Reciprocity and Professional Capital as Measures of Success in a Professional Development School

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ABSTRACT: In this study, a PDS partnership is examined using the lens of *professional capital* (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) with an emphasis on the perspectives of teachers in preschool through grade 8. Findings suggest that teachers were less likely than university faculty to indicate that the partnership contributes to qualities of professional capital. Further, teachers described ways in which reciprocity, parity, and trust with university partners impacted their role in the PDS relationship.

NAPDS 9 Essentials addressed: 1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community; 2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community; 4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; 8. Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings;

Professional development schools are designed to bridge the gap between research and practice in education (Henry, Tryjankowski, DiCamillo, & Bailey, 2010; McIntyre, 2006; Ross, Brownell, Sindelar, & Vandiver, 1999). They often serve as demonstration and training sites as well as research hubs to study effectiveness of promising practices in education (Henry, Hyde, & Kennedy, 2017). As such, they rely on strong teaching staff to facilitate implementation of high-leverage practices with fidelity. The concept of "professional capital" is described by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) as the confluence of human, social, and decisional capital. The interaction of these components results in teachers who are talented, collegial, and thoughtful in their approaches. In this study, qualities of professional capital are examined within the context of the partnership between PEAK PDS* and Southwest State University (SWSU)†. Key elements of professional capital provide a lens through which to look beyond the structural elements of a partnership, and instead examine the potential of school-university partnerships to impact the quality of teaching practices associated with professional capital.

Literature Review

Professional development schools are the result of close school-university partnerships (Cosenza & Buchanan, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2005). Although there is a great deal of variety among PDSs, defining features emphasize reciprocity, commitment to the preparation of future educators, and engagement in the profession through dissemination of practices (NAPDS, 2008). While most school-university partnerships are centered around teacher training, other potential benefits include research grounded firmly in the field, PK-12 teacher input on teacher preparation, and a high-quality education for PK-12 students (Breault & Breault, 2012; Glass & Wong, 2009). Several authors have emphasized the potential of mentoring and clinical practices used within PDSs to inform teacher education more broadly (Breault, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2005), and research indicates that preservice teachers trained in professional development schools consistently rate their experience highly (e.g., Bebas, 2016; Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006). Some aspects of PDS partnerships, however, are difficult to transfer to more traditional programs. For example, PDS models establish a high standard for collaboration and mutual stakeholder benefits that are not realized in more loosely developed school-university relationships (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Much of the research on PDS partnerships, however, carries a narrow focus on the student teaching experience rather than examining the broader potential for innovation and development of quality teaching practices by university and P-12 faculty (Allsopp et al, 2006; Breault, 2013). For example, PDS literature on specific mentoring practices is abundant, such as examination of the practice of co-teaching between mentor and student teachers (Friend, Embury, & Clark, 2014; Kittleson, Dresden, & Wenner, 2013). Further, PDS research has been criticized for failing to investigate issues of parity between university and K-12 stakeholders (Breault, 2010; Breault & Breault, 2012; Teitel, 2004). Although reciprocity between school-university partners is often cited as a defining element of a PDS, evidence also suggests that benefits can be weighted toward university partners over school-based partners (Jeffery & Polleck, 2010; Sandholtz & Finan, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

Although the ultimate goal of PDS partnerships is often either explicitly or implicitly stated as student achievement (NCATE,

* Pseudonym
† Pseudonym

2001), the qualities of motivation and engagement among P-8 teachers and university faculty are essential to both sustainability of the partnership and the success of their students (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2009). Within much of the literature on professional development schools, there is an assumption that master teachers within PDSs are highly skilled professionals. By using the model of *professional capital* described by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) as a lens for examining a PDS partnership, we might better understand the relationship between the PDS status and teacher qualities associated with professionalism, engagement, and implementation of high-leverage and evidence-based teaching practices.

The term *capital* is used in multiple disciplines to refer to various forms of wealth, originating from classic definitions of economic wealth (Bourdieu, 1986). Within the *professional capital* framework, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) build upon existing notions of social and human capital, and supplement these constructs with that of decisional capital. Putnam (2000), defines *social capital* as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 19). *Human capital* refers to the wealth of skills within a labor force (Goldin, 2014), and is applied to teaching by Hargreaves and Fullan as "having and developing the requisite knowledge and skills" (p. 89) associated with the multi-faceted role of a teacher. Finally, the authors describe *decisional capital* as the "experience, practice, and reflection (that enable) wise judgements in circumstances where there is no fixed rule or piece of incontrovertible evidence" (p. 93). Together, these qualities describe the core of the professional capital construct. Teachers with high professional capital, then, will effectively meet student needs, become engaged leaders in their profession, and collaborate effectively with others to make sound educational decisions and disseminate effective practices. If professional development schools rely heavily on master teachers to serve as models for future educators, then we hope that these teachers will exhibit many of the qualities attributed to professional capital. In this study, this notion is examined further to investigate key qualities of the experience of teaching in a PDS that might support the development of professional capital.

Methods

This study used survey and focus group data to investigate qualities of the partnership between PEAK PDS and Southwest State University (SWSU) which serve to enhance the professional capital of faculty and P-12 teachers. Some analysis of how the relationship between PEAK PDS and SWSU fits within the PDS model with an emphasis on the "Nine Essential Elements" (NAPDS, 2008) has already confirmed a strong and established partnership between the two institutions (Hanreddy, 2017). The questions guiding this research build upon these previous findings. Guiding questions for this research are as follows: What qualities of a PDS partnership serve to increase professional capital for P-8 teachers, university faculty, and teacher candidates? What potential benefits of the PDS partnership under study are unrealized?

Participants

Organizational partners. The *Partners to Educate All Kids* (PEAK‡) early intervention, preschool, and charter school (TK-8th grade) programs have served as model demonstration sites for a range of evidence-based practices in education with an emphasis on an inclusive educational environment for almost 30 years. In a given year, PEAK programs currently serve approximately 800 children, birth to age 14.

Southwest State University (SWSU) is a university with a large teacher preparation program. While just one faculty member is assigned to serve as a liaison between PEAK and SWSU, several SWSU faculty in Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education have longstanding relationships with PEAK through grant projects, student teacher supervision, the provision of professional development, and research.

School and university participants. Participants in the current study included teachers at the early education (infant/toddler and preschool) and charter school sites as well as faculty with involvement at one or both of the sites within the 5 years preceding the data collection phase of the study. An email with a survey link was sent to all potential participants in each category, and two follow ups were sent approximately two weeks and four weeks after the initial email. Teacher participants included 33 respondents in preschool, elementary, and middle school, and included both special and general educators. University faculty participants included 17 respondents from the three teacher education departments within SWSU's College of Education: Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education. The roles of respondents in each setting are described in Tables 1 and 2.

Data Collection

An online response form was developed in collaboration with a school-university partnership committee. This survey included both Likert-style rating items and open-ended responses related to the partnership, and were aligned to core concepts of professional capital as described by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). The daily lives of both school teachers and university faculty involve a wide range of tasks and interactions. Throughout the survey, respondents were asked to focus on typical interactions they have with their partner institution. Sample questions from the survey, and their alignment with professional capital, are provided in Table 3. The survey was distributed to all PEAK teachers (n = 54) and all SWSU faculty who had been involved with PEAK within the past five years (n = 24) and adapted for each group. Two reminders to complete the survey were sent to each group, until a response rate of at least 50% was achieved.

‡ Pseudonym

Table 1. Survey Respondents: PEAK Teachers

Teacher Role	*n*
General education, K-5	16
General education, 6-8	5
Special education, infant/toddler/preschool	3
Special education, K-8	3
Other (art, music, PE), K-8	5
Total	33

Table 2. Survey Respondents: SWSU Faculty

Faculty Department	*n*
Elementary education	7
Secondary education	3
Special education	7
Total	17

Focus group interviews were conducted with both PEAK teachers and SWSU faculty who volunteered to participate at the end of their survey. Due to availability constraints, university faculty were interviewed in two small groups (4 and 6 participants), and PEAK teachers were interviewed in a whole group faculty meeting which involved both small and large group discussions (n=42). These interviews lasted approximately one hour and began with a presentation of survey data. Participants were then asked for their input on the data and the initial themes presented. Preliminary questions were open-ended, asking for feedback on the survey data (e.g. "What did you notice?") and progressed to more specific questions regarding how participants might explain the survey results based on their experiences (e.g. "Why do you think that university faculty rated this item higher than teachers?"). When relevant, participants were asked for examples to support their answers. In addition, further input and experiences with the PDS partnership beyond the original survey questions were solicited, with an emphasis on potential unrealized benefits of the partnership. Each focus group included a note-taker who took detailed notes throughout the discussion.

Data Analysis

The research questions described above were investigated using qualitative analysis. An interpretivist approach to organizing both survey and focus group data was utilized in order to recognize and validate the multiple paradigms participants may draw from in their understanding of the phenomena under study (Yanow & Ybema, 2009), with the goal of achieving coherency upon assembling these pieces. Using a qualitative framework, "authenticity" (Manning, 2016) was emphasized throughout the processes of recruiting participants, collecting data, and interpreting findings through open dialogue regarding the goals of the study as well as collaboration with participants and colleagues to describe and build upon common themes.

Survey data was first analyzed for initial themes by identifying the variance on rating scale responses between PEAK teachers and SWSU faculty. Questions were aligned with elements of professional capital, and so qualities associated with the construct were emphasized throughout analysis. Summaries of the data and initial themes were shared with a standing school-university partnership committee and questions for further investigation were identified. This committee's reactions and hypotheses in response to survey data formed the basis of initial focus group questions for each group. Open-ended survey responses and focus group notes were coded and analyzed for initial themes using an open coding strategy. Analysis used the framework of "professional capital" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) to draw conclusions related to the potential of the partnership to promote the development of professional capital among stakeholders in the field of teaching and teacher education. Similarities and differences across stakeholder groups were also considered. A summary of findings following analysis was again shared with the school-university committee for input. Feedback from this group led to adjustments in both analysis and discussion.

Findings

The online survey was distributed to 78 teachers and university faculty. Fifty complete responses were received, which is an overall response rate of 64%. Respondents included 33 PEAK teachers (response rate of 61%) and 17 university faculty (response rate of 71%).

Given the small population size of these samples and the ordinal nature of the data, parametric analysis was not used. Rather, survey responses were summarized using frequency data and presented to focus groups for input and interpretation. Meaning was made of survey responses in the context of individual and group experiences with the school-university partnership. Thus, following the initial summary of survey data, themes from the focus group interviews provided an additional framework through which survey data could be contextualized.

Summary of Survey Data

Interactions with partner institution. While there were multiple ways in which the two stakeholder groups experienced partnership between PEAK and SWSU, responses indicated that the most common form of interaction between partners centered on the support of teacher candidates (Figures 1 and 2). In fact, 88% of SWSU faculty members and 69% of PEAK teachers identified student teachers as a way in which they interact with their partner institution. Other interactions included guest lectures provided by PEAK teachers to classes at SWSU, professional development provided by SWSU faculty to PEAK teachers, and SWSU students coming to observe classes at PEAK.

Professional capital. Both PEAK teachers and SWSU faculty consistently rated their partnership positively and attributed qualities of professional capital to their interactions with their partner institution. Favorable ratings (indicating "agree" or

Table 3. Sample Survey Items

Professional Capital Element:	*Survey Item*
Patterns of interaction that are focused on student learning	**SWSU Faculty:** *How often do your interactions with PEAK administrators, teachers, and students focus on instruction and student learning?* **PEAK Teachers:** *How often do your interactions with SWSU faculty and students focus on instruction and student learning?*
Communities of teachers using best practices together	**SWSU Faculty:** *Through my interactions with PEAK administrators, teachers, and/or students, I am able to support their implementation of best practices in education.* **PEAK Teachers:** *My interactions with SWSU faculty and students support my implementation of best practices in education.*
Commitment to the field	**SWSU Faculty:** *My interactions with PEAK administrators, teachers, and/or students help me to remain committed to my field.* **PEAK Teachers:** *My interactions with SWSU faculty and students help me to remain committed to the teaching profession.*
Striving for excellence	**PEAK Teachers:** *Interactions among faculty and students from SWSU and PEAK help to create a culture of excellence within my program.* **SWSU Faculty:** *Interactions among faculty and students from SWSU and PEAK help to create a culture of excellence within our school.*
Interactions based on feelings of trust and closeness between teachers	**PEAK Teachers:** *Interactions among faculty and students from SWSU and PEAK help to create a supportive atmosphere for teachers.* **SWSU Faculty:** *Interactions among faculty and students from SWSU and PEAK help to create a supportive atmosphere for teachers.*
Status and high quality	**PEAK Teachers:** *I feel like my status as a faculty member is increased as a result of my involvement with PEAK.* **SWSU Faculty:** *I feel like my status as a teacher is higher at PEAK compared to other schools due to its close relationship with SWSU.*

"often/all the time") ranged from 54 to 82% across all survey items. Both PEAK teachers and SWSU faculty were likely to attribute a *culture of excellence* and *collaborative atmosphere* to their partnership, with ratings of "agree" at 66-81% for both groups (Figures 3 and 4). This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that Professional Development Schools are associated with high expectations for teaching staff and high demands for collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007).

Although one of the oft-stated goals of PDS partnerships is to bridge the gap from research to practice (Henry, Tryjankowski, DiCamillo, & Bailey, 2010; McIntyre, 2005), participants were less likely to attribute implementation of best practices to the partnership than several other items (Figure 5). Despite the fact that the PDS partnership of SWSU and PEAK is often highlighted by both institutions, both PEAK teachers and SWSU faculty were less likely to attribute their involvement with the partnership to an elevated status in their profession (Figure 6) compared to other positive qualities of the partnership.

Across most rating questions, SWSU faculty rated the partnership slightly more positively than PEAK teachers. For example, university faculty were more likely than teachers to attribute a culture of excellence to the partnership or to claim that involvement in the partnership led to a more supportive atmosphere for teachers. In addition, 81.82% of university faculty feel that involvement in the partnership helped them to remain committed to their field compared with only 54.17% of teachers (Figure 7). Across all questions, there was greater

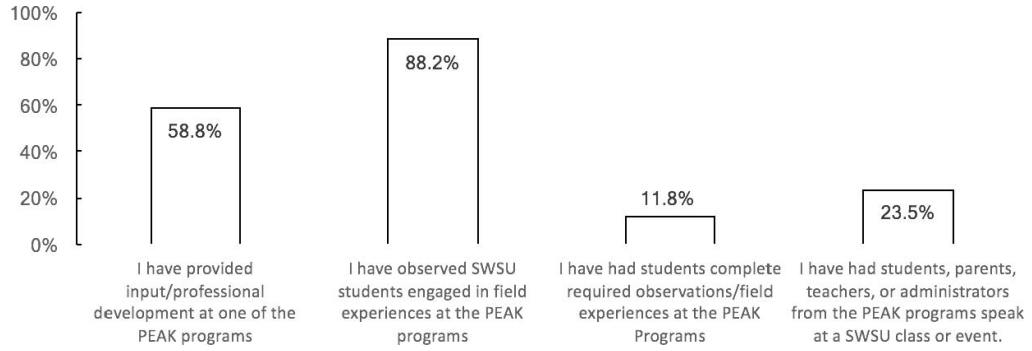

Figure 1. Interactions With Partner Institution by SWSU Faculty

Figure 2. Interactions With Partner Institution by PEAK Teachers

variability of responses among PEAK teachers than with university faculty. As discussed below, this may be attributed to the variability of teachers' involvement with the university partner.

Focus interviews and responses to open-ended survey questions supported and clarified these findings, and contributed to the development of broader themes. When presented with the data described above in focus group interviews, both university faculty and PEAK teachers were asked for possible explanations for higher and lower ratings, as well as the differences between faculty and teacher responses. SWSU faculty frequently highlighted the ways in which they used educational practices at PEAK as a positive example in their courses and how they benefited from time spent in PEAK classrooms (usually when observing student teachers), but PEAK teachers often qualified their descriptions of benefits with either drawbacks or ideas for improvement. Themes most common in these discussions were reciprocity, parity, and trust.

Reciprocity. The most common manner in which SWSU faculty interact with the PEAK schools is through observations of students engaged in field experiences (88.2% of respondents). In addition to student teacher observations, 59% of SWSU faculty indicated that they provided input or professional development at one of the PEAK programs, and 23.5% indicated that they have had representatives from the PEAK programs speak at a SWSU class or event.

Many teachers expressed satisfaction with their role in supporting student teachers, and saw this as an important contribution to the field. They did not, however, always see this as a "perk." While SWSU faculty were quick to identify student teachers as a benefit to classrooms in the form of "extra hands," PEAK teachers emphasized the time spent supporting student

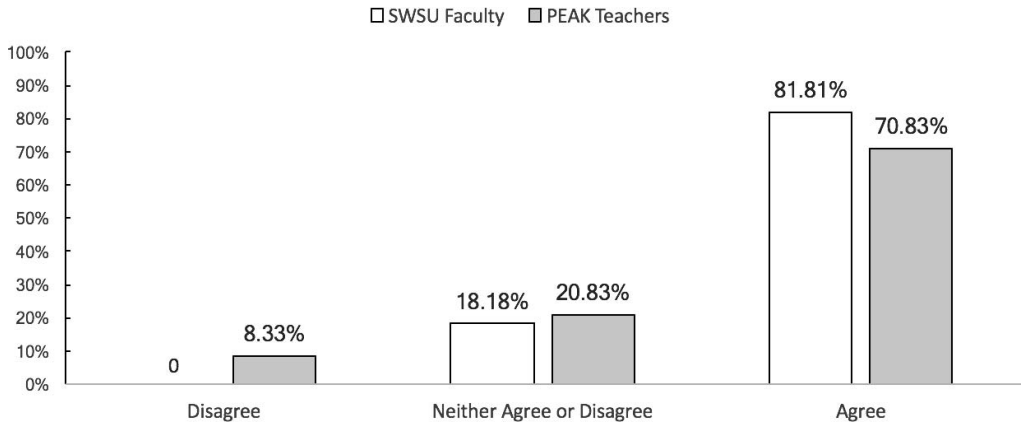

Figure 3. Interactions Among Faculty and Students From PEAK and SWSU Help to Create a Culture of Excellence Within My Program

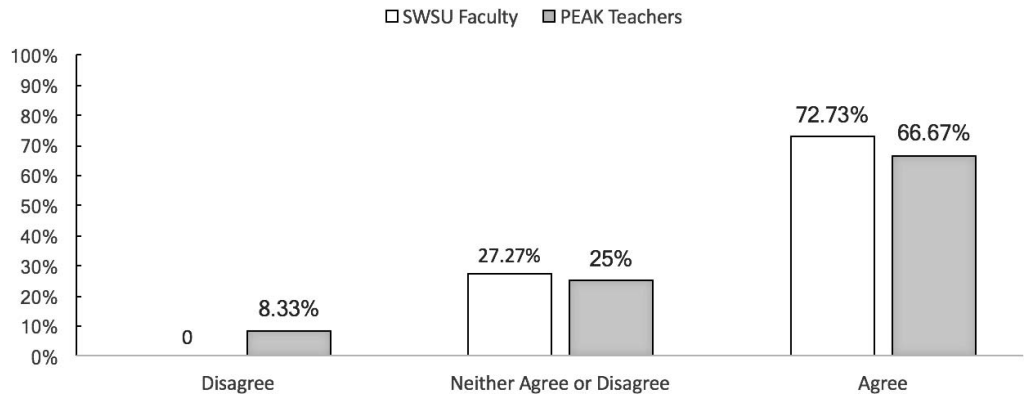

Figure 4. Interactions Between SWSU and PEAK Help to Create a Supportive Atmosphere for Teachers

teachers throughout the day, additional work to ensure that pupils received adequate instruction when under the direction of student teachers, and additional time spent meeting and debriefing with both student teachers and their supervisors. As one PEAK teacher stated, "we offer a lot to student teachers, but I don't see a lot on my end" (focus group interview). The sense among PEAK teachers that mentoring a student teacher is an important, but one-sided responsibility may in part explain the discrepancy between PEAK teachers and SWSU faculty to the survey item, "Interactions with my partner institution help me remain committed to the teaching profession." Unrealized benefits related to student teacher mentorship described by PEAK teachers included a desire for more recognition (in the form of units or a stipend) and opportunities to attend lectures and events on SWSU's campus related to education and teacher training.

Since not all PEAK teachers are assigned student teachers, those not directly engaged in teacher training were less likely to interact with the university partner. Although eager for support and to refine teaching practices, newer teachers who were less likely to be assigned a student teacher were the least likely to receive informal support or training from SWSU faculty. Further, teachers who already demonstrate a high degree of professional capital (such as recognition by others for high quality practices) are those who are most involved with SWSU

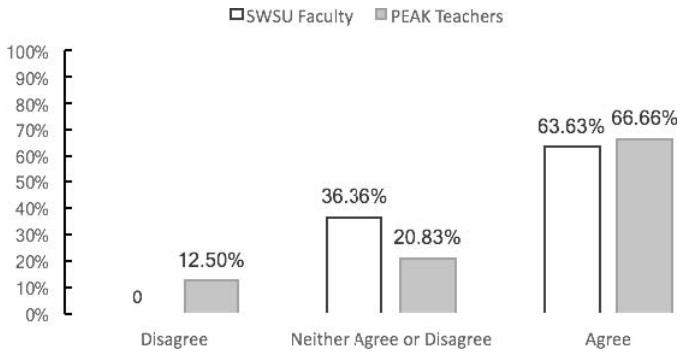

Figure 5. Interactions With (My Partner Institution) Support My Implementation of Best Practices in Education

faculty. There is considerable variability in the degree to which individual teachers might benefit from the university partnership. SWSU faculty, on the other hand, interact most frequently with talented master teachers, and thus benefit from exemplars of high-leverage practices to use in their work as teacher educators. These challenges related to reciprocity may indicate that a narrow focus on teacher training could serve to limit the development of professional capital among all teachers within a professional development school.

Parity and trust. As teachers at a school known as a "model demonstration site," many teachers at PEAK are quite confident in their day-to-day instruction and their role as mentors for teacher candidates. They view themselves as a resource for the university but indicated their expertise was not always valued by faculty. For example, several PEAK teachers had strong opinions related to the performance of their student teachers and yet described situations in which university faculty made decisions about whether a student teacher would "pass" their student teaching assignment without their input. As one teacher shared, "there was a lot of pressure put on me personally to pass my (first semester) student teacher. I was told that because next semester was full day, it would be okay." Teachers felt a responsibility to protect future students from poor instruction when a student teacher had not developed the skills to move on, but indicated that some faculty felt that they "knew better." These disagreements regarding the adequacy of student teacher skills served to erode teachers' trust that university faculty respected their expertise.

Other teachers described ways in which they felt excluded from decision-making systems and committees that relate to the partnership. When committee meetings were held between administrators and university faculty during the school day or on the university campus, they felt excluded from the process. As one comment points out, "it is important to get teacher feedback in the meetings about the university partnership" (referring to school-university committee meetings).

Experiences such as those described above may help to explain some of the "disagree" (8-12% of teacher respondents) and neutral (20-33% of teacher respondents) ratings on survey

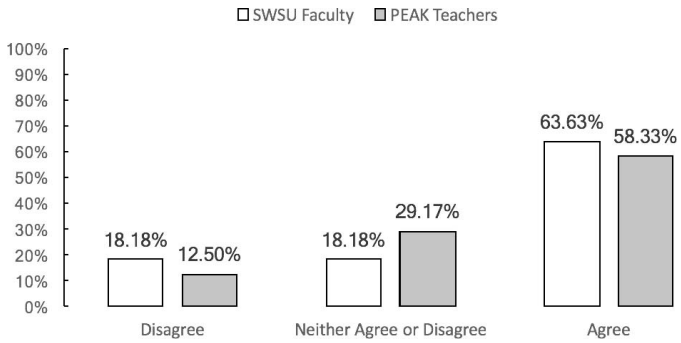

Figure 6. I Feel Like My Status as a Faculty Member Is Increased as a Result of My Involvement With (My Partner Institution)

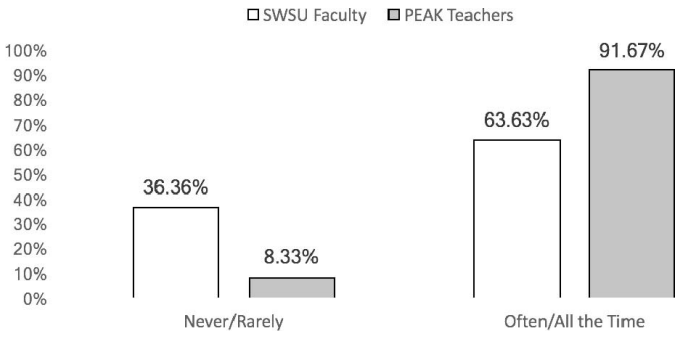

Figure 8. How Often Do Your Interactions With (Stakeholders From PEAK or SWSU) Focus on Student Learning?

items regarding the school-university partnership. If teachers do not think they are valued as equal stakeholders in their partnership with the university, then they are less likely to view the partnership as contributing to aspects of professional capital such as a supportive atmosphere, increased status, or increased commitment to the field.

Unrealized benefits. Concrete applications of professional capital were evident throughout teachers' open-ended and focus group responses in which they articulated aspects of the PDS partnership in need of development. When asked what benefits teachers hoped to experience as a result of their involvement in a PDS, they primarily indicated practices that would contribute to their efficacy in supporting student achievement and mentoring teacher candidates, as well as the elevation of their importance in the partnership. Teacher responses across multiple survey items and focus group questions expressed a desire for increased professional development and coaching from SWSU faculty to support their continued growth in the profession. Teachers viewed the expertise of faculty as a resource that had enormous potential benefit to both schoolwide systems and classroom practices, and yet was often untapped. Other examples of benefits that teachers saw as potential, but unmet include:

- Guest lectures from content specialists in the university for P-8 students at PEAK (e.g. a visit from a biologist to a science class; a political science professor to a class studying government, etc).
- Access to research journals via the university library to support familiarity with current research related to education;
- Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for hosting student teachers and participating in mentor meetings.

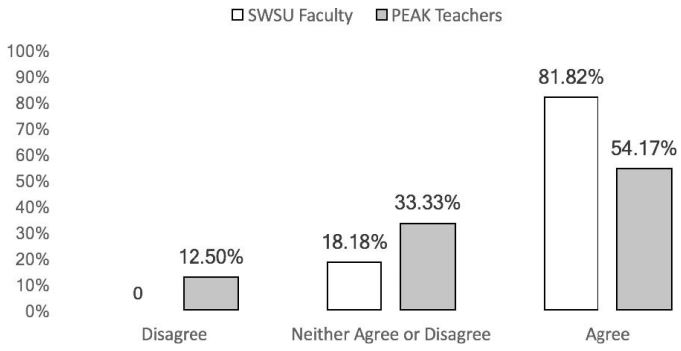

Figure 7. My Interactions With (My Partner Institution) Help Me to Remain Committed to My Field

These unrealized benefits describe practices that require an expansion of partnership activities beyond teacher training. Although at the time of the study, PEAK and PDS did engage in some partnership activities beyond student teacher mentorship (Figures 1 and 2), these additional activities did not meet the needs identified by teachers. The additional suggestions from teachers serve to increase professional capital through their commitment to student learning, their emphasis on evidence-based practices, and their commitment to protecting the status of the profession through recognition of their role in teacher training.

Recommendations

Nationally, teachers in the US frequently cite feeling undervalued as a reason for leaving the profession (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Xiaofeng & Ramsey, 2008). The recognition and status often associated with Professional Development Schools can serve as one avenue for elevating the teaching profession through the development and recognition of professional capital among teachers. As this study suggests, even well-established PDSs with embedded structures for partnership may benefit from the incorporation of teacher voice related to unrealized benefits. Specific recommendations based on these findings are as follows:

1. Create systems to engage teachers and university faculty in interactions focused on student learning.
2. Provide access to university-based professional development activities and university faculty mentorship for all teachers within a PDS, not just those who serve as mentor teachers.

3. Give teachers a way to access to current literature related to evidence-based practices through library access and/or by sharing research relevant to their practice, and provide opportunities to collaboratively discuss potential implementations.
4. Engage in collaborative dialogue between university faculty and mentor teachers regarding expectations of student teachers, and seek teacher input on the development of evaluations and other criteria for successful completion of practica at the PDS.
5. Identify expertise of PDS teachers and recognize/leverage this within university settings through guest lectures, research opportunities, and demonstrations (e.g. videos of specific practices).

Summary

Study participants considered the partnership between PEAK and SWSU to contribute to many elements of professional capital, and yet several areas were identified in which the partnership required further development. Teachers were most critical of the partnership in terms of reciprocity and parity, and several unrealized benefits were identified. Specifically, these P-8th educators emphasized ways they hoped the partnership with SWSU might support their continued growth as educators. In fact, the emphasis on critique, reflection, and high expectations for the partnership that was evident among the teacher participants may be considered an embodiment of professional capital. Their criticisms illustrated a commitment to the profession, to the implementation of best practices, and to collaboration to support learning, all of which are core elements described by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012).

Findings from this study are consistent with those of some authors in the PDS field who have emphasized the need for reciprocity as a critical feature of the PDS relationship (Breault & Breault, 2012; The Holmes Group, 2007). While many of the current publications on the topic of PDS are primarily descriptive in nature (Breault, 2013; Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2009), the use of the concept of *professional capital* as a tool for analysis allows for a deeper level of investigation into the impact of PDSs on the professional qualities of teachers and university faculty engaged with professional development schools. In addition, the practical emphasis of this study on unrealized benefits provides clear examples for ways in which reciprocity between the schools and universities might be strengthened. SUP

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