team had "ups and downs," they were ultimately able to cooperate and produce a finished product. Ms. Penbert built on this idea, stating that she felt heard and valued even when her team struggled. "If I express my opinion, I won't be in trouble...I am part of the team." Ms. Randison added to that sentiment when she shared in her individual interview, "The ability to disagree and move past it goes a long way." When a team can move beyond disagreements and cooperate, positive organizational trust is evident, as noted by Ms. Nedson in the focus group discussion. "I can really speak freely, and I feel respected and heard in that environment." After the individual interviews, journal prompts, and focus group, it was clear that cooperation was a key element in team functionality.

Trust Through Change

Trust through change is an important element of innovation that was illuminated by the participants. To experience positive organizational trust, they needed to feel supported through an innovative experience. Eight of the 10 participants spoke positively of times when they felt supported by their colleagues. They shared that they needed a safe space to share their struggles with innovation and how their needs were met.

Several teachers mentioned the need for a “safe” person to talk with who would not judge them when they were experiencing difficulties during their individual interviews. Ms. Kiliam said, "I can call my LSS, my administrators, and they give me whatever I need." "When you have a concern that is being addressed, that's great," said Ms. Nedson in a focus group. Speaking of the importance of personal relationships and the ability to go to someone for help, Ms. Melbrook said, "I need to be comfortable to go and say, 'I'm frustrated with this.' It makes you

very vulnerable." Ms. Jaycee's journal prompt response revealed how she felt similarly when she said, "My sense of trust allowed me to go to a co-worker for help." In the focus group, Ms. Penbert stated feeling that someone "has your back" made her feel trusting. Ms. Babbit built on this idea, saying, "I had .... tell me, you do not work for me, you work with me." She continued to express how much that support meant to her. "She came to my rescue... I cannot tell you how supported I felt by her." Ms. Randison spoke of successful teams and their relationship with trust through change during her individual interview.

> I have always felt like the teams who have been the most successful are the ones who can say, I know it's hard; what can I do to help you? And help them through something that was difficult...or next time can we try it this way? And everyone is still okay, not offended, and people do the same thing to you. And that's been, to me, the most high-functioning teams we have been on.

Having a colleague who could be trusted personally or professionally allowed the respondents to be more open to innovation knowing they were not alone.

Collective Responsibility

Eight out of 10 respondents spoke about collective responsibility (Qian & Walker, 2021). Mrs. Randison described this well, responding to the journal prompt. "In teaching, everyone's goal is working with the kids and helping them be successful." Shared responsibility was also an issue for Ms. Darby. The individual interview questions probed thoughts about who is ultimately responsible for innovation. She said, "We all are responsible for what happens in our building." Ms. Jaycee backed up these sentiments by echoing, "They (administration) want us all to be on the same page." Experientially, this can be effective when team members follow through on their commitments to the end goal. During the focus group Ms. Nedson shared, "If we make a

commitment, then you follow through with that commitment." Ms. Newberry echoed this feeling. in her journal prompt writing, "We will do what we know is in their best interest to get results." When stakeholders honor their commitments to each other, organizational trust grows. During the individual interviews Ms. Jask and Ms. Babbit again reinforced the idea that positive organizational trust is evident when "We have a mindset that we are responsible for all of the students."

Negative Experiences with Organizational Trust

While many teachers experienced support from their administrators, they reported many negative experiences with grade-level colleagues. Mrs. Killiam rated her team trust at a "two" and then changed her score to a "0.5" during her individual interview. In her journal response, Ms. Darby explained, "Collaboration is lost when you don't have a relationship or trust. In the end, students lose out." Some subthemes were like positive organizational trust, while others were new.

Belonging

While experiencing positive belonging experiences can increase trust, being alienated or feeling alone can destroy trust. Three out of ten participants shared experiences of feeling like they did not belong. While Ms. Randison spoke about organizational trust in a positive light, she also shared times that were not positive during her individual interview.

> When someone is extremely rigid, or not taking in the whole scenario. Like, it's not just your way, and it needs to be everyone cohesive. I think that breaks down the trust.

Ms. Nedson also shared a time when her colleagues cried daily. "They were made to feel so small, and I think that was it." She also shared during her individual interview a time when age

was a barrier to belonging. She was working with much younger teachers. She felt alienated because her opinions were being dismissed. She said, "We could have looked at it differently so I could have been heard and validated, not dismissed."

Collective Responsibility and Cooperation

Four out of 10 respondents shared negative experiences with collective responsibility and described the effect on trust. When collective responsibility is not established, it can lead to individuals not fulfilling their responsibilities to the collective group. Ms. Kiliam described an experience in her journal prompt where personal feelings drove a team apart. "They were more worried about if 'they' were seen as the best. Not if our team did what was best." Ms. Nedson shared a time when data was being reviewed during the focus group. "It becomes personal sometimes, and people refuse to fulfill their responsibilities or withdraw." She continued, "If we make a commitment, then you follow through with that commitment." During her individual interview Ms. Jask added to the explanation of what happens when collective responsibility is absent. "Staff not holding up their job responsibilities. Letting some staff slide on things but not others." When individuals are putting themselves before the group, organizational trust will suffer.

Cooperation emerged as a sub theme when six out of ten participants spoke of the negative effect it had on organizational trust. While effective cooperation boosts organizational trust, ineffective cooperation can destroy trust. Ms. Kiliam blamed emotionality as the root cause of a lack of cooperation in her team during her interview. "You cannot look a certain way without pissing someone off. It's ridiculous." In her individual interview Ms. Randison mirrored those sentiments, stating, "There is some undermining and manipulation that happens that can be very difficult when you are trying to be a team." The lack of cooperation then affects the entire

team dynamic. Ms. Randison continued, "When someone finds it unimportant, it comes back on everyone else." Ms. Nedson said this type of behavior is why she began to isolate herself. "When we agree to do something... I need you to go through with it." A similar experience was had by Ms. Babbit She shared this in her journal prompt.

> There was a lot of arguing and emotionally charged situations that created distrust between us. It is better than it was, but it has taken a full year to get to the point where we can meet without too much drama. Still, the trust has been broken, and of course, our guards are up.

After speaking with the participants, it was clear that without cooperation, there would be no collective responsibility. Everyone was looking to protect themselves first and foremost.

Support

The need for support during innovation was discussed by five out of 10 participants. When support was missing, organizational trust was lacking. Instances of supporting colleague decisions were noted by Ms. Penbert during the focus group discussion. This caused her to feel a lack of trust based on missing psychological safety. Ms. Darby shared in her individual interview that when supportive actions and language were missing, she often felt she would be called out for being wrong. "I feel like I'm wrong, even when I'm not doing anything wrong." The issue of support should be addressed both vertically and horizontally. Ms. Kiliam said, "I feel like there is not a lot of trust or support from our ILT or LSS." Ms. Nedson spoke of ways teachers might not be supported during the focus group discussion. "Maybe if a concern wasn't addressed, or if you weren't given the supplies or resources that were necessary." She shared that once when she was at a new school, she felt unsupported by her colleagues. "I was left to my own devices. I was running around trying to get people to help me." She continued, "That kind of started off my year

in this place of feeling abandoned." Ms. June took another approach in her individual interview. She spoke of peers who were resistant to innovation. She said there wasn't a shared understanding of the need to innovate. This left her in an uncomfortable position. "I do not feel supported when dealing with these team members. We are left to pick up the pieces." These scenarios speak of the lived experiences of teachers that have led them to feel a lack of organizational trust.

Authenticity

Lastly, an unexpected sub theme emerged: authenticity. It was noted by four of ten participants that stakeholders who were less than truthful about their actions or words were a negative force on organizational trust. Ms. Darby shared in her written response that when she had an administrator visit her team meeting she was caught off guard. The team had met without her and planned to run the meeting differently while the administrator was present. She said, "The facilitator started talking about norms. We have never done norms. This is a dog and pony show." She felt they were not representing their true selves, and this example, along with others, caused her trust in them to wane. Ms. Babbit shared in her journal response she thought this issue was connected to a lack of genuine communication. "Lack of communication is a huge factor for me. A lack of genuineness that begins at the top." After listening to teachers, it was clear when they perceived the actions of other teachers as inauthentic, they felt distrust, even if the actions weren't directed at them personally.

Outlier Data and Findings

There were many discussions regarding trusting relationships and school administrators. Initially, the focus of this study was directed at administration as a barrier to innovation. As themes emerged, the focus, led by the teachers themselves, became trust in a team dynamic.

One outlier was noted during this study. Ms. Jask, was on a successful grade level team. Her issue with trust was based on support being provided during times of innovation, rather than on the team she was working with. She shared in both her interview and her journal that she trusted her team and had great relationships both personally and professionally. Her issue with distrust came specifically not being provided training during times of innovation.

Research Question Responses

This section discusses findings addressed by the Central Research Questions, and Sub Questions. The information shared by participants through individual interviews, journal prompts and focus groups was synthesized. These responses helped to illustrate the participants' experiences with organizational trust and innovation.

Central Research Question

How do public elementary school teachers' organizational trust perceptions affect innovative educational practices?

The participants' perspective is that organizational trust is based on team trust dynamics rather than that of individuals to administrators. Team interactions were deemed more important due to the amount of time spent with team members. Nine out of ten participants reported that they rated their organizational trust relationships with administrators at an 8, 9, or 10 out of 10.

Teams were generally open to innovation when they felt a sense of belonging in the group, cooperated, trusted each other through change, and felt a collective sense of responsibility for team decisions and actions. However, teams without the previously mentioned elements or were lacking authenticity and support during innovation were not receptive to innovation and even adopted quiet quitting as a technique to manage inevitable failure. Ms. Randison, a leader on her grade-level team, spoke about this struggle.

> We are doing this thing because it's important for our school. Then someone finds it unimportant or less important and it comes back on everyone else. You guys didn't pull your weight. We all did. I don't want to be the person who points out the one who didn't but like, it's difficult.

A team that does not communicate or work effectively will not succeed at a high level. Although they may be able to function at a low level indefinitely, the push to create professional learning communities that exchange information both vertically and horizontally requires high-functioning teams.

It was apparent through the conversations with participants that they did feel some pressure to innovate, they weren't openly against innovation. When asked for possible reasons for innovation, global innovation was an emergent theme. In her interview, Ms. Darby said, "The world is changing. We have to keep up." Ms. Nedson spoke of the changing world students are growing up in. "The kids are changing every day...if we don't meet them where they are at, we will lose them." Ms. Newberry gave the most detailed response in her journal prompt:

> The twenty-first century learner is a very different creature. They not only learn differently but also process information differently. They will be asked to compete globally in a very different world than many educators grew up in. As we have moved away from a society that only values labor and instead values innovation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Our curriculum, teaching practices, beliefs, and attitudes must reflect an understanding and a respect for change.

These responses and others led me to understand that educators and their administrators are on the same page regarding innovation. The difference lies in how the innovation occurs, not why it is happening.

Regarding the origins of innovation, most respondents stated they believed it originated from the central office. In her interview, Ms. June said, "I think this starts at the very top with an innovative mindset and an understanding of the importance.... and moves inward into the schools." Ms. Babbit concurred, "I have always thought it starts at the central office." Most teachers I spoke with held the building principals blameless. Principals were perceived as neutral participants in the chain of command.

Sub-Question One

How do the organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt curriculum innovations?

Organizational trust components were present in the discussions held regarding innovative curricula. Positive experiences clustered around trust issues such as teamwork, support, communication, and cooperation. Teachers are trying to implement innovation when it is asked of them. "They (admin) have asked us to try it (Inspire). I'm trying to comply, but I don't love it," said Ms. Nedson. Teachers like Ms. Nedson are willing to try because they feel supported.

Ms. Kiliam shared, "I can call my LSS, my administrators, and they gave me whatever I needed. It was awesome." When faced with a problem, Ms. Melbrook shared the response from her school. "When we went back and said it (the program) wasn't working, it was redelivered in a different way, and we understood." Ms. Jaycee shared her support experience. "The reading specialist is very good about coming into our classroom and modeling and I feel that is very helpful." Ms. Babbit spoke of support for PLC innovations. "I feel that we receive a great deal of support from admin, teacher leaders, and peers in regard to collaboration." These examples shed

light on the idea that when supported, educators will continue to work toward successful innovation implementation.

Sub-Question Two

How do the organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt digital innovations?

Participants shared mixed emotions regarding digital innovation. Eight of ten participants had a positive experience they wanted to speak about. When asked, participants' positive experiences involved various software programs designed to increase student learning. Of note was the educator's acknowledgment that digital innovations were increasing student mastery and engagement. Ms. Darby said her experience with digital innovation was supported when "platforms were user-friendly, organized, and easy to navigate." Ms. Kiliam said she was using digital testing platforms to "mirror the milestones" in preparation for state testing. Data collection was also a positive experience made easier through digital innovation. Ms. Melbrook said using programs like MAP testing helps predict student performance. "This is our third or fourth year with MAP. So, they have stuck with this one for a while." These shared experiences are important as they speak to the willingness of educators to implement new digital innovations.

While many positive experiences were shared, they were buried in an avalanche of negative experiences. In all three interview settings, participants shared their frustration with digital innovations. They shared that classroom expectations have not kept pace with digital advances. Teachers are walking a fine line between stakeholder expectations about how much technology to implement and when to use it. "It's a hard thing. You have to really justify being on the computer," shared Ms. Penbert. She continued, "I think a hands-on center would be more accepted."

Another negative experience voiced in all three interview platforms was that of training. Multiple participants said they received no training, minimal training, or unhelpful training when asked to use new technologies. Ms. Melbrook's school was given new smartboard technology. She said, "We got a board, and you got nothing. You had to figure it out." She continued, " I went to a training for Illuminate four years ago, and since then....nothing." Ms. Darby shared that when asked to implement a new digital technology, she almost gave up.

> I was frustrated for the first three months because the thirty-six hours of training we got in person did not give me ample time or tools to properly navigate the very cumbersome and not user-friendly website.

Ms. Nedson shared that her age was a factor in digital innovation. "I'm older, and it doesn't come naturally for me. There has to be a time to figure things out." The issues experienced with training speak to the lack of support educators receive when asked to implement new innovations. Ms. Babbit elaborated, "So many times I have to rely on other teachers to show me how to navigate programs." "You have to have been trained on some of that, I think for teachers it's overwhelming," said Ms. Nedson. Teachers must be taught to effectively implement the programs they are asked to use.

Teachers overwhelmingly expressed the need for easily accessible support in the form of classroom assistance, financial assistance, and digital upgrades. Ms. Jask said, " I do not feel supported when I am not provided technology, or it is outdated." Ms. Babbit spoke of the time needed to get the technology repaired. "When things happen with computers it can be weeks or months even before it gets addressed." A co-worker can be a source of support, but only if they also have the training and time to assist. In her individual interview, Ms. Jaycee said, "I was asking for help, and people were bothered by it because they also had a lot to do." Some schools

have a technology specialist who comes to the school. However, this is a cause for frustration as well. "Our technology person is only in our building on Monday and Tuesday, we don't only have problems on Monday or Tuesday," explained Ms. Darby.

The pace of digital innovation is outpacing the school system's ability to upgrade materials, causing a technological divide in what teachers have and what they are asked to do. Ms. Darby wrote in her journal prompt, "In one system I worked in, we were one-to-one. Here I have three desktop computers for twenty-five students." She continued, "I don't even have a printer in my room. These (points at desktop computers) are like dinosaurs." Ms. Randison shared these feelings:

> I think the one-to-one technology is a barrier because we have little kids and three I-pads, three outdated computers that move very slow. For kindergarteners, that does not work. they will tap until it blows up. So, that is difficult. Going from I-pads to a computer with a mouse is a thing in kindergarten. One to one...we have three....If I had five, I could do a center. Three is not a full center. I have 20 kids.

Ms. Penbert addressed the lack of financial support. "We do have a lot of new things like Exact Path or Reflex. Well, they didn't buy it. We wrote a grant for it." Ms. Randison described money as a barrier. "Last year, we asked and got three (I-Pads). So, it was like, don't ask for more." The lack of consistent financial support across classrooms speaks to a lack of decision making on the importance of technology in the classroom specific to elementary students. How do educators balance technology time with hands on experiences? It was reported that in all three elementary schools, one-to-one technology was evident in upper elementary school classrooms but absent in lower elementary school rooms.

Sub-Question Three

How do the organizational trust experiences of public elementary school teachers affect their ability to adopt methodological innovations?

Of all the innovations we discussed as a group, the methodological innovation was the most difficult for teachers to initially embrace. Most discussions centered around the Workshop Model, STEM education, and data collection. Ms. Penbert shared, "In the closing of the workshop model, I struggle there." Ms. Randison spoke of STEM education in her interview. "We have committees, we have meetings, we have showcases...and it's been a slow rollout." Using a new digital platform to teach was a positive experience for Ms. Nedson. "It (Teams) has been really good for me." She continued, "That has been a real challenge for me and having to adjust my thinking has really paid off." "Methodological innovation has helped me learn how to collect, organize, and interpret information," shared Ms. Jask. These statements demonstrate some teachers are embracing innovation to become more effective teachers.

When working through negative methodological innovation experiences, organizational trust issues arose. Teachers reported teamwork, support, and training as barriers to innovation. Ms. Penbert spoke of teamwork, "If you have co-workers who don't believe in the process that would be a difficult problem to overcome." Ms. Darby supported that opinion stating, "In reality, not everyone is doing it every single day." This behavior of withdrawing from team expectations could be due to a lack of support.

"There was a lot of new terminology (in the PLC) that became a barrier. I wasn't sure what it meant," shared Ms. Melbrook. When receiving a new curriculum that required a new methodological approach, Ms. Randison recalled, " I don't have an hour and a half to teach math. How does this work in real life?" Ms. Darby shared that the time required to implement the PLC

was overwhelming. "Here there is a meeting about a meeting that could have been an email. It's been a challenge for me." Additionally, Ms. Jaycee shared a time when she felt overwhelmed with STEM. "It was sink or swim. I felt nervous, anxious, and I panicked." Again, we are seeing a repeated phenomenon of educators needing to feel supported.

Summary

Elements of organizational trust were present in the interviews, focus group, and journal prompts provided by participants. Sharing their experiences provides a basis for understanding the phenomenon of implementing innovative educational change. When educators feel they belong to the group, cooperate effectively, experience trust through change, and share collective responsibility for innovation they function as high-performance teams. When those elements are absent, the team functions at low levels and struggles with basic team functioning which prevents innovative behaviors.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This multiple case study aimed to understand leadership distrust that led to a lack of innovative educational support for elementary school teachers in the Knight School District. The focus of this research was to understand why educators were hesitant to utilize innovative methods, curricula, or technology. Chapter Five presents an interpretation of the findings as they apply to this research. Also discussed are implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This study sought to understand how public-school elementary teachers perceived administrator distrust as a barrier to innovation. Research revealed it was not administrators but rather the team members and team dynamics that were the barrier to innovation. This is critical information as educational practices embrace the PLC process to improve student learning (Hudson, 2023). Participants shared experiences detailing how success and failure of the educational teams affect innovative practices. The following section discusses interpretation of findings, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

Ten elementary school teachers from three schools shared their experiences regarding organizational trust and innovation. The data were collected using individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. These methods were utilized to triangulate the data. The data were analyzed through multiple readings and sorted into meaningful codes using Taguette (Yin, 2018).

The data exposed two main themes: positive organizational trust experiences and negative trust experiences. Themes were then further analyzed to reveal subthemes. Positive organizational trust subthemes include belonging, cooperation, trust through change, and collective responsibility. Negative organizational trust subthemes include belonging, collective responsibility and cooperation, support, and authenticity.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Thematic findings of this research include 1) organizational trust is expressed through relational interactions, and 2) effective innovation must have support structures in place to enable stakeholders to feel successful. These two themes are important because they speak to the relationships between stakeholders and how successful exchanges can promote innovation, while unsuccessful relationships are barriers to innovation.

Organizational Trust is Expressed Through Relational Interactions. Organizational trust is created when all stakeholders feel valued. Participants shared basic needs such as "they are nice and kind to me," as expressed by Ms. Jaycee. They revealed a fear of being uncomfortable with innovation and how organizational trust could promote efficacy. Ms. Melbrook said:

> I think personal relationships do help a lot. When I think about it, I think also the comfortableness to go and be able to say, 'Hey, I don't understand this...' or 'I'm frustrated with this.' Being able to come across and explain, 'Why is this happening?' and I can get an honest answer without being penalized or anything. Yeah, I just feel like it's a safe place to talk.

While trust exchange is not a new topic, in this setting, it takes on unique characteristics. Educators are collectively responsible for the education of children over many years. This means

that each grade level must intrinsically trust the previous year. They must be able to communicate where gaps in learning occur and how the institution collectively can repair them. Without trust, a free exchange of information from all contributors is not possible. Grade levels who are not experiencing organizational trust are not able to innovate effectively.

As noted previously, education has evolved rapidly over the last century. Gone are the days when teachers closed their doors and taught in isolation. The arrival of the professional learning community has ushered in a new era of teaching methodology. Sharing students across teams and grade levels is now the norm. Teaching teams are expected to interact, review data, and plan collectively for the good of all students. Grade level teams interact face-to-face for more hours than anyone else in the building. Ms. Randison shared her perspective:

> I have worked in lots of different grade levels over the years, I think they have varied. Currently not a great organizational trust situation. There is some undermining and manipulation that can be very difficult when you are trying to be a team. I have worked on a grade level like that in the past, and, um, it's more...in my opinion, it's harder to come to work and love it when you don't know if you say something if it's going to be used against you later on.

To initiate change effectively, these teams need to trust each other with a high level of confidence. They need to exhibit the traits of high-performance business teams, building on each member's strengths. When this trust is missing, teams will only be able to complete low-functioning teamwork tasks successfully.

Effective Innovation Must Have Support Structures. A repeated theme expressed in the data was that innovative concepts were not supported by professional development or training. Educators were willing to put new curri**c**ula, technology, and methodologies in place

but often felt let down by a lack of training or support when facing an issue. The issues faced ranged from basic physical needs (printers) to training (too much or not what was needed) to support (ongoing problem solving). This reveals the problem is not rooted in the willingness of educators to try to innovate but rather follow-up regarding issues that arise in real-time. Ms. Babbit stated:

> I love technology, so I enjoy learning about different ways to use it. I am not fearful of learning more, but I do have trust issues with our technology support. I do not feel like we have good support there so when things happen with computers it can be weeks or months even before it gets addressed.

Providing timely support and training could alleviate these barriers in the future.

Implications for Policy and Practice

As a result of this study, I will make recommendations for both policy and practice in the elementary school setting. Educational policy and practices must evolve in tandem with innovation. Policy and practices represent a major source of support for educational innovation efforts.

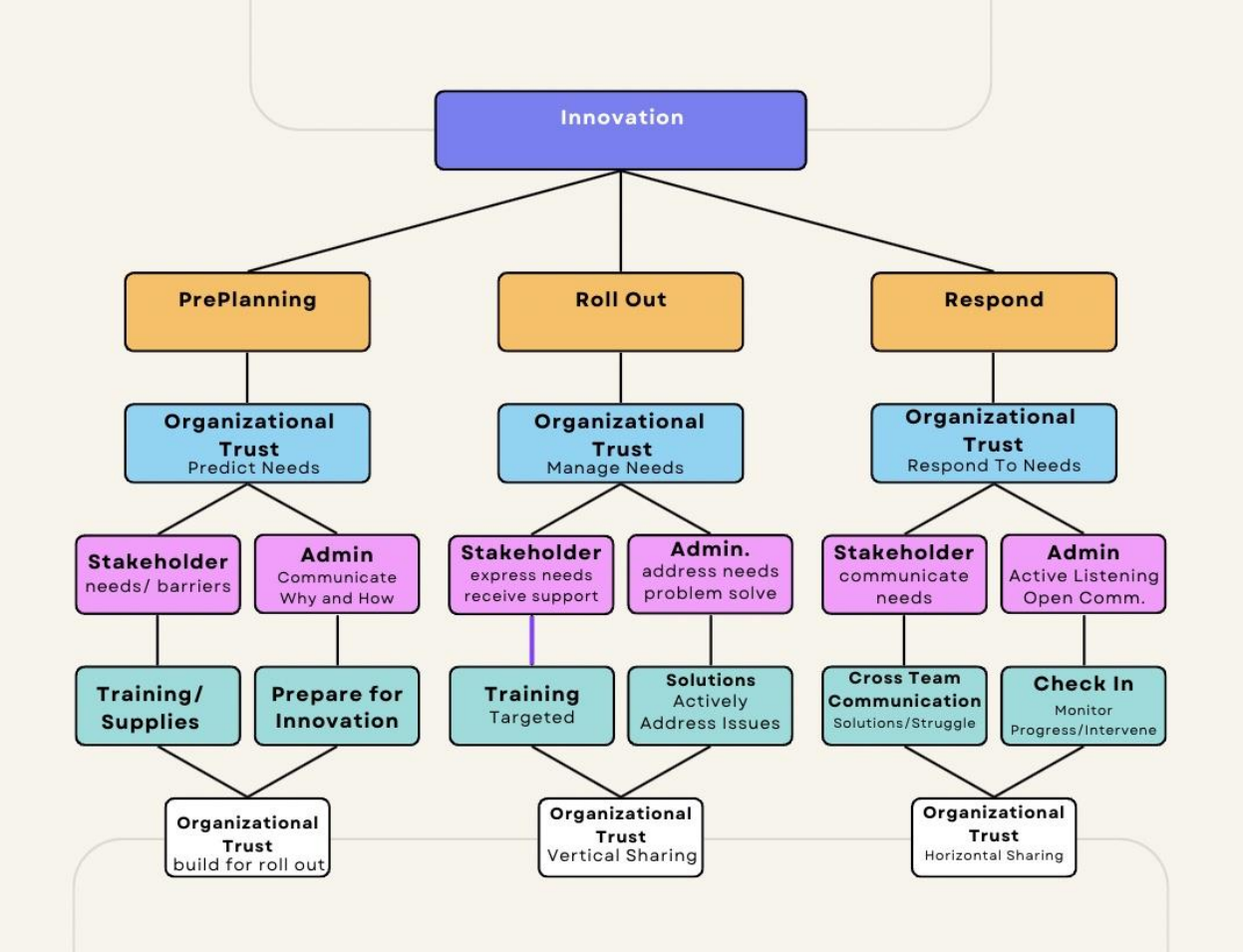
Implications for Policy

When considering innovations in the elementary school setting, school districts and administrators should both prepare and support innovation adequately. In interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts, participants said they were willing to innovate but needed continued support throughout implementation. When implementing innovative technology, curriculum, or methodology, it would be best practice to follow a template or timeline like the one in Table 6 to make sure all aspects of support are accounted for and in place. This flow chart monitors innovation and provides monitored support for stakeholders. The idea of monitored and

continued support is based on the 2020 work of Canterino et al., in which they stated leaders should monitor achievement to ensure effective sharing of knowledge.

Table 6

Innovation Implementation Flow Chart



Implications for Practice

Many school practices are based on progress through community sharing. Research findings emphasize the need for team trust as noted by George Homans theory of social exchange (1958). Professional learning communities, grade-level teams, and educational

institutions operate on social exchange of information. Schools must focus on team building and trust behavior (Yang & Tsai, 2022) to create high-performance teams.

While interviewing participants, common themes of high-performance team functioning became apparent (Ha & Lee, 2022). Common sub themes that emerged were cooperation (Su et al., 2020), trust through change (Doeze Jaeger et al., 2021), belonging (Enwereuzor, 2021), and collective responsibility (Qian & Walker, 2021). These responses aligned with the business model of high-performance teams explored in the literature review section of this document. In educational practice, schools must consider team dynamics when hiring and asking teams to implement digital innovations, curriculum, or methodology.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section addresses the study's theoretical and empirical implications. It discusses social exchange theory, transformational leadership theory, and the Tuckman model. Additionally, it addresses the school principal as an agent of change and the novelty of elementary school grade-level dynamics.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretical implications describe how this study aligns to a specific theory. In this section, I will discuss George Homans' theory of social exchange theory. This theory is the predecessor to Bernard Bass' transformational leadership theory, which also supports my research.

Participant phenomenology supported George Homans' (1958) social exchange theory. Homans explained individuals' trust interactions were based on exchanges of tangible and intangible goods. Rhamadi (2021) stated individuals could accept or reject innovation based on their level of trust within an organization, which was evident in participant findings.

Thematic findings in the data revealed that belonging, cooperation, trust through change, and collective responsibility were among the top organizational trust behaviors valued. Participants who experienced positive organizational trust reported these characteristics were created through positive exchanges with their colleagues. These positive exchanges were highly valued. The cost of their exchange was minimal compared to the profit they received.

Conversely, participants who deemed their social exchange too costly spoke of a lack of organizational trust, which led to disfunction or withdrawal from the group goals or exchanges. The outcome of failing to adopt organizational trust is concepts such as resisting changes to the status quo or misalignment of beliefs (Al-Takheyneh et al., 2022). Educators who do not feel trust hold up progress, refuse to adopt innovations, ignore changes, and adjust them to their personal preferences (Supriani et al., 2020), and this was evident in the interviews, focus group, and journal prompt responses.

This study contributes to other studies regarding organizational trust in education. It is unique in that it specifically addresses elementary education teacher perspectives. This is important because the structure of teacher content groups is so different from the departmentalization models of middle and high school. Middle and high school teachers are generally grouped together by content areas. This creates an automatic feeling of sameness. "We are all fine arts teachers." In the elementary school setting, teachers are grouped by what they bring to the team. In lower elementary school, teachers are grouped by grade level and teach all subjects. This can lead individuals who have very little in common to work closely together for an extended time. In upper elementary school, mixed teams are still present, but there may be sharing of students across teams. These dynamics are very different from the middle and high school models.

Empirical Implications

Empirical implications are directly related to previous studies on this topic. Discussed in these sections will be the work of Bernard Bass and the theory or transformational leadership, the Tuckman model of group dynamics, and the role of school administrator as an agent of change. All these topics directly support previous research.

This study supports the work of Bernard Bass and his study of transformational leadership (1985), which evolved from the work of George Homans. The participants' shared experiences supported the construct that leadership is a collaborative process rather than the focus on one individual in authority. Participants spoke of their building principal as a person they interacted with, and ultimately trusted to do what was best for them and the students.

Trust became an issue when discussing grade team members who spend a great deal of time in direct contact with each other completing tasks. The participant's stories reflected Bass' assumptions that trust behaviors are necessary for innovation to occur through knowledge transfer and risk-taking behaviors (Xavier Molina Morales et al., 2011). As participants shared their stories, it was evident in their testimony that a lack of organizational trust impacts attitudes, knowledge sharing, cooperation, and productivity (Hung et al., 2021) and prevents high performance tasks such as innovation.

The participants' shared experiences support the Tuckman model (1965) discussed earlier in the research. Of the five stages of group trust that Tuckman outlined (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, Adjourning), only one participant shared in their interview that they had reached the Performing stage. I would describe most participants' group dynamic as Forming or Storming. The participants described multiple experiences of negative behaviors, low trust ratings, and lack of personal benefit (Pfutzereuter et al., 2021). Many participants reported

feeling 'thrown into' a group where they were forced to navigate trust and communication as a group dynamic without support from school administration (Samad et al., 2023).

Multiple studies noted that school level principals are key agents of change (Aslan et al, 2018; Da'as, 2020; Hardie et al., 2020). However, Berries et al. (2020) contradicted this idea, stating no one entity could create success in an organization, and Homans (1965) expanded this idea in the social exchange theory. While the building administration may establish a vision, it was evident in conversations with teachers that they rely on co-workers far more often than administrators for trusting exchanges. Participants indicated administrators could build trust and meet some educator needs through vision casting, norms and goals, individual support, and knowledge sharing (Bellibas & Gummus, 2021). However, the day-to-day work of creating a functional group dynamic takes time, communication, and trust. Educators reported they were all willing to try innovation, but needed to feel supported by administrators prior to, during, and after innovative efforts. Educators can respond positively to this by properly preparing staff for innovation through resource identification, professional development, establishing trust as a non-negotiable, and presenting results in user-appropriate formats (Maass et al., 2019).

Limitations and Delimitations

One weakness of this study is the number of participants. I found it ironic that while I was researching trust, many teachers expressed a willingness to help me but ultimately declined out of fear. They didn't want anyone to be able to know what they said. Another weakness of this study is lack of gender and school diversity. Male teachers are not found as frequently in elementary settings, but at least one male perspective would have been valuable. The Knight School System is primarily white; however, it does have some African American and Latino educators. I would have liked to have a more diverse population sample.

Delimitations to this research were few but important. Teachers had to have experienced five or more years of teaching. This was valuable as new teachers do not have enough experience to know how an organization *should* function when they first begin their careers. Their inexperience may have skewed results as they do not have alternate experiences. Having only one viewpoint limits their understanding of how trust is in multiple settings so they can be compared. I also made sure all participants had been asked to implement a STEM or STEAM experience so they could have some commonalities in their stories. All participants were selected from only the Knight School System for this same reason.

Recommendations for Future Research

In consideration of the study findings, limitations, and delimitations, I would suggest the following recommendations and directions for future research. First, following George Homans' social exchange theory design, I would broaden this number of participants to see if results could be replicated on a larger scale. I recommend a phenomenological study to illustrate shared experiences among teachers. Second, I would do a gender study on this topic to see if there is a difference in how male and female educators perceive trust and trusting relationships in an organization. Again, I would recommend a phenomenological study. Third, I would create a wider age group sample and see if there were generational implications on organizational trust. I would focus on biological age rather than years of experience as there are many people who choose teaching as a second career. I would compare beginning, mid, and end career teachers to determine if the novelty of career or teacher burn-out were considerations in organizational trust. As this study has shown trust issues are associated with grade-level teams, I would recommend altering the central research question to reflect concerns noted in the results section of this paper. The actual area of innovation seemed to be inconsequential as far as pedagogical,

methodological, and digital innovation is concerned. A follow-up study focus point could be developed around the how administrators create great teaching teams based on the information revealed in this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support. Ten participants were interviewed face to face, in focus groups, and through journal prompts. Their responses created a phenomenological understanding of the lived experience of educators trying to navigate group dynamics to create innovative end products.

At the beginning of this research, I was working under the assumption that teachers were unwilling to innovate because of their trust relationship with their administrators. However, the data revealed that the construct was not accurate. Respondents rated trusting relationships with administrators highly. After interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts, participants shared that the real issue is organizational trust with grade-level teams that led to dysfunction, quiet quitting, and lack of project completion.

While administrators are not the cause as indicated by participants, they can promote positive trust characteristics within their vision and mission. Important positive organizational traits were found to be belonging, cooperation, trust through change, and ownership of data through collective responsibility. This information can aid educators and administrators by better understanding how all human interactions influence our trust perceptions of other individuals. Creating teams that work at high levels of trust provides proven competitive advantages, are a prerequisite for functional team dynamics, and encourages social exchanges and information sharing both vertically and horizontally throughout an organization.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 10, 2024

Catherine Hampton
Ellen Ziegler

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-638 UNDERSTANDING HOW PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' TRUST PERCEPTIONS AFFECT INNOVATION IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

Dear Catherine Hampton, Ellen Ziegler,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

September 23, 2023

Recipient Name

Title

School Address

To _____,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirement for a doctoral degree in organizational leadership. The title of my research is Understanding How Public Elementary School Teachers' Trust Perceptions Affect Innovation in Educational Practice: A Multiple Case Study. The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview and receive their journal prompts. Additionally, they may be asked to participate in a focus group study, The total time commitment should not exceed 2 1/2 hours. The data collected will be used to support or disprove my central research question. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participating in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

I have contacted Dr. Chiprany regarding my study. He felt I should contact each school individually to obtain permission. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on an official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Catherine N. Hampton

Doctoral Candidate

Liberty University

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Dear Elementary Teachers,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to provide an in-depth study of teacher perceptions of organizational change and the role it plays in innovative change.

Participants must be K-5 teachers in ____County who have been asked to participate in innovative educational practices within the last five years. The innovations can be of a digital, curriculum, or methodological nature. Participants will be asked to answer a series of questions regarding their perspective of their experiences at _____ County. It should take approximately thirty minutes to one hour to complete the procedure listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click **here** to confirm your ability to participate in a scheduled interview and return by _____. If you meet my participant criteria, I will contact you to schedule an interview.

A consent document will be given to you at the time of the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Catherine N. Hampton

Liberty University Doctoral Candidate

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix D

Consent Forms

Informed Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: Understanding How Public Elementary School Teachers' Trust Perceptions Affect Innovation in Educational Practice: A Multiple Case Study

Principal Investigator: Catherine N. Hampton, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a K through 5th grade teacher who has been asked to participate in innovative educational practices during the last five years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand leadership distrust that leads to a lack of innovative educational support.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an in-person interview (Time estimate: 60 minutes)
2. Transcript review of in-person interview (Time estimate: 15 minutes) - Participants will be asked to review their interview transcript. Transcripts will be returned to participants by email within 1 week and by mail in 2 weeks.
3. Participate in a focus group interview (Time estimate: 60 minutes)

4. Transcript review of focus group interview (Time estimate: 15 minutes) - Participants will be asked to review their interview transcript. Transcripts will be returned to participants by email within 1 week and by mail in 2 weeks.
5. Complete three journal prompts- (Time estimate: 30 minutes)

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the opportunity to further understand how teachers' perceptions of innovative practices are shaped by organizational trust in elementary schools.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After 3 years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide 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 will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Erica Pardo. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at nhampton7@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Ellen Ziegler, at eziegler@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

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

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix E

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career in your current position. CRQ

2. Describe your current position in an educational institution, including any meaningful content focus you may have. CRQ

3. On a scale of one to ten, with one being 'not very trustworthy' and ten being 'very trustworthy' how would you describe the level of organizational trust in your building and why? CRQ

4. On a scale of one to ten, with one being 'not very trustworthy' and ten being 'very trustworthy' how would you describe how would you define the level of organizational trust in your grade level and why? CRQ

5. What factors do you feel affect your sense of organizational trust? CRQ

6. What kinds of behaviors would increase or decrease your sense of organizational trust within your current school? CRQ

7. Who do you feel is responsible for creating a sense of organizational trust in your building? CRQ

8. What type of trust behaviors do you feel create a psychologically safe environment? CRQ

9. Please tell me about the importance your school district places on innovation in the classroom. CRQ

10. How often do you feel you are asked to implement innovative curriculum practices in your classroom? SQ1

11. How often do you feel you are asked to implement innovative digital practices in your classrooms? SQ2

12. How often do you feel you are asked to implement innovative teaching methods in your classrooms? SQ3

13. Whom do you feel begins the push for innovation in your district? Does it start at the central office, principal/assistant principal, or does it stem from peers? CRQ

14. In your opinion, why are teachers being pushed to innovate? CRQ

15. Describe a time when you were required to utilize an innovative curriculum in your current teaching role. Describe the support you received from other teachers or administrators during that innovation. SQ1

16. Describe a time when you were required to utilize a digital innovation in your current teaching role. Describe the support you received from other teachers or administrators during that innovation. SQ2

17. Describe a time when you were required to utilize a methodological innovation in your current teaching role. Describe the support you received from other teachers or administrators during that innovation. SQ3

18. What obstacles do you feel you had to overcome while implementing an innovative curriculum? How did organizational trust affect your ability to implement those innovative practices? SQ1

19. What obstacles do you feel you had to overcome while implementing digital innovations? This could be one-to-one technology, an application, a website, an intervention, etc. How did organizational trust affect your ability to implement those digital innovations? SQ2

20. What obstacles do you feel you had to overcome while implementing methodological innovations? Share a time you were asked to use a methodological innovation. This could be flipped classrooms, STEM/ STEAM, PLC, etc. SQ3

21. Describe a time when you felt supported during a time of innovation. CRQ
22. Describe a time when you did not feel supported during a time of innovation. CRQ

Appendix F

Focus Group Questions

1. Talk about a time when you were innovative with people you felt were trustworthy in your organization. CRQ

2. Share a time when you were innovative with people you did not feel were trustworthy in your organization. CRQ

3. Tell me what creates a sense of psychological safety in your organization. CRQ

4. Tell me what types of innovation might flourish in your school if you felt a sense of organizational trust in your school. CRQ

5. Share a time when you were asked to be innovative with the curriculum. Discuss how organizational trust played a role in your adoption or refusal to support innovation.

    SQ1

6. Share a time when you were asked to be innovative with technology. Discuss how organizational trust played a role in your adoption or refusal to support innovation. SQ2

7. Share a time when you were asked to be innovative with teaching methods. Discuss how organizational trust played a role in your adoption or refusal to support innovation.

    SQ3

Appendix G

Journal Prompts

1. Write about when you implemented an innovative technology, new curriculum, or teaching method in the classroom and felt unsuccessful. What organizational trust factors were absent? CRQ

2. Write about a time when you participated in an innovative program or teaching method and felt successful. What organizational trust factors were in place? CRQ

3. Write about how a lack of organizational trust affects your ability to support innovation. CRQ