

Leading Professional Learning to Develop Professional Capital: The Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit's Facilitator Community

Pamela Osmond-Johnson
University of Regina, CANADA

Drawing on data from a mixed methods study of the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit's (SPDU) Facilitator Community, this paper highlights the potential of teacher-led professional learning in developing professional capital through engagement in teacher leadership. Analysis of survey, interview, and observational data revealed the Community to be a powerful platform from which teachers extended their own individual skills (human capital), learned from and with each other (social capital), and used their collective expertise to lead the learning of their peers (decisional capital). Teacher leadership within the community is nurtured through a mentored model of gradual release designed to create an environment conducive to supporting organic and meaningful learning and growth experiences for its members. It is this same environment that serves as the platform for the development of professional capital.

Keywords: teacher leadership; professional learning; professional capital

Introduction

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

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

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

A recent report on professional learning in Canada (Campbell et al., 2016; 2017) found that, as in most educational jurisdictions, the appropriate balance of system-directed and self-directed professional learning for teachers in Canada is complex and contested. However, the report also highlights several promising practices across Canadian jurisdictions that utilize the leadership capacity of teachers in determining their own learning needs and leading the professional learning of their peers. This paper extends the literature on teacher-led professional learning in Canada in its report on the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit's (SPDU), Facilitator Community.

An initiative of the professional development branch of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, SPDU's Facilitator Community, supports the growth and development of teacher facilitators who design and lead professional learning for teachers. Drawing on interview and survey data from over 20 community members, the paper highlights the potential of teacher-led professional learning to act as a platform for developing professional capital through engagement in teacher leadership. The paper begins with an overview of the teacher leadership literature and then moves to discussing the movement towards teacher-led professional learning. The construct of professional capital is then described as the conceptual framework for the study. This is followed by a description of the Facilitator Community and an overview of the study—its purpose, research questions, and design methods. Key findings around the impact of the program on the development of professional capital within its members is outlined, after which the paper concludes with a discussion of the power of leading professional learning for developing professional capital.

Teacher Leadership and the Movement Towards Teacher-Led Professional Learning

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

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

The second wave of teacher leadership saw teachers taking on informal leadership roles as mentors for new teachers and leaders of teacher learning within their schools. Often, however, the learning they led was prescribed—initiatives that were required by the school district—rather than learning designed by the teacher leaders themselves. In wave three, teacher leaders began collaborating with their peers on self-led learning in what became known as professional learning communities (PLCs) (Dufour, 2004). However, as Hargreaves (1994) pointed out, PLCs in many schools became sites of “contrived collegiality” as the micro-politics around control turned collaboration into coercion to achieve specific district or Ministry-determined goals.

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

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

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

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

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

According to Timperly, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007), professional learning programs need to view teachers, “as self-regulating professionals who, if given sufficient time and resources, are able to construct their own learning experiences and develop a more effective reality for their students through their collective expertise” (p. xxv). This aligns well with Hargreaves and Fullan’s (2012) notion of professional capital. Comprised of human (the skills and strengths of individuals), social (the capacity of the collective) and decisional capital (the ability of professionals to make autonomous, discretionary judgements), professional capital is predicated on the notion that great teaching is a shared accomplishment that involves continuous improvement informed by collaborative experience and collective knowledge. The concept of professional capital and its relationship to teacher leadership is the focus of the section that follows.

What is Professional Capital?

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

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

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

This is what they refer to as social capital; collaborative and collegial relationships among people and the resource and information sharing that occurs because of these relationships:

Social capital increases your knowledge—it gives you access to other people’s human capital. It expands your networks of influence and opportunity. And it develops your resilience when you know there are people to go to who can give you advice and be your advocates. (p. 90)

Professional capital is not simply developing and sharing knowledge and practices, however, it is establishing, cultivating, and valuing opportunities for informed professional judgment, decisions, and actions. This is decisional capital; “capital that enables them [teachers] to make wise judgements in circumstances where there is no fixed rule or piece of incontrovertible evidence to guide them” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 94). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest, in fact, that exercising decisional capital is what defines a skilled professional: “The pros do this all the time. They come to have competence, judgment, insight, inspiration, and the capacity for improvisation as they strive for exceptional performance” (p. 5). Moreover, just like social capital allows access to another person’s human capital, social capital is also the key to decisional capital, which is enhanced over time through practice and reflection on practice in collaboration with colleagues.

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

Teachers Leading Teachers: The SPDU’s Facilitator Community

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

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

Re-imagined in 2014 as the Facilitator Community, teachers within the current structure are involved in all aspects of workshop preparation, from design to delivery, through a model of mentored gradual release. In this model, new community members begin by co-leading a workshop with an experienced community member who is the lead. Together they tweak existing workshops that had previously been developed and/or delivered by the lead. Once new members have co-led one or two workshops, they are invited to be a lead on that workshop and begin to engage in the development of new workshops in collaboration with SPDU staff and other experienced community members. Community members are also required to complete the Facilitator Series, a set of six workshops specifically designed to support and enhance their skills as facilitators of adult learning.

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

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

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

Methods

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

The online survey was based on an adapted version of a survey created by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) designed to gain a broad-based perspective of participants' perceptions of the impact of the Facilitator Community on various aspects of professional capital. Twenty two community members completed the online survey over a three-week period in January of 2017. In addition, 10 community members completed a paper version of the same survey during an SPDU facilitation event in December of 2016. Responses from the paper versions were input into the online database to facilitate simple statistical analysis of percent responses and run crosstabs of all survey data simultaneously.

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

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

It is important to note that teaching in Saskatchewan is a unified profession, meaning classroom teachers, school administrators, and school division consultants are all represented by the STF. Collectively, all members of the STF are eligible to participate in the Facilitator Community and each group was represented in all forms of data. Considering the focus of this paper is on teacher leadership (as opposed to those already in formal leadership positions), analysis of interview and survey data was limited to classroom teachers, which comprised 5 and 19 participants, respectively. Recruitment of participants was done in collaboration with SPDU, who forwarded an invitation to participate, the letter of informed consent, and the link to the online survey to all members of the Facilitator Community through their email Listserv. Community members who were interested in volunteering to be interviewed or observed contacted the researcher directly and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. Consent for the survey was embedded within the online database itself. The results of the analysis are further described below.

Results

Developing Professional Capital

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

Human capital. In terms of their individual professional growth, interviewees exclusively described their involvement in the community as the best professional learning in which they had engaged, owing to its networked structure, its practice of teachers leading teachers, and the learning-centred focus of the workshops. This was reiterated in the survey data, where 100% ($n=17$) of teacher respondents agreed ($n=3$) or strongly agreed ($n=14$) that the Facilitator Community has been a beneficial professional learning experience. Relatedly, 88% ($n=15$) of survey participants saw the Facilitator Community as aiding their search for additional professional learning opportunities to improve their own practice.

In particular, participants identified the learning in which they engaged as part of the community as strongly impacting their own classroom teaching. For John, this was a function of the community’s focus on empowering teachers to be in control of their own learning, which he had transposed onto student learners:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relatedly, others noted that through the community, they now had a group of colleagues from around the province upon whom they could call for advice should they need it; “there is always one or two people every year that are the type that like to stay in contact all the time, bounce things off you, vice versa” (Dean). Likewise, in the survey data, 94% of classroom teachers relayed that their participation had provided numerous (75%, $n=12$) or some (19%, $n=3$) opportunity to discuss issues of teaching and learning with people in other educational roles. Ninety-four percent ($n=16$) also agreed (18%, $n=3$) or strongly agreed (76%, $n=13$) that being involved in the Facilitator Community had grown their professional networks.

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

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

John reiterated the significance of learning with and by other teachers as part of the community:

I just appreciate the opportunity to work with other teachers and to see multiple perspectives. I think whenever I have conversations with professionals, whether I'm in PD myself or I'm giving PD or just in meetings and meeting great people like the people at SPDU, I just like the networking of it all. It's helped me to put my whole career into perspective and know that, although we all have different context and different struggles, ultimately we are all in it for the same reasons, and I think that's very, the network is super valuable for me.

Survey data additionally confirmed this finding, with 87% ($n=14$) of classroom teachers indicating that the Facilitator Community had provided them with numerous (75%, $n=12$) or some (13%, $n=2$) opportunity to learn alongside other educators.

The collective capacity of the group was also viewed as an avenue for improving the facilitation and teaching skills of everyone in the group. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), this is the epitome of social capital, using the group to improve the group. For instance, Tara, who is now a lead facilitator, spoke of the growth in her facilitation skills because of the mentoring she had received. She remarked, "I didn't really think that I was that great of a facilitator and I probably wasn't when I first began but through the mentoring that they have through SPDU you have that comfort and that support that you need." Other interviewees also commented on the positive impact of the mentored model on the growth of their facilitation skills. For Sherry, the model provided a safe space to try out a new role in a supportive collegial environment, noting, "The mentoring has been awesome because God forbid I would have been thrown into that [facilitation] without anybody that had done it before. It's definitely a mentorship kind of atmosphere, which makes it safer." Survey responses confirmed that, by and large, teacher respondents viewed the community as a place to examine and improve their practice in collaboration with their peers, with 81% ($n=13$) reporting numerous (63%, $n=10$) or some (18%, $n=3$) opportunities to do so.

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

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

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

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

With respect to the development of decisional capital within the community itself, the cohort model has been significant. As the Executive Director explained, one function of the cohorts is to use the expertise and professional judgement of members to discern the needs of students and teachers to make decisions about the kinds of professional learning the cohort will offer over the next year. Perhaps Tara best described this process who observed:

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, survey data highlighted that this "thinking on their feet" transferred to their classroom work, with 82% of teacher respondents agreeing (41%, $n=7$) or strongly agreeing (41%, $n=7$) that their participation in the community had impacted their ability to assess what worked and what did not work in a lesson.

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

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

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

Discussion: Professional Capital as a Function of Teachers Leading Teachers

Teachers within SPDU's Facilitator Community are further evidence of the fourth wave of teacher leadership, embodying identities consistent with Berry et al.'s (2016) notion of "teacherpreneurs." Interacting and collaborating with their peers as a community of practice, community members are leading the development of high quality professional learning for their peers and themselves. They are indeed agents of change, providers of solutions, and creators of new knowledge. Furthermore, through their leadership of professional learning they are honing all three areas of their professional capital, growing their individual and collective abilities to lead change and influence decision making in their own classrooms and beyond. While the growth of their individual human capital is important, it is the presence of strong social capital that plays the most significant role here. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) posit, "learning is the work and social capital is the fuel. If social capital is weak, all else is destined for failure" (p. 92).

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

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

It is specifically this kind of joint work—through the design, development, and delivery of professional learning—that sets the stage for the development of strong social capital within the Facilitator Community. Inevitably this further builds teacher's decisional capital, which includes the autonomy and inquiry skills to collaborate with their peers to examine evidence of student learning, make judgments about student needs, decide what sorts of professional learning would best support student needs, and evaluate and reflect the success of new practices within their own contexts. This cycle of collaboration, reflection, and experimentation is critical if such cultures of leading learning are to be sustainable in the long term and bring about authentic change that fosters continuous professional learning and drives school improvement. Despite the promotion and proliferation of forms of teacher-led professional learning, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) lament, "Unfortunately, the development of social capital as a strategy has not yet caught on in the teaching profession" (p. 91). Hence, it is important to note that the Facilitator Community does not engage in this cycle in a haphazard manner. Rather, teacher leadership within the community is nurtured through a mentored model of gradual release designed to create an environment conducive to supporting organic and meaningful learning and growth experiences for its members. It is this same environment that serves as the platform for the development of professional capital.

Furthermore, decisional capital—the opportunity for educators to be professionals with responsibility and trust for their own informed judgments—is often overlooked, or undermined, in current policies regarding teacher quality and effectiveness (Lieberman et al., 2017). In a recent call to action around professional learning, Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) specifically note that “if you want a return, you have to make an investment” (p. 1). While the presence of programs like Ontario’s TLLP (Lieberman et al., 2017) and Saskatchewan’s Facilitator Community are examples of promising practices in Canada that are investing in teacher leaders and their professional capital, there is certainly room for further investment in teacher-led learning across the profession. As this study demonstrates, teachers leading teachers clearly has the power to develop professional capital. Consequently, rather than investing in the “wrong drivers” (Fullan, 2011, p.1) of accountability and individualistic solutions, the key for school systems appears to be the development of collaborative forms of professionalism focused on building professional capital and collective ownership over student success. Increasing access and opportunities for teachers to engage in a variety of formal and informal teacher leadership roles is an essential component in moving such an agenda forward.

Conclusion

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

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

The next phase of this research aims to explore how the professional capital of community members impacts the practice of the teacher learners they are leading. This will be important in continuing to establish the link between professional capital and improved teaching and learning across the teaching profession.

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