TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE IMPACTS OF SCRIPTED AND NARROWED CURRICULA ON CURRICULUM AUTONOMY: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE IMPACTS OF SCRIPTED AND NARROWED CURRICULA ON CURRICULUM AUTONOMY: A MIXED METHODS STUDY (182 pp.)

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Scripted/narrowed curricula are tangled in the webs of school reforms and standardization. Teachers are experiencing a monumental challenge: the deprofessionalization of their roles as educators. I sought teachers' understandings of how scripted/narrowed curricula impact their curriculum autonomy, specifically, their professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from K–12 public educators in Rhode Island using an adapted Curriculum Autonomy Survey and Curriculum Autonomy interviews. I analyzed the quantitative data using descriptive and inferential statistics, which provided a broader picture of the experiences of Rhode Island educators faced with teaching scripted/narrowed curricula, and a second group emerged: teachers who develop their own curricula. Interview questions asked teachers to reflect on their experiences with the curriculum. By coding and conducting thematic analysis, I analyzed the interview transcripts, and multiple themes emerged after the data proved consistent across the survey and interview. Teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula are experiencing a loss of their curriculum autonomy. Their professional responsibility is being challenged because they are no longer stakeholders in the curricular and pedagogical decisions or curriculum changes for their content areas. This lack of decision-making has led to questioning the equity of curricula and questioning the breadth and depth of subjects and topics in curricula. These educators are facing challenges to pedagogical artistry, meaning they cannot modify/accommodate student needs or create lessons to promote

cultural and social learning opportunities, and they have felt a loss of creativity in building lessons to ensure students are learning skills to be citizens of the world.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Standardization is at the core of American education. As such, "Public schools across our country are under assault, vilified for the inability to close the achievement gap, compete on international achievement assessments, and prepare students for college and careers" (Gornik & Samford, 2018, p. 4). Each state has a set of standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in most subject areas. Math and English Language Arts remain the two core subjects, and students take state and/or national assessments based on these standards (Ravitch, 2016). By August 2011, 44 states adopted the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010; Ainsworth et al., 2012). Implementation of these K–12 Math and English Language Arts standards aligns perfectly with the long history of the United States education system leaning further into standards-based reform. Despite scripted curricula existing long before the turn of the 21st century, the rise in their use in "American classrooms can be traced back to the passing of NCLB [No Child Left Behind]" (Wyatt, 2014, p. 447). As scripted curricula became increasingly more common, Ede (2006) defined scripted curricula as:

> Instructional materials that have been commercially prepared and require the teacher to read from a script while delivering the lesson. Scripted materials reflect a focus on explicit direct, systematic skills instruction and are touted as a method to boost sagging standardized test scores and narrow the achievement gap between children growing up in poverty and those who are affluent. (p. 29)

A scripted curriculum gives a word-for-word script for educators to follow to complete a lesson each day. A narrowed curriculum is similar to a scripted one in that all content and materials are

chosen and prepared for the teacher and will be taught in a specific order. However, it does not come with a word-for-word script. For this study, I am considering scripted and narrowed curricula together because of their similarities and how both limit curriculum autonomy. They will be referred to as scripted/narrowed curricula or programs throughout the study.

Standards-based education is all too familiar to the U.S. education system. As early as 1892, the National Education Association's (NEA's) Committee of Ten argued for a "national system of education that aims at certain common results and uses certain common means" (Mackenzie, 1894, p. 148). To this end, the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* were drafted in 1918 (Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, 1918). By the end of the 20th century, content standards, performance standards, and national assessments were developed to determine the level at which students were mastering content standards (Ravitch, 2016). Standards-based education reforms have gone far beyond only providing content-based standards and the expectations to which students and teachers should be performing to meet the standards.

Since the passing of the school reform legislation No Child Left Behind in 2002 (US Department of Education), the public education system has been focused on student outcomes, specifically on national standardized assessments (Ravitch, 2016; Tienken, 2017). Schools that purchased scripted/narrowed, evidence-based reading curricula were rewarded with additional funds, and underperforming and/or non-compliant schools risked losing millions (Arce et al., 2005; Ravitch, 2016). However, national test scores did not improve, and a call for more standardization led to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). These new, rigorous standards meant school districts scrambled for support, and many turned to scripted/narrowed curricula in all subjects, not just English and math (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020).

Scripted/narrowed curricula are now being used at a higher rate in public education classrooms nationwide for all subjects, not only in Title I schools for reading instruction (Flinders & Thornton, 2013; Henderson, 2015; Milner, 2013; Noddings, 2013a; Ravitch, 1995). Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (US Department of Education) and, with it, the Reading First Initiative, school districts around the nation have felt pressured to master the standards, make the grade in standardized tests, and receive additional funding by way of scripted/narrowed curriculum implementation (NCLB, 2002; Noddings, 2013a; Ravitch, 2016). When curriculum becomes dictated by legislators, administrators, and school boards, and educators are mandated to follow assigned curriculum maps, rubrics, standards, and so forth, the curriculum is no longer about "developing human capacities for freedom with self and social understandings of democratization" or a democratic education (Henderson, 2015, p. 59). Furthermore, with these changes come many issues and challenges, leading many to question: What happened to teacher autonomy?

Several definitions of teacher autonomy exist. Charters (1974) described teacher autonomy as a "psychological construct representing a teacher's beliefs about his or her freedom from external interference, pressure, or control in performing the work of the classroom" (p. 217). Street (1988) defined it as "the independence teachers maintain in exercising discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions" (p. 4). Finally, Elo and Nygren-Landgärds (2021) defined teacher autonomy as the "teachers' capacity to independently decide and determine their actions within the given contextual frame of constraints in which they operate" (p. 426). Based on these definitions, my definition of teacher autonomy is a teacher's capacity to work and exercise discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions without undue external interference, pressure, or complete control.

In 1993, Pearson and Hall sought to develop a scale to measure teacher autonomy and created the Teacher Autonomy Scale; later, in 1999, Friedman did the same and produced the Teacher Work Autonomy Scale. At the conclusion of each study, they uncovered teacher autonomy is not a single trait but instead is separated between general autonomy and curricular autonomy. Curriculum autonomy is "consistent with the need for teachers to have autonomy in decisions of teaching and learning" (Pearson & Hall, 1993, p. 177). For this study, I focus specifically on curriculum autonomy by examining teacher's understanding of how scripted/narrowed curricula have impacted this trait of teacher autonomy.

In a standards-based education system, full professional autonomy is unrealistic. Ravitch (1995/2016) asserted that standards as a structure to support teachers in developing curricula is not an unreasonable concept. Standards can help teachers ensure they are developing a linear curriculum in order to raise academic achievement by identifying to students how these standards build on each other and lead to higher-order thinking skills. It is when a standardized curriculum takes over a teacher's pedagogical artistry, creativity, and professional judgment that it deprofessionalizes teaching (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Henderson, 2001, 2015; Milner, 2013; Noddings, 2013b). After the passing of NCLB and the "curricular and pedagogical impositions of scripted lessons, mandated curriculum, narrowed options for pedagogy . . . teachers find their personal and professional identity development thwarted, creativity and autonomy undermined, and ability to forge relationships with students diminished" (Crocco & Costigan, 2007, p. 513).

Professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry are critical factors in curriculum autonomy. Professional responsibility involves understanding subject content and pedagogy, being a part of the decision-making process, and profoundly understanding the practice (Henderson, 2015; Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018). Educators who are

professionally responsible engage in reflective inquiry, reject expected order and norms, practice problem-solving artistry, reject ideological society when necessary, and promote democratic education (Henderson, 2001, 2015; Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018). Pedagogical artistry is the practice of teaching and reflective inquiry (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). It is the day-to-day decision-making and holistic teaching done by teachers to ensure the democratic education of students by using 3S understanding pedagogy to support students' holistic journey through their education (Henderson, 2001, 2015; Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018).

Professional responsibility provides educators with the freedom to teach holistically with pedagogical artistry. Holistic teaching is "fostering and empowering students' democratic learning as well as embracing intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth" (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 75). It aims to support students in affirming their holistic being (Henderson, 2015). The end goal of holistic education is to break away from the sameness of standards-based education and support the ideals of democratic education (Dewey, 1938/1997; Henderson et al., 2018).

Every day, teachers are told to help each student based on their individual needs, and yet, in a standards-driven education, each student is expected to arrive at the *same* performance and behavior goals (Noddings, 2013a, 2013b). A one-size-fits-all education is not a realistic expectation of any human society because it asks students of different racial groups, ethnicities, learning levels, and socio-economic backgrounds to learn from an identical curriculum, and this does not promote equity (Henderson, 2015; Senge et al., 2012; Tienken, 2017). Ensuring students receive a more individualized education requires professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry as crucial components of curriculum autonomy and supports teachers in making what they believe are the right decisions for their students (Henderson et al., 2018;

Noddings, 2013a). From grades K–12, teachers make upwards of 1,500 daily decisions that impact their students (Klein, 2021). These decisions affect students of different races, ethnicities, learning levels, learning languages, students with disabilities—the list continues. In addition to diverse student populations, teachers face the incredible hurdles of standards-based curriculum and standardized testing. Curriculum theorist Nel Noddings (2013a) suggested that, at the very least, teachers should be allowed to use their professional judgment in the classroom. By practicing holistic teaching, teachers use their creativity, artistry, and professional training to support students through their journey of 3S understanding (i.e., self-learning, social learning, and subject learning) and offer transactional experiences (Henderson, 2001; Henderson et al., 2018). However, scripted/narrowed curricula either limit or completely eliminate the practice of curriculum autonomy.

Problem of Practice

Throughout my first nine years of teaching in Ohio, I primarily taught in school districts where teachers developed their curriculum guided by state standards. This required that I learn the subject standards, set objectives for students to meet based on these standards, choose the texts based on the goals, and develop materials for students to achieve at a proficient to mastery level—while also developing critical thinking skills for real-world problems. As an educator, I used my professional judgment and knowledge to prepare lessons with instructional methods that fit my student population.

Across the United States, standards differ from state to state; unlike many countries, the U.S. does not have a national curriculum. After the rollout of the Common Core State Standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), many states created their interpretation of the Common Core State Standards (Ravitch, 1995, 2016). As these state standards were implemented, so were new

standardized state tests. Like many other states, Rhode Island, the subject of my study, designed new school report cards that detailed each school's demographics and achievements on standardized tests. School funding is inevitably connected to these school report cards (Noddings, 2013a; Ravitch, 2016). If a school underperforms, its funding decreases (Noddings, 2013a; Ravitch, 2016). This model has created an unfortunate outcome in education. Schools are under pressure to perform at their best on standardized assessments, pressure that pushes many schools toward the use of scripted/narrowed curricula (Noddings, 2013a). Martha Nussbaum (2016) explained:

> "Teaching to the test," which increasingly dominates public school classrooms, produces an atmosphere of student passivity and teacher routinization. The creativity and individuality that mark the best humanistic teaching and learning has a hard time finding room to unfold. When testing determines a school's entire future, forms of student-teacher exchange that do not have a payoff on tests are likely to be squeezed out. (p. 133)

Nussbaum (2016) explained how standardization shifted the roles of teachers and students, altering the future of teaching and education. Scripted/narrowed curricula are a result of school reforms and standardized testing.

In my current Rhode Island school district, under pressure from the state, the district's administration implemented a scripted math curriculum five years ago in grades 7 through 12 and is mandating a new narrowed English Language Arts curriculum for grades 7 through 12 beginning the 2023–2024 school year. The two remaining core subjects (i.e., social studies and science) do not currently follow a scripted program in grades 7 through 12 but follow a narrowed curriculum using a curriculum map, though scripted programs are imminent. Grades

kindergarten through 6th grade follow a scripted curriculum for math, reading, science, and social studies is used as a supplement. For the first time in my career as a 7th through 12th grade English language arts teacher, I face a district-mandated curriculum that limits my teaching content, pedagogical choices, and materials. I am faced with making curriculum, pedagogical, and professional decisions based on the expectations of the district-mandated curriculum rather than eleven years of teaching experience, twelve years of higher education, and a personal understanding of my student population.

As scripted/narrowed programs become increasingly common in districts nationwide, such decisions will continue suppressing curriculum autonomy and deprofessionalizing teaching, an already snubbed career field. Furthermore, I believe such changes are already negatively impacting students; that is, I believe students are being left behind. A one-size-fits-all education system in a world of diverse students is, in my opinion, simply unethical because of it inequality. When using a scripted/narrowed text, students at different learning levels, whether this is high or low, are learning at the same level. For lower-level learners, if an Individual Education Plan or 504 Plan is not in place, teachers may be prevented from accommodating or modifying their instructional strategies to support their needs. On the other side of the coin, higher-level learners are not being challenged because of the same issue of limited professional and pedagogical decision-making. Yes, there is equity in every child receiving the same curriculum, but it is not an equal education for all. Scripted/narrowed curricula limit teachers' ability to provide additional learning opportunities to students, particularly in creating inclusive environments that promote social and cultural learning. Students from all walks of life should be able to see themselves in their schoolwork at some point, in some way (Datnow, 1999; Kang, 2016). There

is an expectation that all students “race to the top” by any means necessary, but I do not think a scripted/narrowed curriculum is the answer.

From my experience this year, the use of a narrowed curriculum with middle school ELA students has been a challenge due to my lack of opportunities in decision-making. In English Language Arts, the amount of standards students are expected to learn and retain is massive, 76 for 8th grade alone if you include the specifics of the standards. My students have the additional expectation to perform for the state standardized test called RICAS. Needless to say, the pressures they face are immense, and I feel the weight ten-fold because I am being held accountable for their performance on assessments, over which I have zero control. Not only do I have no control over the state assessments, but I have also lost the ability to choose the materials and formative and summative assessments used to determine their understanding and mastery of the standards. While we work through a unit, we focus on specific skills and terms for different passages. By the end of the unit, they have made gains and, despite their middle school “I can’t show it because I am cool” attitude, I know they are proud. This feeling comes tumbling down when I am expected to give the students assessments with ambiguous questions with even more ambiguous selection responses. I watch as the fire is extinguished because they are reading an exam that is difficult simply because so many questions make no sense. Had I been able to create the assessment myself, with accessible language, my students would not have lost their confidence. While they may have to take this exam and I may have to use it, I decided to use my professional judgment and curve the results based on how many questions I deemed unanswerable despite their newly gained knowledge. This can be the difference between a failing grade and a passing grade for many students. This decision was made in collaboration with my intervention specialists, who could not agree more with my exam analysis. We chose to use our

years of experience, understanding of our student population, and reflective practice to take a risk for our students by doing what is right. Our leaders should place more faith in our educators as professionals, include us in curricular decisions, and allow us to make changes according to each student's needs.

Purpose of the Study

The study was designed to examine teachers' understandings and perceptions of how scripted/narrowed curriculum impacts their professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry.

Using an interpretive/constructivist framework, this mixed methods study explored the phenomenon related to teacher experiences with scripted/narrowed curricula and how it impacts a teacher's curriculum autonomy, specifically a teacher's professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry. I investigated the advantages and disadvantages of having curricular expectations determined by the school district on teachers' pedagogy, creativity, and professional judgment. I surveyed and interviewed teachers experiencing a scripted/narrowed curriculum to understand their personal experiences. A standardized education system relies so heavily on teaching to the standards and teaching to the standards that many districts feel pushed into using scripted/narrowed curricula. These decisions affect equity, professionalization, missed curriculum, and individual student preparation.

This study addresses the research question: *How do teachers understand the impact of scripted/narrowed curriculum on curriculum autonomy?*

To investigate teachers' curriculum autonomy and, thus, address the research question, I used a framework (i.e., democratic curriculum leadership) that defines curriculum autonomy in terms of professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry.

Significance of the Study

Several studies have identified teacher autonomy as an essential aspect of job satisfaction (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Friedman, 1999; Pearson & Hall, 1993; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). Pearson and Hall (1993) and Friedman (1999) identified two dimensions of teacher autonomy: curriculum autonomy and general teacher autonomy. Curriculum autonomy has been under attack since the implementation of high-stakes standardization. In his study of high-stakes testing, Au (2007) found that many schools narrow their curriculums to "teach to the test," which led him to understand that standardization controls curriculum. This standardization of control, which has since led to scripted/narrowed curriculum, threatens curriculum autonomy by restricting the individualism of the teachers, de-skills teaching, and violates a democratic curriculum (Apple, 2009; Dewey, 1900/1990; Henderson et al., 2018; Tienken, 2017). Fitz and Nikolaidis (2020) explained:

> Teachers must also preserve the intellectual autonomy to cultivate students' capacity for critical thinking and questioning the standards and norms of society. Only in this manner can society continue raising citizens who are capable of genuine democratic deliberation and who are capable of keeping the democratic values of that society alive. It is in this key point that the justification for teacher professional autonomy lies. (p. 209)

Giving teachers the authority to make curriculum and pedagogical decisions gives them empowerment and autonomy (Friedman, 1999; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; Ingersoll & Collins, 2018; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006).

Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), said it perfectly back in 1986, that as long as the curriculum and material are being determined by legislators, state departments, school boards, and superintendents, schools will continue to make

mistakes because they will continue to rely on a reward and punishment system with top-down management. Shanker (1986) stressed the importance of daily decision-making being placed back into the hands of the people in the classroom and understanding students' experiences and challenges. According to Shanker (1986), "The future of education depends very heavily on making teaching a profession and giving teachers a modicum of control over their environment" (p. 411). Failure to do so would result in a problem with teacher recruitment and retention— a problem education is now facing around the globe (Shanker, 1986). Teachers spend years earning an education. Teachers are faced with exams to get licensed. Teachers then spend years in a residency-like program that determines if and when they get a professional license. All throughout this process, teachers face evaluations and the constantly changing tides of education. In consideration of all of these leaps and bounds, teachers deserve a voice in curricular and pedagogical decisions.

My study gave teachers the opportunity to reflect on their experiences with scripted/narrowed curricula. Many teachers I interviewed for this study have at one point experienced some semblance of curriculum autonomy, if they are not some of the select few who still do. In reflection of former practices, it gave many teachers the opportunity to reflect on how much education has changed since they started teaching, whether it was five or 30 years ago. In sharing their experiences and insight, they shared with me information that helped me better understand the impacts of teachers losing their curriculum autonomy. It supported my understanding and belief that educators have a passion for what they do, but for some, losing their curriculum autonomy is breaking their passion because of the implementation of scripted/narrowed curricula.

Chapter Summary

This study aimed to understand the teachers' understandings of scripted/narrowed curricula programs and its impact on a teacher's curriculum autonomy. Driven by my relocation from a district in the Midwest designing curriculum collaboratively to a district in Rhode Island using a district-mandated scripted/narrowed curriculum, I felt the professional impacts of working with a narrowed curriculum. It drove me to explore how scripted/narrowed curricula may be impacting the curriculum autonomy of other educators. From professional responsibility to pedagogical artistry, I sought the experiences and feelings of educators about how scripted/narrowed curricula affect areas of teaching, including equity, equality, accommodating and modifying options, missed curriculum, and the deprofessionalization of teaching.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The threat to teacher professionalism and teacher autonomy and the push for scripted/narrowed curriculum has been coming since the school reforms in the 1980s and beyond, such as *A Nation at Risk*, *America 2000 Plan*, *Goals 2000*, *No Child Left Behind*, and *Race to the Top* (Arce et al., 2005; Noddings, 2013a; Ravitch, 1995, 2010; Tienken, 2017). These reforms pushed for standardization and a national curriculum without considering the teaching profession (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Noddings, 2013a, 2013b). At the beginning of this chapter, I outline these reform efforts with particular attention to standardization efforts. The chapter then transitions to curriculum, discussing curriculum theory and models and how historical reforms and ideals have influenced them. I complete Chapter 2 with a review of curriculum autonomy as defined by the democratic curriculum leadership framework in terms of professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry.

History of School Reforms

The following sections discuss the school reforms of the late 20th century that affected the standardization of America's public education.

A Nation at Risk

The groundbreaking April 1983 publication *A Nation at Risk*, prepared by the National Commission of Excellence in Education, began with a statement that stirred the nation, "Our Nation is at risk" (Gardner et al., 1983). The National Commission of Excellence in Education was charged by President Ronald Reagan's Department of Education to, as paraphrased by Walker and Soltis (2009), "responded to the economic emergency its authors felt was impending due to American firms' inability to compete with Japanese and German firms whose workers

were said to be better educated" (pp. 85–86). According to Bracey (2008), this "landmark report" criticized the American public education system with "a golden treasury of spun statistics" regarding student ability and assessment outcomes, particularly the trending decline (Bracey, 2008, p. 80; Ravitch, 2010, p. 25; Senge et al., 2012; Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

A Nation at Risk played the blaming game: It blamed Americans for being content with the low expectations of the current education system; it accused the school systems and parents of failing school districts to push for higher standards; it claimed there was a growing cost of educational remediation at the higher education level and within businesses; and it suggested that Americans were happy to do the bare minimum (Gardner et al., 1983; Ravitch, 1995; Tienken, 2017). Within the document, the National Commission of Excellence in Education criticized the curriculum at the secondary level (Ravitch, 1995). They claimed the secondary curriculum is "homogenized" and "diluted;" and it accuses secondary students of choosing a "general track" over the vocational or college preparatory tracks (Gardner et al., 1983, p. 26). The document is renowned for placing the blame on America's teachers. In the document, it states teachers were giving less homework, their materials were not challenging, and inexperienced teachers were writing textbooks (Gardner et al., 1983, pp. 27–29). *A Nation at Risk* went so far as claiming teachers came from the "bottom quarter" of college students. It suggested that at the higher education level, there was too much focus on teaching methods rather than focusing on the subject matter. Due to the lack of content focus, it determined that of the math and science teachers who were hired, "half" were not qualified to teach the subject (pp. 30–31). Lastly, it also discusses students' lack of motivation, claiming students were not taking complex math and science courses compared to competitive nations, students were no longer required to take a

foreign language, and students' performances on competency exams had been falling short of expectations (Gardner et al., 1983, pp. 27–29).

Ravitch (2010) detailed how the commission behind *A Nation at Risk* failed to address the underlying causes of low test scores impacting communities around the country: "poverty, inequality, racism, and segregation" (p. 31). Tienken and Orlich (2013) called this an example of Simpson's paradox, which is when the "results and conclusions from an aggregate group data set are sometimes different than the results and conclusions from the underlying subgroup data sets" (p. 29). This was occurring because of the changing curriculum through the years; more nontraditional students who had not taken college prep courses nor had an interest in attending college were taking these standardized tests even though they were not college-bound, affecting the data outcomes (Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

A Nation at Risk also brought attention and public interest to education in the 1980s. It brought so much attention that hundreds of state-level task forces moved into local school districts to "address education issues, seeking ways to raise standards, improve textbooks, lengthen the school day or year, or improve the teaching profession" (Ravitch, 1995, pp. 52–53; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). *A Nation at Risk's* arguments about education lacking effort and high standards were all part of the effort for corporate and market-based reforms (Ravitch, 2010).

America 2000: An Education Strategy

In 1989, in response to the fears prompted by *A Nation at Risk*, the Bush administration formed an agreement with the Nation's governors to develop national education standards. However, Bush did not believe the federal government should have control over standards and testing (Ravitch, 1995). This agreement became known as The Bush Administration's America 2000 Plan (1991). The America 2000 Plan consisted six goals aimed at increasing academic

achievement including: setting national standards, competency in school subjects to prepare for citizenship, United States children would be first in the world, all preschool aged children would start school prepared for learning, improved attendance rates, and disciplined drug-free environments (Ravitch, 1995; Tienken, 2017).

By 1991, Lamar Alexander, one of the leaders of Bush's Department of Education, was granted the bi-partisan committee called the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST; Ravitch, 1995). In its development, the purpose is stated to "advise on the desirability and feasibility of national standards and tests" and "recommend long-term policies, structures, and mechanisms for setting voluntary education standards and planning an appropriate system of tests" (Ravitch, 1995, p. 139). The NCEST's first report, released in January of 1992, recommended national content standards, and based on those standards, a national system of assessments (Ravitch, 1995). Ravitch did note the NCEST-recognized assessments can and will influence what is being taught; therefore, the new tests needed to be based on these newly developed standards. Despite their efforts, the NCEST believed education needed state curriculum frameworks, more professional development for educators, and modern technology (Ravitch, 1995).

The Bush administration used the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics as a model of reform. By 1992, grants were made for scholars and teachers to create standards in English, the arts, foreign languages, science, history, geography, and civics, all meant to be voluntary (Ravitch, 1995). There was an evident refusal despite the encouragement to use learning models that focused on the "active participation of the child in inquiry and questioning" (Nussbaum, 2016, p. 16). This new education model focused on education for economic growth. For this, students only need "basic skills, literacy, and

numeracy," and only some people have "advanced skills in computer science and technology" (p. 19).

Goals 2000 Educate America Act

The Clinton Administration followed the America 2000 strategy with its Goals 2000 Plan, passing voluntary legislation on national standards but providing states with federal money to write their standards (Ravitch, 1995, 2010). The administration created a federal agency called the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC), which is responsible for "certifying the national standards created by subject matter organizations" (p. 29). According to Ravitch (1995), the issue is over national control of standards; under the Goals 2000 Plan, the national standards are voluntary, and NESIC offers state and local opportunities for standards development. However, Goals 2000 does not instate a national test, so states created their content performance standards and state tests (Ravitch, 1995, p. 30). What occurred was a lack of clarity in curriculum content; by avoiding clarity in content, specific states avoided scrutiny from stakeholders (Ravitch, 2010). The NESIC also used the word competency, shifting the focus from inputs to outputs (Tienken, 2017). Equity and equality were not at the forefront; teachers and students needed to be competent in the end goals, which gave an even stronger reason or purpose for standardizing student performance and instructional processes (Tienken, 2017).

No Child Left Behind

As the country entered the 21st century, George W. Bush was elected president. On January 8, 2002, his administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act (2002; NCLB, 2002) and, with it, the Reading First Initiative (Ravitch, 2010). NCLB took the place of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA). Bush continued the main idea of Goals 2000 to let states create their standards and pick their end-of-year tests. Still, under the NCLB (2002) legislation,

every school had to make adequate yearly progress in making every student proficient in math and English by 2014, and the legislation left each state to define proficiency on its own terms (Ravitch, 2010, p. 23). Meeting this AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) was crucial because this determined how funds would be distributed to public school districts (Arce et al., 2005; Tienken & Orlich, 2013; Wexler, 2020).

The new standardization framework and new test-based accountability national education policy meant more sanctions for failing schools, which included closure and being turned over to private management or state control (Ravitch, 2010, p. 23; Tienken, 2017). According to this new law, 100% of students needed proficiency, and the test score requirements increased yearly (Ravitch, 2010). Unlike its predecessors, NCLB (2002) is a different school reform in that it is a federal law, and states or school districts that are non-compliant with the mandates risk losing millions of dollars in school funding (Arce et al., 2005; Ravitch, 2010, p. 33). NCLB (2002) was the game changer in school reform because it no longer focused on the curriculum's quality but on data and standardized test scores (Ravitch, 2010; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). NCLB drove many districts towards "commercially developed scripted programmes" to increase teachers' use of "scientifically based teaching strategies" (Wyatt, 2014, p. 447).

Race to the Top

The Obama administration echoed many NCLB strategies with the launch of Race to the Top in 2013. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's fear for the state of America's public education system led him to believe in the importance of standardization as determined by policies and programs (Tienken, 2017). With 4.35 billion dollars in federal funds available for states, Race to the Top encouraged the adoption of charter schools, merit pay, judging teachers by students' test scores, or if scores remain inadequate, firings and closings (Ravitch, 2016;

Tienken, 2017, p. 273). The bill claimed it would do so by improving teacher and school leader effectiveness by promoting equitable distribution, strengthening the use of data to improve education, implementing college and career-ready programs, using internationally benchmarked standards, focusing on low-performing schools and turning them around, coordinating early learning programs for children as young as birth through third grade, and creating and maintaining innovative, high-performing charter schools (Rep. Polis, 2013).

Standardization

Due to the education reforms, the issue educators faced, and continue to face, is standardized education. Historically, standardization has always been around, but assessment-driven standardized education was brought to the education world by education reforms like *A Nation at Risk,* America 2000, and, specifically, No Child Left Behind (Tienken, 2017). What does a standardized education look like? Tienken (2017) explained:

> A policy-making body, like a state education agency, develops, copies, and or/purchases a set of curriculum standards that specify expected outputs, and then it adopts a one-size-fits-all testing program to monitor implementation and determine the attainment of the standard based on predetermine expectations and student output. Finally, the policy-making body mandates through legislation and administrative code that public school personnel teach the specified standards and administer the tests to monitor student achievement of the standards and judge teacher effectiveness. (p. 3)

The one-size-fits-all performance guarantee standardized education is focused on student outputs in a cost-efficient mechanistic assembly line approach based on the industrial age school (Eisner, 1994; Senge et al., 2012; Tienken, 2017).

Several problems arise with standardized education for students, including narrowing curriculum in “depth and breadth of subject matter,” the difficulty levels become standardized, and content customization is impossible due to departure from the expectations (Tienken, 2017, p. 5). For teachers, standardized curriculum expectations may cause them to teach in a “prescribed” or standard manner, causing “instructional regression” and “little room for diverse instructional methodologies” (p. 5). It may also cause teachers to use subject-centered rather than student-centered practices (p. 5). For both teachers and students, standardized curriculum expectations “stunt creativity, innovation, complex thinking, and other skills and dispositions necessary for an uncertain future” (Tienken, 2017, p. 5).

Common Core State Standards Initiative

By 2006, when national test scores showed little to no improvement in standardized test scores, there was a greater call for national standards, a national curriculum, and national tests (Ravitch, 2016; Tienken, 2017; Wexler, 2019). The suppliers of Common Core assured these standards would fix the lack of standardization policies from NCLB (Ravitch, 2016; Tienken, 2017; Wexler, 2019). The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and The Gates Foundation, which pledged $240 million, began drafting the Common Core Standards (Ainsworth et al., 2012; Wexler, 2019). The Common Core Standards were meant to be the great equalizer for all students by preparing them to graduate “college- and career-ready” (p. 141; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). By March 2010, 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia endorsed the development of the Common Core State Standards and the eventual implementation in K–12 for selected content (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). When developing the standards, the Common Core Standards writers considered the following: internationally benchmarked, special populations,

assessment, standards and curriculum, and twenty-first-century skills (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). Along with these standards came new, more rigorous standardized tests like PARCC and SBAC (Tienken, 2017). Despite these skills-based standards, the state tests had become a "powerful influence on teaching practices" (Ainsworth et al., 2012, p. 77).

Due to the new rigorous standards, many schools scrambled for what is deemed a "high quality" curriculum across all content areas; "The usage of scripted curricula was further accelerated in many states by the sudden implementation of the CCSS" (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020, p. 197). Teachers now faced the pressure of the scores from the state tests being included in their teacher evaluations, so more schools looked towards adopting scripted/narrowed curricula in all subjects (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Holt, 2022). Despite calling the CCSS "simply another set of lists of performance objectives" (p. 106), Tienken and Orlich (2013) explained this standardization as "deskills teaching and reduces it to a recipe and a set of steps" (p. 109)

Curriculum

School reforms directly affected how state legislators expected school districts to prepare their curriculums to meet the state standards. The following subsection is an introduction to aspects of curriculum theory related to this research study.

Defining Curriculum

Curriculum theory has been reconceptualized since the birth of public education in the United States. Tanner and Tanner (2007) defined curriculum as a "reconstruction of knowledge and experience that enables the learner to grow in exercising intelligent control of subsequent knowledge and experience" (p. 99). John Dewey (1902/1990) defined curriculum as "a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies" (p. 189). Each definition suggests that

students learn from experiences, through active learning, through reflective inquiry, and that "the curriculum should evolve according to experiences, passions, and interests students bring to the curriculum" (Tienken, 2017, p. 5).

Public education was created at the birth of the nation to equalize social class systems and support all citizens with the chance to practice a curriculum that encourages everyone to become a member of a democratic society (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). To do so, Dewey (1900/1990) argued that the focus or aim of curriculum needed to not be on the subject matter but on the child. He pushed for more individualized education in which students gained interest and skills in communication and constructivism inquiry, artistic growth, and critical thinking. However, this called for fluid and fluent curricula like the universe; curricula that are not fixed or ready-made but instead based on active learning, the children's experiences, and how the child interprets the subject matter (Dewey, 1902/1990). Dewey (1902/1990) stressed the teacher's role is one of guidance, one that provides the appropriate stimuli, one that can provide connection, motivation, and quality of learning.

Curriculum Models

President Thomas Jefferson was among the first presidents to publicly advocate for free public secondary education for children of all social classes and an education that did not rely on rote drill and memorization (Tienken & Orlich, 2013, p. 2). Later, a Massachusetts teacher and legislator, James Carter, pushed for engaging textbooks and science in schools (p. 2). Carter also ensured the system is equitable by pressing for the state to oversee the schools rather than the town, "local control with state regulation" (Tienken & Orlich, 2013, p. 3). Soon, Horace Mann emerged and encouraged teacher education institutions to improve teaching methods, diversify school groups, and create a curriculum that supports students' critical thinking skills to grow as

democratic citizens (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). However, these progressive education ideas faced many battles, including cost efficiency, overcrowding, and school reforms.

One of the oldest forms of instruction is the Lancasterian method; with this model, up to 50 students were placed in one room. The teacher taught by following a scripted drill lesson, and then, the brightest students in the class monitored the learning of other students in the row. The teacher would move on to another classroom and repeat (Rayman, 1981; Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

The Industrial Age model hit public education in the middle 19th century, and many aspects have lived into the 21st century (Senge et al., 2012). The Industrial Age model is directly influenced and modeled by the assembly lines that arose from the factory and technology industry, and the students are looked at as products instead of learners (Senge et al., 2012, pp. 35–36). Under the industrial model, standardization was the key to success. Standardization took the form of the assembly stages: grades, classes by age, moving from one stage to the next, teachers as advisors, and a certain number of students for certain days, for specific hours, determined by bells. Quantity was desired over quality. Outstanding performances were rewarded. Administrators at the top determined the requirements and standards to be followed (Hansen, 2021; Senge et al., 2012).

Paolo Freire (2017) viewed education as a Banking model that considers students as "passive consumers" (hooks, 1994, p. 40). When the Banking model is in place, the curriculum is deposited by the teacher, consumed by the student, and, hopefully, stored in their brain (p. 14). This model places students in a teacher-centered learning environment. Students have little involvement in their learning, including what they are learning and how they are learning. The Banking model is caused by the political stronghold in education pushing students to conform to

the status quo. Freire's hopes for students to "question the system they live in and the knowledge being offered to them, to discuss what kind of future they want, including their right to reject authority and to remake the school and society they find" (Shor, 1993, p. 28). Freire hoped for teachers to feel empowered in choice, to be transformative, "to become change-agents in school and society, for critical thought and action, for democracy, equality, ecology, and peace, against domination, manipulation, and the waste of human and natural resources" (p. 34).

Curriculum in Theory of This Study

Curriculum, curriculum theory, and curriculum models have been evolving since the formation of the 13 colonies. No matter how it evolved, the curriculum has always had one commonality: the teacher's involvement. Teachers support students in their journey through their understanding of the curriculum. How a teacher delivers the curriculum is vital to a student's success. While the early models focused on teaching all students, the shift to the teacher-centered models, like the Banking model example, does not support the growth of students. However, Freire's push for a transformative model that promotes a democratic and transformative relationship between teachers and students could be a model we strive to push for. Still, we must overcome the current scripted/narrowed programs taking over America's classrooms.

Scripted/Narrowed Curriculum

School reforms, like NCLB and the Common Core State Standards Initiative, drove 21st-century standardized education, which pushed schools to use scripted/narrowed curricula to meet the goals. The following subsections discuss the history of scripted/narrowed curriculum and its impacts.

The History of Scripted/Narrowed Curriculum

On September 2, 1958, the National Defense Education Act was signed into law (Huimin, 2020). President Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted to strengthen academics, capital, and "legitimate" content in schools by funding Kindergarten through four-year college (Flinders & Thornton, 2013; Huimin, 2020; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). One way to gain such control was by producing curricular programs, particularly at the elementary level, that were "teacher-proof" in that everything the teacher needed was provided and prespecified (Flinders & Thornton, 2013). If schools purchased these curricular programs, they were reimbursed through the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This is one of the earliest examples of a scripted or narrowed curriculum.

Since the time of Eisenhower, several curriculum models have been used and reforms implemented, but the most defining reform in terms of curriculum came with NCLB (2002). Before the 21st century, most scripted/narrowed programs focused on reading instruction, and with the passing of the No Child Left Behind legislation came the Reading First education program geared towards the improvement of literacy by the third grade, which increased the use of scripted/narrowed programs (Coles, 2001; Ede, 2006; Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020). The Reading First initiative stems from a report published by the National Reading Panel (NRP), in which they claim to have reviewed 100,000 studies analyzing how students learn to read and even provided a guide for scientifically based reading instruction (Coles, 2001; Demko, 2010; Ede, 2006, Wyatt, 2014). However, the reality of the study is that 100,000 studies had been done since 1966, and the actual cases studied by the NRP were far fewer, 614 total, a fraction of the 100,000 number that heralded the support it needed to support the Reading First initiative (Coles, 2001).

The NCLB and Reading First mandate provided "funding to schools on the condition that they adopt scientifically based reading programs. The "'scientifically based' (quantitative) research by the NRP that resulted in the funding for 'scientifically based' reading programs by Reading First is the basis for scripted reading curriculum" (Ede, 2006, p. 30). By defining scientifically based instruction, schools were limited to the types of curricular programs that would receive federal funding based on what was determined to be considered scientifically based instruction by the Reading First initiative in NCLB, and districts using programs outside of the explicit scientifically based programs would no longer receive federal funding (Coles, 2001; Ede, 2006; Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020). The results of this ended with schools choosing to either take the route of adapting a curriculum or adopting a curriculum:

> Teachers in schools that *adapted* scripted curricula were encouraged to use the curriculum as a resource but could omit or supplement whatever activities, projects, or topics they thought appropriate to enable their students to meet the standards. Teachers in schools who *adopted* the curriculum were expected to read the script without modification, perform all of the activities as written, and decorate their classrooms with the supplemental materials that the curriculum provided. (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020, p. 198)

A second surge of scripted/narrowed curriculum occurred in 2010 with the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which were adopted by many states. Due to the increased standardization and accountability in more subjects, schools were encouraged and even given incentives to adopt scripts that "rigorously planned and paced teaching in all subjects" (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020, p. 198). By 2012, "effective and creative teacher-designed instruction"

was being replaced by scripted programs (Dresser, 2012, p. 72). The role of the teacher changed from "professionals to mere transmitters of knowledge" (Dresser, 2012, p. 72).

Curriculum Developers/Publishers and Financial Gains

The requirements for funding the Reading First curriculum meant curriculum developers jumped on the NCLB train and began pushing out scripted curriculum materials (Ede, 2006). To receive funding, the scientifically based programs had to "incorporate systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (p. 30). Some of the most common curricula publishers include Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Harcourt, and Riverside (Arce et al., 2005, p. 58; Miner, 2004).

The profit makers of the NCLB legislation are the curriculum publishers who develop curricula, materials, and textbooks and "whose subdivisions develop standardized tests" (Arce et al., 2005, p. 58). Harcourt book publishing companies produced the SAT-9 assessment, and by 2002, 15 million students took this test (Arce et al., 2005; Miner, 2004). Harcourt companies range from Harcourt School, which produces textbook materials for kindergartners, and smaller companies like Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Publishers, which produce middle and high school textbooks and materials (Miner, 2004). McGraw-Hill—a larger conglomerate operating outside education with a financial investment company—delivers the TerraNova, TerraNova CTBS, and the California Achievement tests. According to Miner (2004), in 2004, McGraw-Hill was the leading producer of standardized education materials, serving 15 million students and 8,500 school districts throughout the country. In nine months, McGraw-Hill made $3.84 billion with net profits of $566 million. Riverside Publishing, a smaller part of major publishing company Houghton Mifflin, publishes the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and, after the passage of NCLB, produced several assessments designed to meet the criteria of the Reading First initiative

requirements, the most popular one Open Court (Arce et al., 2005; Miner, 2004). According to Miner (2004), Houghton Mifflin makes $1 billion in annual sales.

Pearson, initially the smallest company, has become the standardized testing and curriculum production giant. From the Los Angeles School District alone, Pearson sold their online curriculum for $135 million, and in 2013, the company's global profit peaked at $1 billion. According to Robinson (2021), by 2018, Pearson profited $762 million from $5.511 billion in revenue. Pearson is the leader in standardized tests but also in curricula publishing, but

> Districts can buy Pearson textbooks, Pearson workbooks, and Pearson test prep, such as a suite of software that includes 60,000 sample exam questions. They can connect kids to Pearson's online tutoring service or hire Pearson consultants to coach their teachers. (Simon, 2015, para. 36)

In May 2020, Pearson sold its learning division to Nexus Capital for $250 million (Molnar, 2020). It has been rebranded to Savvas Learning Company and provides products for "K–12 grade levels and disciplines and covers core curriculum, supplemental content, and intervention programs" (Molnar, 2020).

The curriculum developers and publishing companies have made the biggest gains in the era of standardization. They jumped on the scripted/narrowed curricula requirements and started pushing out materials by the hundreds. Districts spent millions of dollars over several years without seeing improvement on national exams. These national exams were also being produced by the same developers and publishing companies they were spending millions to get their students to meet the AYP.

Equity/Equality

Education departments wanted to move to scripted/narrowed programs because teaching these programs pushes the point of equity in that all students will receive the same quality education (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Levinson, 2012, p. 263). Historical and contemporary evidence has shown schools serving higher populations of minority or low-income students have notoriously had insufficient access to school resources. Resources include experienced teachers and curriculum resources, so scripted/narrowed programs have been considered a perfect way to address many of these resource deficits (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Demko, 2010; Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020). Students in high-poverty schools would receive the same scripted/narrowed programs as the affluent schools on the opposite side of town, and because it is scripted/narrowed, it suggests anyone can teach the material.

Despite equal curriculum access, the concern becomes the diversity within the curriculum. Ede (2006) explained with the increasing diversity in public school classrooms scripted curricula were more likely to be adopted. Due to the higher poverty and diverse cultural makeups, Ede (2006) stressed that it is not possible for a single curriculum to "meet the needs and interests of all students" (p. 32). The concern has been and still is having "diverse learners, English Language learners, children from a variety of class and cultural backgrounds, and children with varying degrees of literacy expertise to use one standardized program for learning how to read and write" (MacGillivray et al., 2004, p. 143). Noddings (2013a) feared a universal academic curriculum may "aggravate academic differences" and instead "a richer, more varied curriculum might help students find out what they are suited to do" (Nodding, 2013a, p. 30). In their 2001 study, Moustafa and Land (2001) found zero evidence indicating higher reading achievement among the students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the 153 schools they

studied. Instead, they found evidence that students learning from non-scripted programs outperformed the students learning from the scripted reading curriculum.

Learning Levels

Classrooms consist of students of all learning levels. A scripted curriculum would need to challenge gifted learners while also supporting those struggling learners (Ede, 2006). MacGillivray et al. (2004) explained that "a teacher's obligation to be responsive to a class of unique learners is negated once instruction is automatized" (p. 143). Noddings (2013a) feared a standard curriculum institutes a ranking system based on academic performance, "ignoring their special talents and interests," and the same students would rank at the bottom year after year (p. 34). Moustafa and Land (2001) discovered when the teachers used their experience and knowledge to differentiate instruction based on student needs compared to a scripted reading curriculum, students performed better in reading when they received reading instruction catered to their learning levels.

Novice Teachers/Teaching Professionals

Developers of scripted curricula alleged it could support the potential issues faced by inexperienced and/or novice teachers, including classroom management, by creating scripted routines, subject-matter expertise, and organization of lesson plans. It has been said the design of scripted curricula can help "direct the teachers in the organization and instruction of curriculum . . . provides a powerful support to teachers with less subject-matter expertise or pedagogical know-how" (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020, p. 201). Another alleged benefit is that "inexperienced teachers who are unsure of how to begin the teaching process" now have "support structures to direct teacher behavior" (Wyatt, 2014, p. 449). However, others have been criticizing the use of scripted curricula due to its impact on the teaching profession as early as pre-service teaching.

Holt (2022) explained that scripted curricula affect the critical learning stage for pre-service teachers because when developing their teaching pedagogy, they use scripted curriculum methods as their only practice (p. 698). Garan (2004) suggested this also means novice teachers are not learning to make decisions about developing lessons and working with students.

Instating scripted curricula not only affects novice teachers but can also affect veteran professionals. MacGillivray et al. (2004) explained how when schools implement a scripted curriculum, teachers do not feel the need to continue their commitment to themselves to better their professional development. Tienken and Orlich (2013) compared teachers using the scripted curriculum to automatons and fear the lack of creativity.

Narrowed/Missed Curriculum

The increase in standardized tests increased the number of districts moving to "teaching to the tests" models, leading to narrowed and missed curricula. Standardization reforms leading to high-stakes tests cause many schools to end up having a "significant amount of control over the context, knowledge forms, and pedagogies at the classroom level" or fragmenting understanding of the content to teach to the test (Au, 2007, p. 298; Henderson, 2015). This is called narrowing the scope of subject learning, leading to "little regard-or use-for democratic self and social learning" (Henderson, 2015). In his research study on high-stakes testing and curriculum control, Au (2007) found instances of districts narrowing curriculum for tested subjects. This means he found that the teachers spent more time "teaching to the test," because high-stakes testing had a "significant amount of content control over curriculum" (p. 262).

In discussing the importance of liberal arts and stretching across disciplines, Noddings (2013a) stressed the importance of fostering student creativity and self-learning, "Our aim is not only to increase cooperation as a way of working and relating but also to encourage creativity

and get students to think for themselves" (p. 64). Noddings (2013a) also mentioned that many high-poverty populated schools that are using scripted curricula are failing to teach their students important skills they will not learn at home. These important skills include missing chances to engage in critical dialogue about ecological, global, and political problems that may interest them and missing the opportunity to think critically so as not to become cynical and instead view both sides of issues.

The use of scripted/narrowed curricula imposes on the concepts of democratic education. Public school systems are the only social institutions future generations can actively learn how to participate in a democracy and global community (Tienken, 2017, p. 110). Dewey (1938/1997) argued:

> The traditional scheme, is in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter and methods upon those who are only moving slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject-matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. (pp. 18–19)

Reforms impose scripted curricula, and these "violate the tenets of democratic participation" while also negating their learning needs, which is opposite to the democratic education Dewey envisioned (Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Tienken, 2017).

Concluding Scripted Curriculum

As the requirement for "scientifically based" curricula occurred with the passing of NCLB and then the Common Core Standards Initiative, the use of scripted/narrowed curricula became more prominent at the turn of the century. Curriculum developers and publishers leaped on the opportunity to capitalize on the new academic requirements. Not only did the companies

monetize on producing "scientifically based" scripted and narrowed curricula in all core subject areas, but the new requirements also brought new rigorous state standardized tests the companies also created. Despite the suggestions that scripted/narrowed curricula would fix education, several issues arose with their implementation and continued use. Although students were learning the same curriculum, students did not have the same resources available so issues of equality within curricula exist. Students of different learning levels and capabilities suffered because of the requirements to follow a script to fidelity, and novice and veteran educators' professional and pedagogical practices were challenged. Despite what the research reveals about scripting curricula narrowing the opportunities to expand students' knowledge and experiences, state education departments continue to require their implementation today.

Teacher Autonomy

There are several conversations surrounding teacher autonomy. From the various definitions over the years to the links to other parts of the teaching profession, teacher autonomy is still an understudied aspect in the education world due to the question of whether teaching is a profession. When *A Nation at Risk* was released, it blamed teachers and their lack of professionalism, and this raised the question and argument: Is teaching a profession? (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). The following subsections discuss this question, introduce how to measure teacher autonomy, and uncover the phenomena of curriculum autonomy and its importance to the teacher profession.

Defining Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy has been defined several times since the 1970s. One of the earliest researchers of teacher autonomy, Charters (1974), defined teacher autonomy as a "psychological construct representing a teacher's beliefs about his or her freedom from external interference,

pressure, or control in performing the work of the classroom" (p. 217). Charters' (1976) later definitions of teacher autonomy include ideas like the authority of the classroom decision-making about instruction methods and evaluation processes. A few years later, Street (1988) defined teacher autonomy as "the independence teachers maintain in exercising discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions" (p. 4). In the 1990s, Pearson and Hall (1993) suggested teacher autonomy is when teachers feel in control of themselves and their work environment. Short and Greer (1997) later defined it as a "teachers' belief that they can control certain aspects of their work life" (p. 138). In each of these definitions, teacher autonomy focuses on teachers having some semblance of freedom and control in their instructional methods and decisions, evaluation processes, and exercising discretion. They suggested teachers can practice without external factors interfering with or controlling their work in the classroom.

Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Authority

When examining the literature on teacher autonomy, three words are repeated consistently: empowerment, authority, and professionalism. In 1986, the President of the American Federation of Teachers argued, "A professional is a person who is an expert, and by virtue of that expertise is permitted to operate fairly independently, to make decisions, to exercise discretion, to be free of most direct supervision" (Shanker, 1986, p. 406). However, prior research has suggested teachers have "no authority" over the school systems in which they are meant to exercise their "educational authority: as subject-matter specialists" (Pearson & Hall, 1993, p. 172). Ingersoll and Alsalam (1997) argued that to define teaching as a profession, authority is essential in distinguishing a professional. Later, Ingersoll and Collins (2018) explained:

> Professionals are considered experts in whom substantial authority is vested, and professions are marked by a large degree of self-governance. The rationale behind professional authority is to place substantial levels of control into the hands of the experts—those who are closest to and most knowledgeable of the work. (p. 207)

These researchers argued authority is a crucial characteristic of teacher autonomy in defining teachers as professionals in their subject matter and being professional in decision-making (Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; Ingersoll & Collins, 2018; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). Giving teachers authority serves the purpose of teacher empowerment. Friedman (1999) explained the current top-down managerial systems used by school administrators take away a teacher's authority over important pedagogical matters. He stressed that if teachers are given authority through delegation of decision-making, it is to "empower teachers and create within schools a highly autonomous ambiance" (p. 59). This research suggests the concepts of authority and empowerment are directly related to teacher autonomy. The concepts acknowledge educators as professionals in their roles as educators, as professionals who have the authority and are empowered to make the right decisions for their students.

Teacher Autonomy Measurement Tools and Their Conclusions

Several scales have been created to measure teacher autonomy. One of the earliest scales is Charters' Sense of Autonomy Scale (SAS) from 1974 and Chauvin and Ellet's Attitudes of Professional Autonomy (APA) scale from 1993; however, both measured teacher autonomy as a "shield against external pressures" (Friedman, 1999, p. 59). Pearson and Hall (1993) and Friedman (1999) also created teacher autonomy scales focused on decision-making and pedagogy.

Pearson and Hall (1993) conducted a study based on developing an instrument to determine teacher autonomy. The two-fold research was to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument and investigate the relationship between teacher autonomy and several variables, including age, gender, teaching experience, and so on (p. 173). The research duo developed the instrument known as the Teaching Autonomy Scale (TAS). In their conclusion, based on the data from the TAS (Pearson & Hall, 1993), they determined teacher autonomy was not a single trait but two dimensions: general teacher autonomy and curriculum autonomy (p. 176). Pearson and Hall (1993) determined that "the general teacher autonomy factor is logically consistent with the need for teachers to have autonomy to ensure critical thinking and creativity on the job" and that "the curricular autonomy factor is logically consistent with the need for teachers to have autonomy in decisions of teaching and learning" (p. 177). At the conclusion of their research, they determined that autonomy is related to higher job satisfaction, and the researchers suggested schools consider a more collaborative decision-making approach in which teachers have more autonomy.

In 2006, Pearson partnered with Moomaw to use the TAS (Pearson & Hall, 1993) again to determine the internal consistency reliability of the TAS scores and the original factors. The 18-item TAS (Pearson & Hall, 1993) instrument was used again, and the results were consistent with the 1993 results (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). Pearson and Moomaw's (2006) study determined, along with other researchers, that teacher autonomy is critical to job satisfaction and for teachers remaining in the profession (Brunetti, 2001, p. 48).

Similarly, Friedman (1999) set out to measure teacher autonomy as a means of "encouraging and strengthening the power of teachers in the personal or professional sense" (p. 60). To start, Friedman (1999) set out to develop a scale to measure teachers' sense of work

autonomy by creating what, in the end, became a 42-question scale called the Teacher Work Autonomy (TWA). The TWA consisted of questions about concepts like decision-making in parental involvement, curriculum and development changes, staff development, and more. Before starting his research, Friedman determined teacher autonomy would need to be investigated on "two independent imaginary axes: the decision-level (principle or routine) and the decision-content level axis (pedagogical or organizational)" (pp. 61–62). The first study indicated teacher autonomy consists of "organizational as well as the pedagogical function facets" and "both principle and routine decisions comprise the notion of teacher sense of work autonomy" (p. 67). Like Pearson and Hall's (1993) conclusions, Friedman's (1999) second study concluded teacher autonomy can be conceptualized into two dimensions: content and level of decisions (p. 72).

To develop an instrument that measures curriculum autonomy, precisely professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry, I used several questions from Pearson and Hall's (1993) Teacher Autonomy Scale and Friedman's (1999) Teacher Work Autonomy scale. After reviewing the questions from each scale, I determined which questions best fit the definitions of professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry and developed an adapted 18-question Curriculum Autonomy Scale. I defined professional responsibility by items that measured curriculum decision-making, content, and instructional planning methods. I defined pedagogical artistry by items that measured personal on-the-job decision-making, teaching methods and strategies to support various student learning opportunities and strengths, and daily accommodations.

Curriculum Autonomy

Pearson and Hall (1993) and Friedman (1999) uncovered a critical factor in teacher autonomy. It can be separated into two dimensions, and the one dimension I am examining is curriculum autonomy. After the determination of the two dimensions using the TAS (Pearson & Hall, 1993), Pearson and Moomaw (2006) used it again and determined, "If teachers are to be empowered and regarded as professionals, then, like other professionals, they must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students" (p. 44). For this study, I am focusing on teachers' professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry to examine curriculum autonomy. Professional responsibility is defined as a teacher's responsibility to be educated in the subject content and pedagogy to make curricular decisions in their area. An educator must also engage in pedagogical artistry, which is a teacher's daily pedagogical choices for their student population. This can include but is not limited to how they may accommodate or modify lessons based on special education needs or learning levels, how to use creativity in developing engaging lessons, how to develop new lessons in order to promote social and cultural learning opportunities, and how to create materials for their students based on day-to-day learning. The following two sections dive deeper into each level of curriculum autonomy.

Professional Responsibility

According to Tienken (2017), the curriculum is the "mechanism for socializing diverse groups of students into the American democratic experiment and for preparing them to address the problems that arise in a democracy and in the global community" (p. 110). As a reminder, John Dewey (1990) defined curriculum as "a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies" (p. 189). Based on the work of (Henderson 2001, 2015; Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson

et al., 2018) on democratic curriculum leadership and the work of Pearson and Hall (1993) and Friedman (1999) on teacher autonomy, professional responsibility is a critical factor in curriculum autonomy, and therefore, developing the curriculum.

Ainsworth et al. (2012) stressed teachers should take a central role in the implementation of the curriculum. From the original work on democratic curriculum leadership in 1999 to the 2018 publication, a significant element of public education has been implemented: standards-based education and standardized testing (Henderson et al., 2018). Henderson and his colleagues turned to education philosopher Nel Noddings' teachings on professional responsibility to examine the impacts of standardization on curriculum autonomy. Due to these new expectations and the weight they have on teachers, Noddings (2013a) made a clear distinction between accountability and responsibility for teachers: "Basic to accountability in any profession is in the expectation that a practitioner should be able to account for, to justify, his or her professional decisions and acts" (p. 7). Noddings compared it to how lawyers do not win each case, and doctors do not save each patient, yet these losses are considered a part of the practice (2013a, p. 8). Therefore, defining teacher accountability based on standardized test scores is a warped concept. Whereas accountability is the popular word in the educational world, Noddings (2013a) suggested responsibility is the "more powerful concept for teachers" (p. 8). Teachers are trusted with plenty of responsibility, including students' physical and emotional safety, moral and social growth, intellectual development, and preparation for their future. Teachers do all of this while also creating engaging lessons for 25 different brains (Noddings, 2009, 2013a). Before Noddings, Boote (2006) and Crocco and Costigan (2007) made issue with accountability, explaining there needs to be a balance between autonomy and accountability, but it is "tipped too far in the direction of accountability" (Crocco & Costigan, 2007, p. 514). Noddings (2013a)

firmly stated, “Teachers should not be held accountable, then, for adhering strictly to the prescribed curriculum. Rather, as professionals, they should expect to justify what they do when they depart from it in recognition of their deeper responsibility to students” (p. 8). Darling-Hammond et al. (1999) found that student success is directly related to teacher expertise. Therefore, educators must be professionally responsible and have content and pedagogical knowledge.

For educators to deeply understand their content to strengthen their role as democratic curriculum leaders, teachers must be a part of the development of the curriculum (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). Not only does being involved in curriculum decision-making lead to a greater understanding of the content, but the educators learn the content and pedagogy more intimately. This leads to educational stakeholders having the ability to redevelop and revamp curricula to serve their student population properly (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 33). Walker and Soltis (2009) discussed the importance and need for novice teachers to be included in these collaborations by explaining how novice teachers typically rely on the support of others’ curriculum plans. Still, as teachers gain experience, confidence, and judgment about curriculum growth, teachers take on more curriculum responsibility and decision-making. It stresses the importance of educators partaking in educational, deliberative conversations.

Throughout *Understanding Democratic Curriculum Leadership*, Henderson and Kesson (1999) established the importance of deliberation because it is a “decision-making process where people conceive of the problem, create and weigh likely alternative solutions to it, envision probable results of each alternative, and select or develop an optimum course of action” (p. 34). As problem-solving conversations, educational deliberations can help generate alternatives, cause conflict that encourages beneficial deliberations, and reveal stakeholders’ interests and

investments in the original problem (pp. 36–37). For deliberations to be successful, it is essential to consider time management, generate alternatives that focus on the original problem, consider the group composition, and ensure it is an inclusive practice (pp. 41–44). The importance of using deliberation in curriculum development is that deliberation leads to practical reasoning, and reasoning requires people to use morals and human experience to lead to practical action in problem-solving (Dewey, 1922).

Strong democratic curriculum leaders employ group and solo deliberation of their curriculum, which is the action of reflective inquiry (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 44). Reflective inquiry can be considered a "support of continuous growth" about unanswered questions (Gornik & Samford, 2018). Eisner (1979) detailed reflective inquiry of curriculum:

> The program we provide in schools, what we include and what we exclude, what we emphasize and what we minimize, what we assign prime time and what we assign to the remainder, reflect the directions in which we believe children should grow. Educators help shape minds, and the curriculum we provide is one of the most important tools we use in this process. The curriculum is, in this view, a mind-altering device. (p. 13)

Reflective inquiry is a problem-solving method to support teachers in taking professionally responsible actions.

Professional responsibility includes being a part of the decision-making process and profoundly understanding the practice (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 48). This means a solid understanding of curricular expectations according to the state standards, the framework used, and how the frameworks lead to objectives and goals (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). They also encourage teachers to be suspicious of frameworks and "natural order" (i.e., the curriculum does not always need to be linear; there may be times to deconstruct and resist the regulation;

Henderson & Kesson, 1999). This sometimes means breaking away from the ideological society in which we are based and encouraging a more holistic education for teachers and students (Henderson et al., 2018). In a later text, Henderson et al. (2018) focused on the practice of the 3S Understanding Pedagogy, or 3S understanding, as the lead pedagogical framework for democratic curriculum leadership to support the holistic teaching of students for a democratic education. The 3S Pedagogy focuses on subject understanding, social understanding, and self-learning (Henderson et al., 2018). Professionally responsible educators personally practice 3S pedagogy. Educators already do so when they have expertise in their subject matter and are a part of the curriculum decision-making process so that it serves their student population. The 3S Pedagogy supports the purpose of holistic teaching, which is "fostering and empowering students' democratic learning as well as embracing intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth" (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 75). The goal is to support students in affirming their holistic being (Henderson, 2015). The 3S understanding pedagogy approach helps develop a curriculum that encourages a democratic education (Henderson, 2015; Henderson et al., 2018).

With the ever-increasing expectations of teachers and the top-down managerial leadership style of education that continues to leave educators on the bottom, Henderson et al. (2018) developed a "problem-solving artistry" fourfold process for teachers to practice improving professional responsibility and artistry. The concepts and ideals of 3S understanding (explained below) are echoed in the fourfold process. The first fold focuses on responsibility and professional awakening, which encourages teachers to work through an individual awakening of their educational purpose by challenging themselves to be "less presumptuous and critically question what we do and why with reference to democratic values" (Gornik & Samford, 2018; Henderson et al., 2018, p. 52). By working through this professional awakening, educators can

work through the “process for democratic relations, instead of ideological adherence” and are “intrinsically motivated, autonomous professionals” (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 57). A professional awakening also encourages a deliberative conversation, which leads to the action of reflective inquiry (teach, model, communicate) and a teacher’s self-learning, a goal of 3S understanding pedagogy (Henderson et al., 2018). When a teacher has mastered the subject learning, the self-learning phase is improved through pedagogical artistry, which promotes an active learning environment.

Pedagogical Artistry

Professional responsibility directly fosters pedagogical artistry, another critical factor in curriculum autonomy. As a reminder, Tanner and Tanner (2007) defined curriculum as “that reconstruction of knowledge and experience that enables the learner to grow in exercising intelligent control of subsequent knowledge and experience” (p. 99). This means students learn from curriculum experiences, a curriculum that should “evolve and be customized based on experiences, passions, and interests students bring to the curriculum” (Tienken, 2017, p. 5), and pedagogical artistry supports this active construction and learning in the classroom.

Many modern definitions in education define pedagogical artistry: Alqorni et al. (2023) defined it as “creative teachers have a supportive environment and are self-motivated . . . The teaching process creates new ideas and ideas so that they become unique and a challenge for creative teachers in creating discoveries” (pp. 543–544); Rasam and Sari (2018) suggested it encourages the growth of new ideas from different views so student confidence grows; Kadir (2018) detailed teacher creativity as a way to develop various ideas and encourage student learning. Suryanti and Arifani (2021) highlighted that teacher creativity is the development of innovative ideas before or during the teaching and learning process and argued that teacher

creativity is linked to student achievement and motivation; Sudarma (2013) believed teacher creativity is when educators find learning strategies that focus on improving student achievement. Each definition focuses on teachers making real-time decisions to promote student achievement.

Pedagogical artistry is the act of using reflective inquiry to modify teaching pedagogy (Henderson, 2001). Educators who practice pedagogical artistry nurture democracy by modeling democratic ideals and allowing students to experience democratic living in the classroom (p. 3). According to Henderson (2001), the three basics of democratic living are intelligence, generativity, and generosity. These three basics are taught using pedagogical artistry and the 3Ss of teaching for democratic living, or 3S pedagogy.

To proceed with pedagogical artistry and 3S pedagogy, an educator must be able to practice holistic teaching, a step in the fourfold process mentioned above. The fourfold process focuses on the "transactional relationship between teachers' professional journeys of understanding and their students' holistic journeys of 3S understandings," a student's achievement of subject learning, self-learning, social learning, and a democratic education and curriculum (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 32). Subject learning is the focus on intelligence using "thinking-centered, performance-based activities" (Henderson, 2001, p. 9). This can occur through students engaging in classroom discussion, peer teaching, collaborative learning, project-based learning, authentic, real-world learning problems, and more (Henderson, 2001, p. 9). Self-learning is the focus of generativity or growth by becoming active, life-long learners (Henderson, 2001, p. 11). This is supported through creativity, imagination, inquiry, dialogue, growth-oriented spaces, and social-emotional growth (Henderson, 2001, p. 12). Social learning focuses on generosity through learning and understanding equity, diversity, and civility issues

(Henderson, 2001, p. 13). This learning requires students to be exposed to culturally diverse educational programs that encourage critical awareness and reflective discussion (Henderson, 2001, p. 13). Students should experience a culturally diverse staff who "model equitable social relations," and should be exposed to multicultural education to build a better understanding of people different from them (Henderson, 2001, pp. 13–14). Lastly, to be fully immersed in social learning, students need to be engaged in critical conversations about civil and social issues people face today (Henderson, 2001, p. 15). To give students the democratic education they deserve, teachers must integrate pedagogical artistry through inquiry. Teachers cannot only be experts in their subject matter; to teach a democratic education, educators must also be able to go on a journey of five forms of inquiry: public moral inquiry, multi-perspective inquiry, deliberative inquiry, autobiographical inquiry, and critical inquiry (Henderson, 2001, pp. 21–22).

However, in the standardized education climate, educators deal with uniformity and conformity to meet the behavioral objectives structured on the state's content standards: "Anywhere from commonplace score and sequence charts to highly restrictive scripted and mapped-out instruction, trends toward standardization stifle pedagogical artistry" (Henderson et al, 2018, p. 65). Education scholars Hlebowitsh (2012) and Schwab (1983) insisted teachers should be able to rely on their personal experiences and judgment to make decisions in the classroom, not what the research says about evidence-based learning. Hlebowitsh (2012) compared teaching to "looking for the way or ways to teach all the children represented on the scatterplot" (pp. 6–7). Schwab (1983) described the everyday classroom:

> There are thousands of ingenious ways in which commands on what and how to teach can, will, and must be modified or circumvented in the actual moments of teaching. Teachers practice an art. Moments of choice of what to do, how to do it, and whom and at

> what pace, arise hundreds of times a school day and arise differently every day with every group of students. No command or instruction can be so formulated as to control that kind of artistic judgement and behavior, with its demand for frequent, instant choices of ways to me an ever varying situation. (p. 245)

The modern definitions of teacher artistry above (separate from Henderson and his partners' work) mention the development of new ideas, creativity, growth, and different views; Henderson et al. (2018) moved it one step further by detailing pedagogical artistry as a holistic journey of democratic understanding that honors peoples' idiosyncrasies and individuals' freedom, whereas standardized learning works towards making everyone the same (p. 65). To help support his definition of pedagogical artistry, Dr. Jim Henderson leans heavily on the support of his mentor Elliot Eisner (1979), who wrote in his book *The Educational Imagination on the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*:

> Teaching is an art in the sense that teachers, like painters, composers, actresses, and dancers, make judgments based largely on qualities that un-fold during the course of action. Qualitative forms of intelligence are used to select, control, and organize classroom qualities, such as tempo, tone, climate, pace of discussion, and forward movement. The teacher must "read" the emerging qualities and respond with qualities appropriate to the ends sought or the direction he wishes the students to take. In this process, qualitative judgment is exercised in the interests of achieving a qualitative end. . . . Teaching is an art in the sense that the teacher's activity is not dominated by prescriptions or routines but is influenced by qualities and contingencies that are unpredicted. The teacher must function in an innovative way in order to cope with these

> contingencies . . . Teaching is an art in the sense that the ends it achieves are often created in process. (p. 154)

The modern definitions of teacher artistry echo Eisner's sentiments on pedagogical artistry. Eisner (1979) discussed how teachers make creative judgments in action, and these creative judgments are made to help support the whole classroom. They support the students' achievements by providing more individualized education experiences for their students to support the student's creative journeys. Eisner (1979) stressed teaching cannot be dominated by a hard mapped-out routine because teachers must be able to respond and cope with the unexpected events that occur daily; teaching is a process. Holistic teaching allows teachers to actively engage in pedagogical artistry and a transactional learning environment where students can organically learn state standards rather than the ideological step-by-step process (Henderson et al., 2018). When considering self-learning and social learning in 3S understanding approach, pedagogical artistry and holistic teaching help generate lead learners, another step in the fourfold process. Pedagogical artistry can be traced back to John Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902/1990), in which he stresses the role of the teacher as one who provides direction and guidance, one who provides the appropriate materials, and one who supports the student through active learning.

Dewey (1990/1902) stressed that ready-made material restricts the individualism of the students and teachers. However, Apple (2009) explains that increased demands and pressure for higher scores have had major impacts on teacher professionalism. Apple (2009) details how the increased use of "pre-specified teaching 'competencies' and procedures and student responses" has led to loss of control and de-skilling (p. 167). Pedagogical artistry brings us full circle back to professional responsibility. Peter Hlebowitsh (2012) argued,

> Most distressing is the prospect of assuming that best teaching practices are reliable and portable enough to script instruction, which poses the harmful possibility of closing down the discretionary space teachers need to make responsive and educationally sound judgments in the classroom. (p. 4)

Concluding Curricular Autonomy

Teachers can practice the final step in the fourfold process, which focuses on professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry. The final step, participatory evaluation, is the "practice of deliberative judgments that are based on a rigorous 'perceptual exploration' of subject understandings deepened by democratic self and social understandings" (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 38). All people cannot be evaluated on a one-size-fits-all expectation. Using professional judgments and practicing pedagogical artistry is asking teachers to practice holistic teaching. However, professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry are critical factors in curricular autonomy, a scarce commodity. With the stress of complying with federal and state mandates, teachers are feeling the pressure, and their pedagogical values are being tested. Called a "dead zone," . . . "critical thinking, self-reflection and imagination are being left to outside sources. There is no room for creative methods . . . Scripted instruction takes the places of the teacher. The program determines "what the teacher will say and do, as well as the pace of the lesson" (Dresser, 2012, p. 77).

Chapter Summary

History has proven that school reforms continue to challenge teacher professionalism. After the release of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner et al., 1983), the resurgence of school reforms challenged the American education system by no longer placing students at the center of the curriculum focus. Teachers found their autonomy dwindling when the *No Child Left Behind Act*

(2001) was mandated. Then, the release of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010) forced many teachers to follow scripted curriculums to reach unattainable goals. With the implementation of more narrowed/scripted curricula, teachers are faced with losing their curriculum autonomy and, therefore, their professional responsibilities and pedagogical artistry. The loss of this autonomy has led to many teachers leaving the profession. Those who stay face the debasing scripted curricula are faced with supporting their students through issues of equity and equality, unfair differentiation, or lack thereof, and the missed opportunities of becoming strong democratic citizens who think creatively and critically, challenge the status quo, and actively engage in constructive learning opportunities (Dewey, 1900/1902/1990).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter discusses the democratic leadership conceptual framework, the convergent mixed methods research design used to conduct the study, and the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The conceptual framework and methodological design supported the exploration of the research question: How do teachers understand the impact of scripted/narrowed curriculum on curriculum autonomy?

The applicability of the mixed methods study approach is also discussed throughout this chapter. Therefore, this chapter's primary components describe the conceptual framework, methodology, study participants, data collection, data analysis, and ethical concerns.

Conceptual Framework

I approached this dissertation in practice from the theoretical perspective of democratic curriculum leadership as proposed by curriculum theorists Dr. James Henderson and his colleagues (e.g., Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018), who, in turn, drew inspiration from various educational theorists, including John Dewey and Maxine Greene. To challenge the current managerial control and top-down hierarchy of the public education system, democratic curriculum leadership believes in the *ethics of strong democracy* and uses a transformative reform agenda grounded in five "interrelated dimensions" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 12).

Henderson and Kesson's (1999) four ethical principles were built from Greene's (1988) philosophy of a strong democracy as a way to provide a "concrete normative framework for the practice of democratic curriculum leadership" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, pp. 8–9). These examples include engaging in dialogical inquiry to deepen one's understanding of the

"interdependence of all living things (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 9). Teachers seeking a strong understanding of curriculum practice while engaging in "sophisticated holistic deliberative educational practice" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 10). Lastly, it includes engaging in critical awareness of the complicated dialogue surrounding "democratic emancipation" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 11). These ethical principles provide the basis for a teacher to engage in practicing ethical curriculum autonomy. Using these principles, ethical curriculum autonomy requires teachers to be subject matter and pedagogical experts who use and seek growth in inquiry, reflection, and deliberation to promote and develop democratic curricula.

According to Henderson and Kesson (1999), "When the ethics of a strong democracy is applied to the practice of curriculum leadership, a very specific and challenging transformative agenda emerges" (p. 12). This transformative agenda consists of the following five interrelated dimensions discussing how a democratic leader:

- seeks ways to introduce and support teaching for authentic inquiry learning.
- seeks ways to introduce and support teacher-led professional development.
- seeks ways to redesign educational programs so that they are properly supportive of teaching for authentic inquiry learning and collegial professional development.
- seeks ways to redesign organizational structures so that they properly support collegial professional development.
- seeks ways to establish meaningful school-community dialogue on transformative efforts. (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, pp. 12–15)

As the transformative agenda to develop as a democratic curriculum leader and gain curriculum autonomy, these dimensions guide curriculum leaders in finding different ways to emerge and practice autonomy with transformative skills to support other teachers and students. These four

ethical principles and five interrelated dimensions support the "holistic vision" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 16) that is the democratic curriculum leadership framework.

As described by Henderson et al. (Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018), democratic curriculum leadership is inspired by Dewey's (1916) desire and vision for democratic education and his essentials for problem-solving artistry (i.e., open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, responsibility), Gadamer's (1975) concept of philosophical hermeneutics, Greene's (1988) ethics of a strong democrat, Schwartz and Sharpe's (2010) extension of Aristotle's practical wisdom, and the widely discussed idea of educational deliberations (Dewey, 1922; Schwab, 1983). Democratic curriculum leadership aims to support educators in curriculum development; as such, it seeks to support teachers in practicing professional responsibility and artistry rather than feeling the pressure of government mandates and "teaching to the test" practices (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 18).

Democratic curriculum leadership encompasses several critical concepts that align with Dewey's democratic aspirations for education, which promote the need for teachers' curriculum autonomy. Henderson et al. (2018) supported educators in discovering these democratic ideals in practicing 3S Pedagogy or 3S understanding, which is a "hypothesis embedded in the logic of pragmatic inquiry with its emphasis on learning through experience" (p. 21). According to Henderson et al. (2018), 3S Pedagogy involves the structure of curriculum for individuals on self-learning, subject matter learning, and social learning; therefore, "3S" refers to 3S Pedagogy or 3S understanding. To work through complex education issues and critical conversations, often found within the 3S Pedagogy, Henderson et al. (Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018) developed a fourfold process that encourages educators to reflect critically and develop

education deliberation skills using social skills, interpersonal relationships, practical wisdom, and reflection, all crucial skills in the practice of curriculum autonomy.

According to Henderson and Kesson (1999)—drawing from the likes of Aristotle, Dewey (1922), and Schwab (1978)—educational deliberation focuses on "socially constructing knowledge about the curriculum to resolve a practical problem" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 36). Furthermore, "productive differences of opinion about alternatives . . . are very beneficial in virtually forcing deliberators to examine the alternatives closely," and, "invested interests . . . a primary contributor to conflict is interest because each deliberator has a vested interest in arguing for a particular position and alternative" (Henderson & Kesson, 1999, p. 37). Education deliberations and the process and skills needed to successfully navigate deliberations and emerge as a democratic leader are crucial in gaining autonomy. Henderson et al. (2018) asserted that their fourfold process of professional awakening, holistic teaching, generative lead learning, and participatory evaluation is "designed to advance a study-based lead-learning that fosters individuality, autonomy, and creativity" (p. 20).

Becoming a democratic curriculum leader supports teachers' curriculum autonomy. It is a goal for teachers to become stakeholders in the development of a democratic curriculum that supports teachers and students in authentic and active inquiry-based learning. A democratic curriculum leader seeks opportunities to make responsible decisions to change and adapt curriculum and pedagogical methods to support the student populations' journeys of finding their holistic being through 3S understanding. A democratic curriculum leader not only uses professional reflection practices to help educators practice problem-solving artistry, such as the fourfold process, but also teaches, models, and communicates the importance of democratic education by practicing professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry.

The democratic curriculum leadership framework supported this study by providing context and clarifying concepts of what it means for educators to practice curriculum autonomy by way of ethical principles and a transformative agenda. Democratic curriculum leadership supports educators in the practice of professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry while using the supportive structures of 3S pedagogy and the four-fold process. The principles, transformative agenda, and supportive structures encourage teachers to become democratic curriculum leaders. It encourages teachers to be experts in content and pedagogy in order to be trusted with the professional responsibility of being stakeholders in educational deliberations regarding the subject matter. It also encourages teachers to be holistic and reflective educators to constantly mold their pedagogical artistry with their ever-evolving student population to support their holistic journey through 3S Pedagogy. The democratic curriculum leadership framework discussed critical skills for teachers to practice in their field, and these skills can be actively researched to evolve and improve as educators.

Research Design

Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in one to improve "breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 3). Using a mixed methods research design provides additional types of data for the research problem than a qualitative or quantitative study can do alone. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) asserted that a mixed methods approach "provides strength that offset any weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research," and helps to address research questions that may be difficult to answer with only one approach (p. 12). Mixed methods research also broadens opportunities to make inferences using both data sets and encourages researchers to inquire about

the social world from multiple viewpoints (p. 4). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), a mixed methods design:

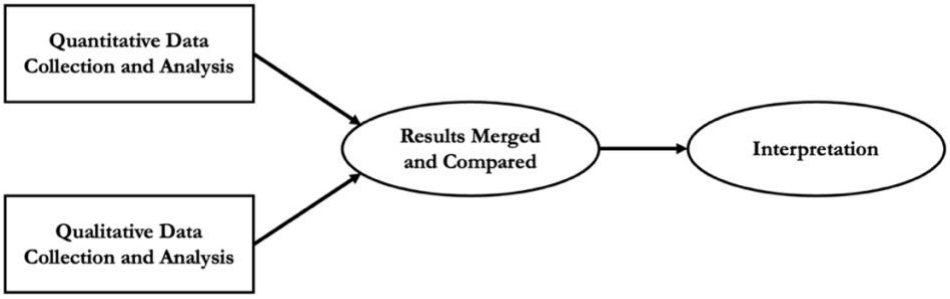
> Collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions); mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other. (p. 5)

Based on my research question, I determined using a convergent design of both quantitative and qualitative research would provide the best data for broad, corroborated information from which strong inferences could be determined. Once the quantitative and qualitative data were collected, I merged the findings so they could be compared and synthesized (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 65), as illustrated in Figure 1. My research study is more narrowly considered a fixed mixed methods design in which "the use of quantitative and qualitative methods is predetermined and planned at the start of the research process and the procedures are implemented as planned" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 52). I had prepared my survey and interview questions prior to IRB approval, and these same products were used to collect the data.

When conducting a convergent mixed methods design, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) explained the quantitative and qualitative methods are conducted concurrently. It is also encouraged that researchers use a parallel sample, meaning the individuals are drawn from the same population (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 187). "When the purpose is to corroborate, directly compare, or relate two sets of findings about a topic," it is recommended to use participants in the qualitative sample who were a subset of the quantitative sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 188). It is also recommended the two samples have different sample sizes. The qualitative is the smaller size, and the quantitative is the larger size because this helps the

Figure 1

Convergent Mixed-Methods Design



Note: Adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2018)

researcher obtain a "rigorous, high-power quantitative examination of the topic" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 188). For my study, my participants were all public educators teaching in K–12 in Rhode Island. The interview participants, or qualitative data source, first completed the survey, the quantitative data source. There is a size disparity between the number of quantitative data participants and qualitative participants, and Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) stressed when the data are used to compare or synthesize the findings into a "complementary picture about the phenomenon," the size difference is not a problem.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) explained that mixed methods studies should be used based on whether both data types will enhance the research problem's explanation. For example, they explained how a "quantitative survey approach best fits the need to understand the views of participants in an entire population . . . [whereas] a qualitative ethnography approach best fits the need to understand how a culture-sharing group works" (p. 7). In my study, the survey was used to see the bigger picture of how educators understand or feel the impacts of scripted/narrowed

curricula. I conducted the interview in a manner to dive deeper into the same topic with the same individuals but with a smaller sample in order to get a greater understanding.

According to Li et al. (2018), a quantitative approach allows for comparisons, is informative for initiating policy or guidelines, and provides a means to determine relations between variables using statistical techniques. The quantitative methods I used in this mixed-methods study included conducting a survey and completing descriptive and inferential statistical analysis on the data from the survey. The descriptive statistics provided values for means, standard deviations, and standard error of means. The inferential statistics helped determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two curriculum types that emerged from the data.

The use of multiple data sources in this study facilitated a holistic understanding of the impacts of scripted/narrowed curricula on teacher autonomy. After the completion of the survey and interviews, two curriculum types emerged: scripted/narrowed curricula and teacher-developed. The quantitative findings enhanced the qualitative findings by providing a stronger, more comprehensive, and more descriptive understanding of the phenomenon. Only using quantitative data would have meant no rich descriptions of teachers' experiences would be provided. Using only qualitative data would have given a small sample of teachers (n = 19) due to the smaller number of interviews done versus a larger number of completed surveys (n = 103).

Context

For this study, the context involved not only the content standards, which "define what students should know and be able to do" (Social Studies, 2023, para. 2; Science, n.d.) but also, the school settings where the participating teachers worked.

State Content Standards

When the Common Core State Standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010) were rolled out in 2010, Rhode Island was one of the states to adopt these standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. Over the next 10 years, the state adopted and adapted content standards to be used throughout Rhode Island. In 2013, the state adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS Lead States, 2013). In 2021, the state adopted revised Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy standards. The Mathematics Standards are adapted from the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010) and Massachusetts' 2017 Mathematics Framework (Current Curriculum Frameworks–Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2023). The ELA/Literacy Standards are adapted to align with the Rhode Island state assessment program. Finally, in 2023, the state adopted the Rhode Island Social Studies Standards (Social Studies, 2023), which are endorsed by the state's Council for Elementary and Secondary Education. Like many other states, faced with NCLB or what becomes Race to the Top, and the era of accountability and student outcomes, many Rhode Island school districts have turned to scripted/narrowed curricula.

Rhode Island Districts

In the state of Rhode Island, there are 32 regular school districts (single municipalities), four regional school districts (more than one municipality), and four state-operated schools (RIDE). Only two of the 36 public school districts were not included, Cranston and Smithfield. These two districts were not included in the study because one district is where I live, and the other would not allow me to send staff members an email that included URLs. One public technical school was included in the study, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 details each district where I sent teachers emails, the number of schools in the district, and the total number of teachers working in the district. The information in Table 1 is provided by the state report cards, which are available on the Rhode Island Department of Education website. Unfortunately, the state report cards are only current for the 2021–2022 school year, so the actual numbers are marginally different.

Participants

The target population for this study was educators from Rhode Island public schools who teach to Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDES's) content standards for one (or more) of the four core disciplines: that is, the *Rhode Island Core Standards for ELA/Literacy* (Rhode Island Core Standards for ELA/Literacy 2021a), *Rhode Island Core Standards for Mathematics* (Mathematics, 2021b), *Rhode Island Social Studies Standards* (Social Studies, 2023), or the *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS Lead States, 2013). Refer to Table 1 for school and district information.

Table 1

Potential Districts and Teacher Numbers

District	Locale Classifications	High Schools	Middle Schools	Elementary Schools	Teachers Only
Barrington	Suburb, large	1	1	4	265
Bristol/Warren	Suburb, large	1	1	4	248
Burrillville	Suburb, large	1	1	3	175
Central Falls	Suburb, large	1	1	4	207
Coventry	Suburb, large	1	1	5	395
Cumberland	Suburb, large	1	2	6	375
Davies Career and Tech	Suburb, large	1			69
East Greenwich	Suburb, large	1	1	4	220
East Providence	Suburb, large	1	3	9	443

(*table continues*)

Table 1 (continued)

Potential Districts and Teacher Numbers

District	Locale Classifications	High Schools	Middle Schools	Elementary Schools	Teachers Only
Exeter-West Greenwich	Rural, fringe	1	1	3	139
Foster	Rural, distant			1	23
Foster-Glocester	Rural, fringe	1	1		123
Glocester	Rural, fringe			2	51
Jamestown	Suburb, large	1 (5-9)		1 (K-4)	49
Johnston	Suburb, large	1	1	6	279
Lincoln	Suburb, large	1	1	4	242
Middletown	Suburb, large	1	1	3	176
Narragansett	Suburb, large	1	1	1	126
Newport	Suburb, large	1	1	1	203
North Kingstown	Suburb, large	1	2	5	335
North Providence	Suburb, large	1	2	5	273
North Smithfield	Suburb, large/rural, fringe	1	1	1	138
Pawtucket	Suburb large	3	3	10	651
Portsmouth	Suburb, large	1	1	2	196
Providence	City, midsize	11	7	19	1,705
Scituate	Suburb, large/rural, fringe	1	1	3	115
South Kingstown	Suburb, large	1	2	4	248
Tiverton	Suburb large, rural, fringe	1	1	3	147
Warwick	City, small	2	2	14	779
West Warwick	Suburb, large	1	1	4	283
Westerly	Suburb, midsize	1	1	4	234
Woonsocket	Suburb, large	1	2	6	459
The following three districts provide an Alternative Program that is housed in a different building or have one building that houses the entire district					
Chariho	Rural, distant	1	1	5	283
Little Compton	Rural, fringe		1 (PK-8)		29
New Shoreham (Block Island)	Rural, distant	1 (PK-12)			23

Not considered a part of any district.
Note. School and teacher information collected from 2021–2022 Rhode Island State Report Cards and Locale classifications collected from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/maped/LocaleLookup/

Survey Respondents Demographic Data

The invitation email and survey link were sent to approximately 5,700 teachers. In the end, 103 teachers responded to the survey. The survey asked for each participant's

demographics, including gender, subject area, grade level(s) taught, and years of teaching experience (see Appendix E, Part 1—Demographic Information). Survey respondents included teachers from various grade levels, kindergarten through 12th grade, and all four core subjects. From the sample, 71% of participants (*n* = 73) used scripted/narrowed curricula, and 29% (*n* = 30) used teacher-developed curricula. For the four core subjects, 39.8% (*n* = 41) taught English language arts, 22.3% (*n* = 23) taught science, 18.4% (*n* = 19) taught math, and 12.6% (*n* = 13) taught social studies/history. In addition, three teachers (2.3%) were special educators and four participants (3.9%) failed to indicate their subject matter specialty. The breakdown of all 103 participants by curriculum user type and subject matter taught is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Breakdown of Participants by Curriculum User Type and Subject Matter Taught

Subject Matter Taught / Curriculum User Type, number of participants (n)	Scripted / Narrowed Curriculum User, number (column percent)	Teacher-Developed Curriculum User, number (column percent)
English Language Arts (*n*=41)	39 (95.1%)	2 (4.9%)
Mathematics (*n*=19)	14 (73.7%)	5 (26.3%)
Science (*n*=23)	13 (56.5%)	10 (43.5%)
Social Studies / History (*n*=13)	2 (15.4%)	11 (84.6%)
Special Education (*n*=3)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)
Not Indicated (*n*=4)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)

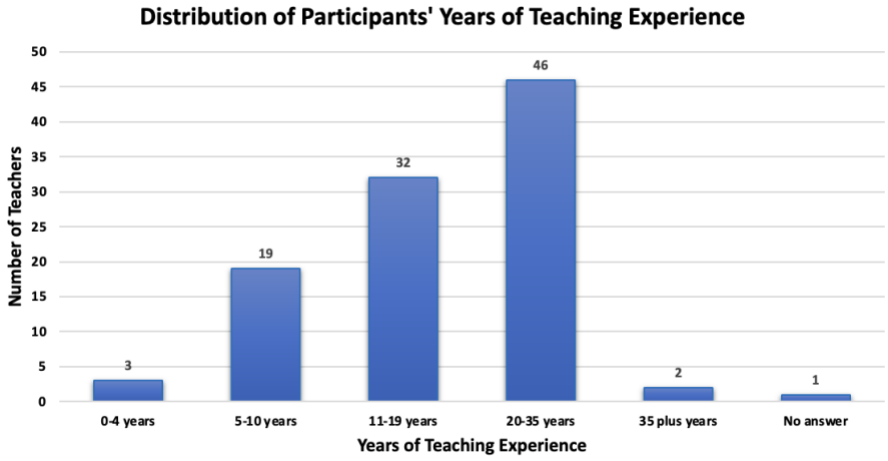
As illustrated in Table 2, 39 of 41 (95.1%) English language arts teachers used a scripted/narrowed curriculum. Furthermore, 14 of 19 (73.7%) mathematics teachers, 13 of 23 (56.5%) science teachers, and all three special educators used scripted/narrowed curricula. Conversely, 11 of 13 (84.6%) Social Studies/History teachers used a teacher-developed

curriculum. Finally, the four teachers who did not indicate their subject matter were evenly divided between scripted/narrowed and teacher-developed curricula.

Additional demographic information collected included the highest education level of participants, the number of years each participant had been teaching, and the grade level each participant was teaching. Regarding the highest education level attained, 62 participants (60.2%) had at most a master's degree, 30 participants (29.1%) had a bachelor's degree, and 11 (10.7%) had a doctorate. For the number of years of teaching, the sample included a teacher with only two months of experience and a teacher with 40 years of experience. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of participants' years of teaching experience.

Figure 2

Frequency Distribution of Participants' Years of Teaching Experience (n = 103)



Disregarding the one participant who did not indicate their years of teaching experience, the median years of teaching experience of the remaining 102 participants were between 11 and 19 years. In addition, the mode of the data was between 20 and 35 years of experience. Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the grade level (or band) each teacher taught and the type of curriculum used.

Table 3

Breakdown of Participants by Curriculum User Type and Grade (Levels) Brand Taught (n = 99)

Grade Levels (Band) Taught / Curriculum User Type	Scripted / Narrowed Curriculum User, number (column percent)	Teacher-Developed Curriculum User, number (column percent)
Grades K–5	19 (26.4%)	0 (0%)
Grades K–8	2 (2.8%)	0 (0%)
Grades K–12	1 (1.4%)	2 (7.4%)
Grades 6–8	21 (29.2%)	10 (37.0%)
Grades 6–12	4 (5.6%)	0 (0%)
Grades 9–12	25 (34.7%)	15 (55.6%)

As illustrated in Table 3, the use of a scripted/narrowed curriculum was relatively evenly distributed across the three main grade bands: Grades K–5 (26.4%), Grades 6–8 (29.2%), and Grades 9–12 (34.7%). Conversely, the use of a teacher-developed curriculum was most common in Grades 9–12 (55.6%) and Grades 6–8 (37.0%). Two of the three (66.7%) participants teaching in the K–12 grade band indicated that teacher-developed curriculum was the predominant curriculum type they used (see Table 3). In addition to the six grade bands illustrated in Table 3, one participant using a teacher-developed curriculum taught courses with concurrent college enrollment along with courses in Grades 9–12, and three teachers (two using a teacher-developed curriculum and one using scripted/narrowed curriculum) failed to indicate the grade band(s) in which they taught.

Finally, survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they were a special/intervention educator, a reading/math specialist, or focused on accommodating English as a second language (ESL) learners, English language learners (ELL), or multilingual learners

(MLL). Thirteen teachers (11.7%) identified as special/intervention educators, three (2.9%) identified as reading/math specialists, three (2.9%) identified as ESL, ELL, and/or MLL teachers, and one (1.0%) identified as both a special/intervention educator and an ELL teacher.

It is important to note it was not possible to determine the number of teachers in Rhode Island teaching only the core subjects of math, English, science, and social studies. Determining the number of potential participants who may have received the email was also not possible. There were hundreds of kickbacks, meaning these emails did not make it to the recipients as the person no longer works for the district or the district does not allow unknown external emails containing URLs. It is unknown how many emails went straight to people's junk mailboxes. Based on the movement in the state, teachers taking new jobs in different districts, and my review of names on websites versus staff directories, many emails may be dormant. Also, because many districts did not distinguish the placements of their staff, emails may have been sent to people to whom the survey did not pertain.

In the beginning, the survey process was overwhelming, specifically when I realized my coworkers were not willing to participate. Changing the potential participants from a small, focused population to a state-wide endeavor would be intimidating to any novice researcher. Going through district websites to obtain emails was a grueling process of testing my patience as I spent upwards of ten hours simply copying and pasting emails due to the arrangements of staff directories on school websites. After completing the task, completed surveys were submitted more regularly throughout the months of October and November.

Interview Respondents Demographic Data

The last three questions on the survey (see Appendix F, Post-Survey Interview) asked respondents if they were willing to be interviewed for the study. Twenty-nine respondents

indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Of these 29 respondents, 19 educators were interviewed for this study. I made three attempts to reach the 10 additional potential interview participants but to no avail. Table 4 details interview participant demographic information.

Table 4

Interview Participants (In-Person and Online Interview/Survey)

Name (pseudonym)	Curriculum Type	Grade Level	Subject	Interview Format
Roberto	scripted/narrowed	9–12	English Language Arts & ESL/ELL support	Google Meet
Abbey	scripted/narrowed	9–12	Math	Google Form
Molly	scripted/narrowed	K–5	English Language Arts & Math	Google Meet
Mia	scripted/narrowed	9–12	English Language Arts	Google Meet
Ryan	scripted/narrowed	9–12	Science	Google Meet
William	teacher developed	6–12	Science	Google Form
Jane	scripted/narrowed	K–5	English Language Arts & Math	Google Form
Elizabeth	teacher developed	6–8	Science	Google Form
Sarah	scripted/narrowed	K–5	English Language Arts	Google Form
George	teacher developed	6–12	Social Studies	Google Form
Kate	scripted/narrowed	6–8	Science	Google Form
Helen	scripted/narrowed	K–5	English Language Arts & Math	Google Meet
Julie	scripted/narrowed	K–5	English Language Arts & ESL/ELL	Google Meet
June	scripted/narrowed	6–8	English Language Arts	Google Form
Victoria	scripted/Narrowed	6–8	Science	Google Form
Erin	scripted/Narrowed	6–8	Special Education-Various subjects	Google Form
Christina	teacher developed	6–8	Reading Specialist	In Person Meet
Barbara	scripted/Narrowed	6–8	Special Education-Various Subject	Google Form
Theresa	teacher developed	6–8	Social Studies	Google Form

Data Collection

I collected qualitative and quantitative data to conduct this mixed methods study (see Table 5 to view the timeline). Quantitative data involved participants' responses to an adapted Curriculum Autonomy Survey (see Appendix E) sent electronically to public educators in Rhode

Island. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews and online interviews/surveys with educators throughout Rhode Island who elected to participate further in the survey through the interview process (see Appendix F).

Table 5

Study Timeline and Critical Data Collection Points

Study Event	Timeline	Description
IRB approval	August 2023	Apply for IRB approval
Study recruitment	August/September 2023	Recruit faculty, obtain informed consent
Participant survey I	September 2023	Send survey via email to all participants. Collect survey data.
Survey data collection	September/October 2023	Recruit faculty, obtain informed consent.
Interview recruitment	September/October 2023	Conduct 20–30-minute interviews collecting experiences and opinions about curricula experiences.
Conduct interviews	October/November 2023	Send survey via email to only English language arts teacher participants.
Survey data collection	November 2023	Collect survey data.

Quantitative Data Collection: Survey

Surveys are measurement instruments that provide a "quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2009, p. 137). The survey, sent electronically, collected a larger sample of data, as compared to the interview, assessing public school teachers' experiences, attitudes, and opinions regarding curriculum autonomy. The first section of the survey asked about demographic characteristics, including years of teaching, subject taught, and education level. The second section asked questions about curriculum autonomy.

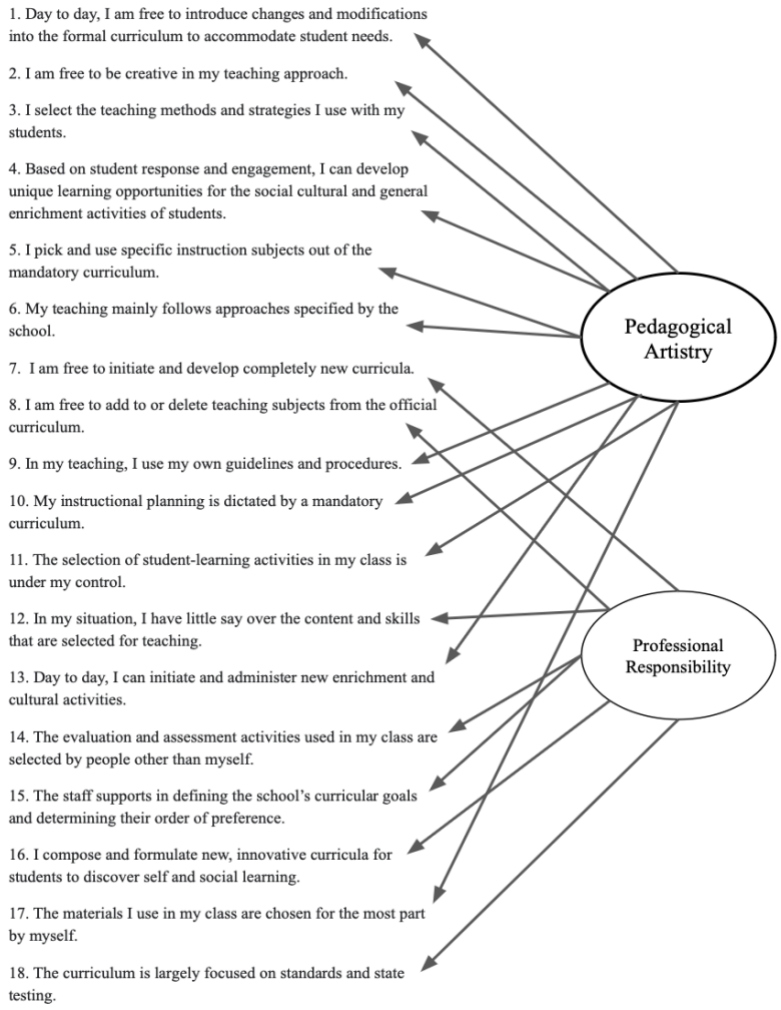
My adapted curriculum autonomy survey questions are based on two existing survey instruments: the Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS) created by Pearson and Hall (1993) and the Teacher Work Autonomy scale (TWA) developed by Isaac Friedman (1999). The Teacher Autonomy Scale (Pearson & Hall, 1993) is an 18-item scale designed to "elicit the degree to which teachers perceive they have autonomy" in several areas of their teaching (p. 174). After conducting their study, Pearson and Hall (1993) determined, based on factor analysis, that teacher autonomy is not based on a single trait but on two dimensions: general teaching autonomy and curricular autonomy (Pearson & Hall, 1993).

The Teacher Work Autonomy scale was originally a 32-item scale called the Appropriate Teacher Work Autonomy Scale (Freidman, 1999), which was renamed by Freidman (1999) to the Teacher Work Autonomy Scale in a later study. The TWA scale was designed for two purposes: to "examine and operationalize the concept of teacher autonomy as being a bestowal or generation of teacher power" and to provide empirical evidence to measure teacher-perceived work autonomy (Friedman, 1999, p. 60). Like Pearson and Hall (1993), Friedman (1999) found teacher autonomy could be separated into two dimensions: content and level of decisions (p. 72).

From the TAS (Pearson & Hall, 1993) and the TWA (Friedman, 1999), I pulled 18 questions and created a curriculum autonomy survey (see Appendix E). To accommodate current educators, for phrasing and clarity, survey questions were revised. For example, the survey question, "Teachers initiate and develop completely new curricula" (Friedman, 1999), was revised to "I am free to initiate and develop completely new curricula" (see Appendix E). A five-point Likert scale was used: 5 (*strongly agree*), 4 (*agree*), 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 1 (*strongly disagree*). The questions are separated into two definitions of curriculum autonomy: professional responsibility and curriculum autonomy (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Adapted Curriculum Autonomy Survey Questions (Freidman, 1999; Pearson & Hall, 1993)



On September 17, 2023, a month after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I sent my invitation to participate electronically to 35 7th- through 12th-grade Math teachers, English Language Arts teachers, and special educators in my school district. Because I frequently interact with these teachers, I anticipated a near 100% return rate. Over the next week, it became abundantly clear there was either a crucial misconception about the study or teachers were too busy to complete the survey. After conversations with a few close coworkers, I found

many teachers were simply afraid to take the survey. This fear was based on what they believed to be potential repercussions from district administrators were they to speak poorly of the district's adoption of scripted curricula. Although the initial recruitment email stated that I planned to use our school for data collection, had obtained permission from the superintendent, that all data were confidential, and anonymity was guaranteed, most teachers were fearful of repercussions. I even sent the initial email invite from my school's email server and planned to use Google Forms (promoted and used by the school district) to collect the survey data, thus making it easier for my coworkers to access and complete the survey. Despite all these steps, most of my coworkers chose not to complete the survey.

After a few discussions with colleagues, I learned that many of my coworkers—particularly the ones who have been with the district for many years and use a scripted curriculum—had been reprimanded for not using the curriculum. These reprimands generally came after teachers had modified the curriculum to serve their students better. Therefore, the possibility of finding oneself in trouble with the district created an unfortunate school culture related to the curriculum, making many teachers fearful of completing an anonymous survey. When I explained and stressed the anonymity of the study, many teachers explained that such a small sample of teachers would make it too easy for the administration to identify each teacher's responses.

Due to low participation in my already small district, I decided to broaden my study and send the survey to educators across the state of Rhode Island. The invitation to participate was sent electronically to all educators from grades K–12 who were teaching one of the four core subjects (i.e., mathematics, English language arts, science, social studies/history). In sticking with the original plan of using the Google platform through my Kent State University account,

the adapted survey on curriculum autonomy was distributed to participants through Google Forms. In some cases, the staff directory only provided a direct email link, so I sent individual emails to each teacher. In one instance, my district's assistant superintendent added the survey to the weekly update, encouraging teachers to participate in my research study.

I began sending emails to this larger sample of teachers on September 24, 2023, and it took nearly three weeks to cover all 34 districts and one state-operated technical school. Due to the low number of survey respondents in the first round, by October 11, 2023, I attempted to increase responses by sending a follow-up email as a reminder. By the end of October, each participant had received the survey at least twice, and the final completed survey came in on October 29, 2023. By October 29th, 103 anonymous participants had completed the survey. Data were collected in Google Forms, transferred into Google Sheets, and then downloaded into Microsoft Excel.

Qualitative Data Collection: Interviews and Online Interviews/Surveys

In-depth, open-ended interviews were used to generate qualitative data for this study. Bhattacharya (2017) detailed,

> In-depth, open-ended interviews usually focus on digging deep into one's experiences with a few key questions prepared in advance. I used key questions as probes to peel away a superficial understanding of one's experiences to a deeper understanding of one's experiences. (p. 127)

Using an in-depth, open-ended interview format allowed me to ask follow-up questions, so these interviews were not just skimming the surface of teachers' perspectives. These follow-up questions supported the teacher in diving deeper into their own experiences by engaging in reflective inquiry. Face-to-face interviews were approximately 23–45 minutes long.

Due to the busy nature of teaching, participants had limited availability, and many asked if they could answer the questions online. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained interviews can also be done online, asynchronously. “One can also conduct interviews *asynchronously* (where there is lag time) over email or on an online discussion; asynchronous interviews tend to be text-based or written interviews” (p. 115). These text-based/written interviews provide ready-made transcripts but lack nonverbal cues and pauses (p. 116). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) considered these online interviews or qualitative surveys that include open-ended questions that can be collected synchronously or asynchronously. For my study, the interviews done using Google Forms are asynchronous online interviews/surveys completed using the same questions as the face-to-face interviews. Teachers did not appear to feel limited by the asynchronous format, as their answers contained rich data with thick descriptions.

To conduct and produce an in-depth interview that results in rich data, I used descriptive, grand tour, example, and structural questions. Descriptive questions generated conversations about specific incidents related to different curriculum experiences in greater detail (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 132). Grand tour questions are “designed for the participant to offer details about their everyday experiences in a particular setting” (p. 132). Grand tour questions helped the teacher focus on the experience in their specific school and classroom environment. Example questions encouraged the participants to provide examples of their experiences. Structural questions were used, especially in follow-up questions, to help me “make meaning of their experiences” in their environments (p. 133). Structural questions “are usually those questions that attempt to understand the social and cultural structures of an organization” (p. 133). The personal perspectives of these participants let to robust, rich data.

I developed interview questions that focused on the teachers' experiences with curriculum autonomy. The questions (see Appendix F) were loosely based on the adapted survey questions, which are based on the TAS (Pearson & Hall, 1993) and TWA (Friedman, 1999) surveys. However, what was different about the interview questions was that these questions asked the teachers to dive deeper into their experiences while also considering additional issues related to pedagogical practices. From the basics of what a scripted curriculum lesson looks like to the accommodations and expectations for students, the goal of the interviews was to fully understand the teacher's individual experience. The interview questions (Appendix F) can be separated into questions pertaining to professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry, as illustrated in Table 6.

Before beginning the in-person and online interviews/surveys, I explained the purpose and goal of the research study by sending a recruitment and consent form (see Appendix D). I detailed how the interview would provide data for the study, reminded the interviewees that they were being recorded, and suggested they read and sign the consent form before we began. While conducting the online interviews, I recorded the interview using the voice memo application on an iPad. All participants were reminded that the interview was being recorded before pushing the record button, and this reminder allowed participants to consider cancellation of the interview if desired. In-person interviews were recorded using the Microsoft transcription recording application on my computer, and I recorded using the voice memo app on my cell phone for backup. Each recording's purpose was to return to the interview to transcribe. Each interview recorded using the voiced memo application was transferred to the Microsoft transcription application. After the transcription was uploaded into the Microsoft document, I listened to the

Table 6

Interview Questions

Professional Responsibility: The following five questions focus on Professional Responsibility: a teacher's ability to make decisions on their curriculum and content as learned through college education and experience.

1. Describe how the district determines what curriculum will be used? Or how the curriculum will be developed. Has this process changed?

2. How do you determine what is taught in each unit? How do you determine when each unit is taught throughout the school year? Is it based on skills, standards, or when tests fall? How about what is taught each semester and/or quarter?

3. What decisions do you make as you prepare your lessons (materials, assessments, activities, assignments, differentiation, instructional strategies)? How about as you prepare your units?

4. How frequently do you give your students a quiz, test, or exam? When do you determine when to assess your students? How do you determine what questions to ask on a quiz, test, or exam? What do you do if a class or group of students do poorly on a quiz, test, or exam?

5. How does your district promote equality in the curriculum? Has this changed in recent years?

Pedagogical Artistry: The following questions focus on pedagogical artistry: a teacher's day to day work and decision making with instruction, materials, lesson planning, accommodations/modifications, and creativity based on student ability, learning levels, and engagement.

6. If you notice your students, in general, are struggling with the material during a lesson, what do you do? If you teach the same class or grade in a later period, what might you change?

7. Do you believe there are any topics or subject matter that should be taught in your grade level or course but are missing? If so, had they been taught in your grade level or course?

8. Do you think the curriculum you currently teach is preparing your students for life after K-12 education? Can you explain why?

9. Day-to-day, how do you make certain your instruction is equitable to all your students?

10. If you notice during instruction or from class-to-class instructional strategies or lessons are not working for the learning needs of the individual learners (whether higher or lower learners) in the classroom, do you have the authority to make modification or changes to the curriculum for those learners? Has this changed from prior years?

11. Day-to-day, how do you make certain your lessons are engaging for your students?

12. If you are now using a scripted curriculum: Since the change in curricula expectations, do you feel your role in lesson development and day-to-day teacher roles and job expectations has been challenged? Can you explain why?

13. As a new/veteran teacher, does the way your curriculum is designed align with your views of what works best?

14. What kinds of decisions do you typically make during instruction? How about as you plan for instruction? How about after instruction, as you reflect on a lesson? If your school has moved to a scripted curriculum, do you feel there are certain decisions you are no longer allowed to make that you were before?

interview while following along on the document to ensure the transcript was correct. Interviewees using the online interview/survey format answered the questions in Google Forms. I received a copy of these answers, and the interviewee received a copy.

The participants who answered the interview questions asynchronously by completing the online interview/survey format in Google Forms answered the same questions but in a written-format. The independence in answering the questions did not prevent participants from elaborating on their experiences.

Research Journal

Throughout the research process, I maintained a research journal. Robert Stake (2010) explained, "Here you should make notes about everything in your research: contact information, calendar, bibliographic references, risks; get it all in one place. In the same journal, put your ongoing speculations, puzzlements, and ponderings" (p. 101). I used my iPad as my research journal throughout the process to maintain consistency. Researched articles and journals were kept together and organized in my journal, and this helped to maintain the order of citations. I also kept my interview notes and recordings in this research journal. Any meeting notes—from the first meeting with my director to the proposal and beyond—were kept and reviewed here as well. Because I used the journal to store researched journals and articles, meeting notes and more, this research journal helped me maintain structure and order. It quickly became the place where I documented my research experience. From the initial struggles of finding articles and then finding participants to nasty return emails and comments made by coworkers here and there. I knew I could return to my journal if I needed to refer to these experiences, or if I needed to return to a quote or journal.

Data Analysis

Using a mixed methods approach, I analyzed the qualitative data using cross-group by working through three stages of coding and thematic analysis, and I analyzed quantitative data using causal-comparative data analysis. Coding, thematic analysis, and causal-comparative analysis approaches allowed for a deeper and more robust understanding of the teachers' experiences with different curriculum types and how these different curricular experiences have impacted their curriculum autonomy. As I reviewed the data multiple times, I was able to develop the themes.

Quantitative Data Analysis of Survey Responses

I reviewed the responses, and any questions left unanswered were filled in with "No Answer." I also created two additional Excel spreadsheets separating scripted/narrowed curricula participants and teacher-developed curricula participants. From there, I prepared my data in several ways, including breaking down the demographics for each type of curricula participant and how their responses to the questions differed. I then replaced the Likert scale categories (*strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*) with numerical values 1 through 5 (e.g., 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Converting the categories to numerical values allowed me to conduct descriptive statistics and significance tests. The significance tests (i.e., Fisher's Exact Test, Mann Whitney U test) were used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of teachers using scripted/narrowed curriculum with those using teacher-developed curriculum for each survey question. I used Prism software to run these statistics, specifically GraphPad by Dotmatics.

I first created two groups to analyze this survey data: teacher-developed curriculum users and scripted curriculum users. I then ran descriptive statistics, including standard deviations and

means of the groups for each question. Next, I ran a sequence of Fisher's Exact Tests (one test for each survey question), to "analyze two variables and the relationships between them" (Dziak, 2023, para. 5). The Fisher's Exact Test is a two-tailed *t*-test that helps determine whether a statistical relationship exists between two variables by determining the *p*-value. Due to the abnormalities of the original data numbers, I also conducted a sequence of Mann-Whitney U tests (one test for each survey question). This test also determines the p-value but does so by comparing the two groups' means (*Mann-Whitney U Test*, n.d.).

Qualitative Data Analysis of Interview Responses

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) explained, "Researchers may find that more than one style of thinking is needed at different stages of the analysis—that is, at the analytic strategy planning stage, the coding stage, and the interpreting and meaning-making stages" (p. 235). Once I gathered my data, it helped me better understand how my conceptual framework worked towards a thematic analysis. First and foremost, the most important theme to emerge is that not all teachers are experiencing scripted/narrowed curricula. Two groups naturally formed: one group of teacher participants who use scripted/narrowed curricula and one group of teacher participants who develop their own curriculum.

The coding process included three coding steps: structural coding, focused coding, and thematic coding. The first step included the elemental method of structural coding. Elemental methods are "primary approaches" that are and have "basic focused filters for reviewing the corpus, and they build a foundation for future coding cycles" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 83). Saldaña (2013) suggested that using structural coding allows semi-structured data-gathering protocols and exploratory investigations (p. 84). Structural coding is a question-based code that "acts as a labeling and indexing device, allowing researchers to quickly access data likely to be relevant to

a particular analysis from a larger data set" (Namey et al., 2008, p. 141). Structural coding codes initially categorize the data corpus to examine comparable segments' commonalities, differences, and relationships embedded in the question-led answers. During the second coding cycle, I manually coded using the focused coding method, which looks for the most "frequent or significant codes to develop 'the most salient categories'" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Focused coding highlights similar categories across both curricular types. Then, it leads into the third and final stage of the coding process by defining the emerging themes and exposing the similarities and differences between these two curricular experiences.

The interviews were analyzed individually through line-by-line coding. I highlighted unique vocabulary and jargon related to curriculum experiences, explicitly highlighting the individual participants' processes, perceptions, emotions, and experiences. I reviewed the transcripts again, entering common vocabulary, terms, expressions, and experiences into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (see Table 7 to review the process). I finalized the codes first by working through the spreadsheet and determining the most common, emerging codes. Once coding was completed for the scripted/narrowed program interview participants, 294 initial codes were created, and for participants developing their own curriculum, 114 initial codes were created.

The second coding cycle consisted of manual coding using the focused coding method, which looks for the most "frequent or significant codes to develop 'the most salient categories'" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Due to the two emerging groups, for the scripted/narrowed users nine categories emerged, and for teacher-developed users seven categories emerged (see Tables 8 and 9). In comparing the two groups, six similar categories emerged due to the nature of structural

Table 7

Interview Coding Examples

Interview Question	Transcript Entry	Category	Theme
If you notice during instruction or from class-to-class instructional strategies or lessons are not working for the learning needs of the individual learners (whether higher or lower learners) in the classroom, do you have the authority to make modification or changes to the curriculum for those learners? Has this changed from prior years?	"Even if it's scripted materials… I will either come up with examples that match directly the question of the student is asking…or with a proof of some sort that might clarify what they're thinking." "I use what they get but supplement." "I will use my training as an ESL and special education teacher to develop techniques and strategies to support my students in any way needed." "We are not to go backwards. We are to start where they are expected to start."	accommodation/ modifications	Adaption versus Adoption: Decision Making in the Classroom
How do you determine what is taught in each unit? How do you determine when each unit is taught throughout the school year? Is it based on skills, standards, or when tests fall? How about what is taught each semester and/or quarter?	"Our teachers took the NGSS standards and divided them up to the three grades (6-8) in a way that made sense to them. They tried to plan the sequence in a way that allowed for the scaffolding of skills and knowledge throughout the grade span." "I choose activities, assignments, delivery methods. Another teacher and I collaborate for a layer of consistency." "For my content area (US History), I find a balance of important content and skill building. Our department's focus is to improve informational argument writing and develop critical thinking skills. This is all done with a linear timeline of US History content. At the beginning of each unit, we select a particular skill we want to focus on, and use rich primary/secondary sources to work on that skill."	decision making	Collaborative Planning for Teacher Developed Curricula Developers

coding. The third and final stage of the coding process occurred by defining the emerging themes and exposing the similarities and differences between these two curricular experiences.

After completing all interviews, transcribing, and coding them, I understood I had five participants who designed their own curriculum and 14 participants who were experiencing scripted/narrowed curricula. I decided after the thematic coding process to separate these two groups into scripted/narrowed curricula users and teacher-developed curricula users. This allowed me to work through the correlation of the themes within and across the groups (see Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8

Data Correlation: Scripted/Narrowed Curricula: Focused Coding

	Molly	Helen	Sarah	Jane	Ryan	Roberto	Abbey
Curriculum Implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curriculum Autonomy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pedagogical Autonomy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Equality	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Deprofessionalization	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Missing Curriculum	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accommodate/Modify	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Equity			X	X		X	
Preparing for Future			X	X		X	X

	Mia	Barbara	Erin	Victoria	June	Julie	Kate
Curriculum Implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curriculum Autonomy			X	X	X	X	X
Pedagogical Autonomy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Equality	X			X	X	X	
Deprofessionalization	X		X		X	X	X
Missing Curriculum	X	X			X	X	
Accommodate/Modify	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Equity			X		X	X	X
Preparing for Future	X		X	X	X	X	X

Table 9

Data Correlation: Teacher Developed: Focused Coding

	George	Elizabeth	William	Theresa	Christina
Full Autonomy: Curriculum and Pedagogy	X	X	X	X	
Equality		X	X	X	X
State Standards Influence		X	X	X	X
Missing Curriculum		X	X	X	X
Accommodate/Modify	X	X	X	X	X
Equity		X	X		X
Preparing for Future			X	X	X

Trustworthiness

My research included strategies for ensuring trustworthiness and rigor through triangulation, reflexivity, and member checks (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) detailed triangulation as the "using multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to conform emerging findings" (p. 259). Triangulation served to explore whether or not the two different data methods clarified meanings and verified conclusions about the understanding of how scripted curricula affect curricular autonomy. I promoted trustworthiness and credibility because I used a mixed methods study in which I used multiple sources of data. I did so by creating a survey and interview. By integrating the data and comparing the results of the quantitative survey and findings to the qualitative interview, I practiced triangulation by using this collected data to determine themes.

Practicing reflexivity as a researcher is "reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 27). I understand my position as an educator, who is currently using a scripted/narrowed curriculum and not enjoying the limitations, means it is important for me to constantly reflect throughout the research process. Reflexivity, or the researcher's position,

is “how the researcher affects and is affected by the research process” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 249). It is vital for the researcher to “articulate their subjectivities-assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study,” so I practiced reflexivity by keeping a research journal and reflecting on my research experiences, particularly after interviewing (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 27). This kind of reflective practice helps a reader understand how I may have arrived at different conclusions based on the data in my analysis.

I conducted member checks as another strategy for promoting the trustworthiness of the study. A member check is a strategy in which the researcher asks the participants to comment on their interpretations of the data “by taking your tentative findings back to some of the participants (from whom you derived the raw data through interviews or observations) and ask whether your interpretations ring true” (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 26). Member checking also helps address my own subjectivities and biases. It ensures I have appropriately interpreted my participants’ stories and held the data faithful to the research questions. The member check took place after completing the interpretations and analysis sections in which I used participant information in Chapters 4 and 5; I shared my interpretations with each interview participant on December 12th, 2023, to ensure that my interpretations of their words describing their feelings and experiences were correct. After a month of each participant having the opportunity to complete the member check, I checked for their feedback, and all the feedback was supportive of my interpretations, with zero recommendations for changes.

Ethical Considerations

It was vital that I made great efforts to be an ethical researcher. Merriam and Grenier (2019) noted, “A “good” qualitative study is one that has been conducted in an ethical manner” (p. 29). However, as asserted by Merriam and Grenier (2019):

> All possibilities cannot be anticipated, nor can one's reaction. Examining the assumptions one carries into the research process—assumptions about the context, participants, data, and the dissemination of knowledge gained through the study—is at least a starting point for conducting an ethical study. (p. 29)

As an ethical researcher, I followed several steps to attempt to avoid ethical dilemmas. The first step was completing the Institutional Review Board process at Kent State University. Once my research study was approved, I produced a consent form for all participants to sign. I also developed a brief overview form explaining the study's purpose, the participant's role in the study, my role during the interview or survey process, and the process I followed to maintain confidentiality. It is important to me they understood this research study is, as Robert Stake (2010) explained, advocative, meaning this study is being done to advocate for the improvement of their professional autonomy (p. 200). Teachers received a brief overview and consent form in the recruitment email I sent out. By submitting the form, the 103 survey participants consented to their demographic and curriculum autonomy responses to be used as data for my research study. The 19 interview/online questionnaire participants consented to participating in the interview, being recorded, and their responses being used as findings in my study.

All recorded interviews were stored on a private computer to which only I have access to maintain confidentiality and to protect participant identities. I originally recorded the interviews using the voice memo application on my phone and once the recording was uploaded to my computer, the recording was deleted from my cell phone. At the conclusion of my coding process, all recordings were deleted from my computer to maintain confidentiality. All demographic information collected in the survey and interview responses were used as indirect

identifiers. Any identifying information mentioned during the interviews has been redacted from the transcript and has not been included in the description of the findings or interpretation.

I chose to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process by using pseudonyms for both the participants and the schools. Because I uncovered information about the school district's demographics and academic achievements, using a pseudonym for the participating educator was crucial.

Chapter Summary

For this study, I chose to use a mixed-methods research design. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, I collected data from K–12 public educators in Rhode Island to thoroughly answer the research question. To conduct a thorough, ethical, and valid research study, I used both quantitative and qualitative research methods, including interviews, online interviews/surveys, a quantitative survey, and a research journal. To analyze the quantitative data, I used causal comparative data analysis and descriptive and inferential statistics. I ran the Fisher's Exact test and the Mann-Whitney U test to determine the *P* value of the numerical values, which told me if there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. For the qualitative data analysis, I used within-group analysis and cross-group analysis after completing three stages of coding interview transcripts. I also worked diligently to ensure the confidence and confidentiality of my research participants. I maintained confidence using triangulation, positionality, and member checks. I maintained confidentiality by following IRB protocol, properly storing interviews, and using pseudonyms. These practices all supported the study to answer the research question of examining teachers' understanding of how scripted curricula might impact teachers' curriculum autonomy.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study examined teachers' understanding of how scripted/narrowed curricula impact their curriculum autonomy using the conceptual framework of democratic curriculum leadership (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). In addition, the study compared the experiences of teacher curriculum autonomy of educators using scripted/narrowed curricula with those who develop and create their curriculum. This chapter consists of addressing the research question through the findings of the quantitative survey and qualitative interview: How do teachers understand the impact of scripted/narrowed curriculum on curriculum autonomy?

In order to gain an understanding of how teachers' curriculum autonomy is impacted in broader terms, I chose to conduct a quantitative survey. For the quantitative Curriculum Autonomy Survey, I completed a Fisher's Exact test, *t*-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups that emerged from the survey. From the demographic information, 73 survey respondents identified as scripted curricula users, and 30 identified as teacher-developed curricula creators. After the completion of the *t*-test, I determined all but one survey question had a statistically significant difference between the two curriculum groups. These results were supported with a second inferential test, the Mann-Whitney U test. The quantitative findings revealed a significant difference between the two groups that emerged from the demographic data (scripted/narrowed curricula users x teacher-developed curricula). The findings provided a bigger picture as to how standardization is impacting the curriculum autonomy of educators teaching with scripted/narrowed curricula in a broader scope around Rhode Island.

For the qualitative interview and online questionnaire, I completed a three-step coding process that informed my thematic findings. Through my analysis, I developed the following themes:

- Teachers want to be involved in curricular and pedagogical decisions, but many scripted/narrowed curricula users feel they are being ignored.
- Teachers understand that scripted/narrowed curricula negatively impact their professional responsibility to make professional judgments about when to modify their curriculum to serve their student population.
- Teachers also understand that scripted/narrowed curricula impact their pedagogical artistry to make proper modifications and accommodations, whether that be for new learning opportunities or creative purposes, to support the engagement and understanding of all students in their classrooms.
- Teachers believe equity and equality are not being addressed as developers allege them to be. Scripted/narrowed curricula creators promised equity and equality for all instead, teachers feel these issues have only become worse.
- Due to the "teach to the test" nature of scripted/narrowed curricula, teachers believe their opportunities to make decisions in curriculum subjects and topics have been eliminated. This has led to teachers perceiving they are unable to add social and cultural learning activities, and this has also made teachers feel they are no longer properly preparing students for their futures.
- Not only did teachers describe how their roles as educators are being challenged due to the scripted/narrowed curricula, but for many, these challenges to their creativity are influencing their passion for education.

My findings confirmed many of my expectations. I fully expected teachers to feel their roles as educators were being challenged. However, I was happy to hear how many teachers continue to break the mold by willingly risking punishments to better serve their students. Participants provided answers about how scripted/narrowed curricula are impacting their everyday lives as teachers, and their sharing shows the extent to which the government has pushed its way into public education. Their stories reflect how standardization is controlling the narrative in our public schools.

Quantitative Findings

The curriculum autonomy survey was completed by 103 K–12 public educators in Rhode Island. Thirty educators who developed their own course curriculum and 73 educators teaching with scripted/narrowed programs completed the survey. The survey was scored using a Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*Strongly Agree*), 4 (*Agree*), 3 (*Neutral*), 2 (*Disagree*), and 1 (*Strongly Disagree*). Six respondents provided no answer or accidentally provided two answers. These responses were removed from further statistical significance testing.

Since the sample size ($n = 30$) for participating teachers using teacher-developed curriculum was small and several survey questions received levels of agreement less than five ($m < 5$; see Table 10), I decided to use Fisher's Exact Test to determine the statistical significance of the frequencies of the level of agreement (e.g., Disagree) between the scripted/narrowed curriculum and teacher-developed participants for each survey question. Therefore, I conducted a series of Fisher's Exact Tests for the 2 x 5 contingency table (i.e., Curriculum User Type x Level of Agreement) to determine the significance of the association between curriculum user type (i.e., Scripted/Narrowed Curriculum, Teacher-Developed Curriculum) and the level of agreement of the statement (*Strongly Disagree* = 1, *Disagree* = 2, *Neutral* = 3, *Agree* = 4, *Strongly Agree* =

5) for each of the 18 survey questions. The results of the series of Fisher's Exact Test are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Fisher's Exact Test by Survey Question

Question	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	N/A	Curricula Type	Mean	SD	SEM	P	N
1	38	13	9	9	4	0	Scripted	3.63	1.08	0.13	<.0001*	73
	15	14	1	0	0	0	Teacher	4.53	0.68	0.12		30
2	12	33	9	10	8	1	Scripted	3.46	1.2	0.14	<.0001*	72
	20	10	0	0	0	0	Teacher	4.67	0.48	0.09		30
3	12	35	10	11	2	3	Scripted	3.63	1.04	0.12	<.0001*	70
	19	11	0	0	0	0	Teacher	4.63	0.49	0.09		30
4	11	27	17	13	5	0	Scripted	3.36	1.15	0.13	<.0001*	73
	13	17	0	0	0	0	Teacher	4.43	0.5	0.09		30
5	11	27	15	16	4	0	Scripted	3.34	1.15	0.13	0.2857	73
	4	16	5	4	1	0	Teacher	3.6	1	0.18		30
6	10	43	16	4	0	0	Scripted	3.81	0.74	0.09	<.0001*	73
	2	7	8	9	3	1	Teacher	2.86	1.13	0.21		29
7	3	11	9	25	25	0	Scripted	2.21	1.19	0.14	<.0001*	73
	8	11	6	3	2	0	Teacher Made	3.67	1.16	0.22		30
8	1	5	10	32	25	0	Scripted	1.97	0.94	0.11	0.0019*	73
	5	5	3	11	6	0	Teacher Made	2.73	1.41	0.26		30
9	8	26	16	18	5	0	Scripted	3.19	1.14	0.13	0.0013*	73
	6	16	8	0	0	0	Teacher Made	3.93	0.69	0.13		30
10	25	40	5	2	1	0	Scripted	4.18	0.79	0.09	<.0001*	73
	1	10	8	9	2	0	Teacher Made	2.97	1.03	0.19		30
11	10	21	23	16	3	0	Scripted	3.26	1.08	0.13	<.0001*	73
	12	17	1	0	0	0	Teacher Made	4.37	0.56	0.1		30
12	16	28	18	9	2	0	Scripted	3.64	1.05	0.12	<.0001*	73
	0	3	6	14	2	0	Teacher Made	2.2	0.89	0.16		30
13	5	28	17	19	5	0	Scripted	3.15	1.06	0.12	0.0003*	73
	7	17	4	2	0	0	Teacher Made	3.97	0.81	0.15		30

(*table continues*)

Table 10 (continued)

Fisher's Exact Test by Survey Question

Question	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	N/A	Curricula Type	Mean	SD	SEM	P	N
14	25	26	9	9	4	0	Scripted	3.81	1.2	0.14	<.0001*	73
	1	4	5	16	4	0	Teacher Made	2.4	1	0.18		30
15	2	15	24	20	11	0	Scripted	2.68	1.06	0.12	0.0088*	72
	3	12	8	5	2	0	Teacher Made	3.3	1.09	0.2		30
16	0	10	16	32	15	0	Scripted	2.29	0.95	0.11	<.0001*	73
	7	10	10	2	1	0	Teacher Made	3.67	1.03	0.19		30
17	2	10	17	21	23	0	Scripted	2.3	1.11	0.13	<.0001*	73
	7	19	3	1	0	0	Teacher Made	4.07	0.69	0.13		30
18	32	31	4	5	1	0	Scripted	4.21	0.93	0.11	0.015*	73
	7	10	8	4	0	1	Teacher Made	3.69	1	0.19		29

Note. *$p < .05$, two-tailed

As indicated in Table 10, the results of the series of Fisher's Exact Test ($p < 0.05$) indicated a significant association between curriculum user type and level of agreement for each question (i.e., statement), except for question #5: I pick and use specific instruction subjects out of the mandatory curriculum (see Appendix E). Since Fisher's Exact test does not consider the ordinal scale, I also performed a series of Mann-Whitney U tests for each question (i.e., statement), since it is more likely to be sensitive to distributional differences across the two curriculum user types (see Table 11).

Table 11

Mann-Whitney U Test by Survey Question

	u-value	z-score	p-value	SD	curriculum type/# of participants
Question 1	601	-3.58	0.00034*	137.7679	Scripted n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 2	405	-4.95	<.00001*	136.16	Scripted/narrowed n = 72 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 3	438.5	-4.708	<.00001*	136.16	Scripted/narrowed n = 72 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 4	488	-4.402	<.0001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 5	956.5	-1.001	0.31732	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 6	540.5	3.84	0.00012*	134.8	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 29
Question 7	444	-4.72	<.00001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 8	768	-2.37	0.01778*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 9	696	-2.89	0.00386*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 10	403.5	5.02	<.00001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 11	451	-4.67	<.0001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 12	352.5	5.39	<.00001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 13	625.6	-3.4	0.00068*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 14	434	4.81	<.00001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 15	737	-2.52	0.01174*	136.16	Scripted/narrowed n = 72 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 16	379.5	-5.19	<.00001*	137.77	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30

(*table continues*)

Table 11 (continued)

Mann-Whitney U Test by Survey Question

	u-value	z-score	p-value	SD	curriculum type/# of participants
Question 17	242	-6.19	<.00001*	137.767	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 30
Question 18	732	2.42	0.015*	134.7995	Scripted/narrowed n = 73 Teacher developed n = 29

Note. *$p < .05$, two-tailed

Aligned with the results of the series of Fisher's Exact Tests, the results of the series of Fisher's Exact Test ($p < 0.05$) indicated a significant association between curriculum user type and level of agreement for each question (i.e., statement), except for question #5: I pick and use specific instruction subjects out of the mandatory curriculum (see Appendix E). Table 12 displays a summary of the results from the statistical significance tests, by aspect of teacher autonomy (i.e., pedagogical artistry, professional responsibility) and survey question number.

Table 12

Comprehensive Table

Pedagogical Artistry		Professional Responsibility	
Question number	Statistical significance	Question number	Statistical significance
1	significant	7	significant
2	significant	8	significant
3	significant	12	significant
4	significant	14	significant
5	not significant	15	significant
6	significant	16	significant
9	significant	18	significant
10	significant		
11	significant		
13	significant		
17	significant		

Professional Responsibility

As displayed in Table 12, every question dealing with professional responsibility exhibited a statistically significant association between participants using a scripted/narrowed curriculum and those using a teacher-developed curriculum. Questions seven and 15 examined how much input the staff can provide into curricular development and in defining curricular goals (Q7: I am free to initiate and develop completely new curricula; Q15: The staff supports in defining the school's curricular goals and determining their order of preference). In response to question seven, 68% of scripted/narrowed curriculum users strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement regarding their ability to initiate and/or develop new curricula, compared to only 17% of teacher-developed curriculum users. This indicates scripted/narrowed program users feel they are unable to support defining curricular goals and determining their order preferences. In contrast, teachers developing their curriculum are given autonomy in these curricular decisions. Further questioning during the interview stage presented additional information regarding this question.

Survey question eight, regarding a teacher's ability to add or delete teaching subjects from the curriculum (Q8: I am free to add or delete teaching subjects from the official curriculum), yielded interesting results. In all, 72% of the users strongly disagreed or disagreed with the question, with a mean level of agreement of 1.97 for scripted/narrowed participants and 2.73 for teacher-developed participants. Overall, both scripted/narrowed program users and teacher-developed users felt they could not add or delete teaching subjects from the official curriculum.

Question 12 revealed some of the challenges to using scripted/narrowed curricula (Q12: In my situation, I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching). With a

mean level of agreement of 3.64 for scripted/narrowed users and 2.2 for teacher-developed, participating teachers developing and designing their curricula were capable of practicing more professional responsibility than scripted/narrowed users by making content and pedagogical decisions regarding curricula implementation. In contrast, scripted/narrowed program users were limited in their decision-making due to the presence of a script.

Question 14 further exposed the challenges of working with a scripted/narrowed curriculum (Q14: The evaluation and assessment activities used in my class are selected by people other than myself). For scripted/narrowed users, 70% agreed or strongly agreed that evaluations and assessments were selected by someone other than themselves, compared to only 17% of teacher-developed users. Five teachers who developed their own curricula strongly agreed or agreed that evaluation and assessment activities were selected by others, a result that suggests such assessments might be designed to focus on meeting content standards. In contrast, many scripted/narrowed users are forced to administer outsourced tests to their students.

Survey question 16 (Q16: I compose and formulate new, innovative curricula for students to discover self and social learning) resulted in a significant difference in the mean of the responses for the two groups. The mean level of agreement for scripted/narrowed users was 2.29 compared to 3.67 for teacher-developed users. While teachers who can develop their curriculum can be more innovative and provide learning opportunities beyond the subject's standards, scripted/narrowed users must stay committed to the mandatory curriculum.

Results from question 18 (Q18: The curriculum is largely focused on standards and state testing) indicated that state standards and state testing drive the curriculum. Seventy-eight percent of all participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, compared to only 10% who disagreed. Eighty-six percent of educators using scripted/narrowed curricula strongly

agreed or agreed state standards and testing drive their curriculum, compared to only 56% of educators using teacher-developed curricula. An interesting result for this question is that 12% of all participants answered "Neutral" for this question. This result has the potential to open a future conversation related to those who disagreed or answered neutrally regarding what they believe curricula are based on. In addition, there was a higher percentage of teacher-developed curriculum participants who answered "Neutral" than participants using scripted/narrowed curriculum, so this could also open a further dialogue related to what teachers think curricula—any curricula—are based on.

Pedagogical Artistry

Overall, 78% of the participants responded they can modify and accommodate according to student needs (Q1: Day to day, I am free to introduce changes and modifications to the formal curriculum to accommodate student needs). This indicates these teachers are able to practice pedagogical artistry, compared to the 13% who felt they could not make any changes. For teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula, the mean level of agreement was 3.63 for Q1, and for teachers using teacher-developed curricula, the mean was 4.53. Therefore, teacher-developed curricula users can make more modifications and/or accommodations to their curriculum than scripted/narrowed curricula users, who must stay closer to the formal curricula as they attempt to accommodate for student needs.

On question 2 (Q2: I am free to be creative in my teaching approach), 74% either strongly agreed or agreed they could use creative teaching approaches, whereas 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, the 10 participants who disagreed and the 8 participants who strongly disagreed with the statement were all teachers using a

scripted/narrowed curriculum. The mean level of agreement for scripted/narrowed users was 3.46 and 4.67 for teacher-developed users.

Only 100 participants answered question three (Q3: I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students), and 77% either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Conversely, 13% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Like question 2, all participants who answered strongly disagree or disagree were scripted/narrowed curricula users. Finally, the mean level of agreement with the statement was 4.63 for teacher-developed and 3.63 for scripted/narrowed curriculum users.

For question 4 (Q4: Based on student response and engagement, I can develop unique learning opportunities for the social cultural, and general enrichment activities of students), 66% of participating teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, whereas 17%—all scripted/narrowed curriculum users—either strongly disagreed or disagreed. This question also received a high percentage of neutral respondents, with 17% of the 103 participants indicating an agreement level of "Neutral." Scripted/narrowed curriculum users had a mean level of agreement of 3.36 for Q4 and teacher-developed users had a mean of 4.43, indicating scripted/narrowed curriculum users have fewer opportunities to deviate from the formal curriculum to create unique learning opportunities based on the social and cultural population of their students.

As indicated in Table 12, question 5 (Q5: I pick and use specific instruction subjects out of the mandatory curriculum) was the only survey question that failed to show a statistically significant difference between scripted/narrowed participants' responses with teachers who developed their curriculum. For teachers using scripted/narrowed curriculum, 52.1% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, whereas the results for participants using teacher-developed curriculum was 66.7%. It is possible participants were confused by the question and interpreted

"subjects" as disciplines (e.g., Math, Social Studies), rather than specific topics, content, or concepts within a discipline; this conjecture was explored further during teacher interviews.

Questions six, nine, and 10 each looked at how much the school administration impacts the daily planning of the classroom. The scripted/narrowed participant responses had a mean level of agreement of 3.81 for question 6 (Q6: My teaching mainly follows approaches specified by the school), 3.19 for question 9 (Q9: In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures), and 4.18 for question 10 (Q10: My instructional planning is dictated by a mandatory curriculum). The teacher-developed participant responses had a mean level of agreement of 2.86 for Q6, 3.93 for Q9, and 2.97 for Q10. These data suggest that school administration significantly impacts participating teachers' instructional approaches, the guidelines and procedures used, and the overall curriculum for scripted/narrowed participants. Comparatively, teachers who developed their curricula indicated they were less impacted by school administration in their classrooms.

For question 11 (Q11: The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control), 42.5% of scripted/narrowed curriculum users agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Conversely, 96.7% (29 of 30) of teacher-developed users strongly agreed with this statement. The teacher-developed participant responses had a mean level of agreement of 4.37 for Q11 and scripted/narrowed users had a mean of 2.2.

Regarding question 13 (Q13: Day to day, I can initiate and administer new enrichment and cultural activities), 45% of scripted/narrowed users strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 80% of teacher-made users. This difference gives an idea of the gap between teacher's abilities to modify or add curricula daily depending on whether they are a scripted/narrowed or teacher-developed user.

Finally, for question 17 (Q17: The materials I use in my class are chosen for the most part by myself), of the 73 participants using scripted/narrowed curricula, only 12 indicated they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 17 scripted/narrowed users answered "Neutral." The mean level of agreement for scripted/narrowed users to 2.3, compared to a mean of 4.07 for teacher-developed users. This suggests teachers who develop their curriculum choose and/or create their materials, whereas scripted/narrowed users utilize what is being produced, purchased, and/or provided by the district.

Concluding Quantitative Findings and Additional Findings

The quantitative findings indicate a statistically significant difference in teacher experiences between the two groups that emerged from the data collection. Educators teaching with a script or using a narrowed curriculum felt their experiences with these curricula resulted in negative impacts on their professional responsibility. Similarly, scripted/narrowed curricula experience let to feeling greater impacts to their pedagogical artistry as compared to teachers developing their own curricula. These findings reveal that scripted and narrowed curricula directly impact a teacher's curriculum autonomy in various ways.

In addition to addressing the research question, the survey data allowed me to examine the significance of the associations between specific demographic data collected through the survey. A Fisher's Exact Test for the 2 x 4 contingency table (i.e., Curriculum User Type x Subject Matter Taught) was performed to determine the significance of the association between curriculum user type (i.e., Scripted/Narrowed Curriculum, Teacher-Developed Curriculum) and subject matter taught (English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies/history). The results of Fisher's exact test ($p < 0.05$) indicated a significant association between curriculum user type and subject matter taught. Similarly, a Fisher's Exact Test for the 2 x 3 contingency

table (i.e., Curriculum User Type x Grade Band Taught) was performed to determine the significance of the association between curriculum user type (i.e., Scripted/Narrowed Curriculum, Teacher-Developed Curriculum) and grade band taught (restricted to Grades K–5, Grades 6–8, Grades 9–12). The results of Fisher's Exact Test ($p = 0.0087$) indicated a significant association between curriculum user type and grade band taught.

These findings contribute to identifying which grade levels and disciplines use scripted/narrowed curricula in Rhode Island. Furthermore, they suggest that education leaders are placing more emphasis only on subjects that are facing standardized testing.

Qualitative Findings

I determined nine themes emerged from the coding process for scripted/narrowed curricula users, whereas seven themes emerged for teachers developing their own curriculum. To discuss the themes, I chose to separate my findings by the two groups (scripted/narrowed curricula and teacher-developed users). Then, within each group, I chose to organize the findings under the two components of curriculum autonomy (i.e., professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry). In this section, the findings of the 19 interviews are categorized by the sub-themes I developed throughout the coding process.

Scripted/Narrowed Curricula

In this section, I discuss how the interview participants' responses provided descriptions of detailed ways scripted/narrowed curricula impact teacher's curriculum autonomy. I provide the understandings and perceptions of educators whose professional responsibilities have been challenged and whose pedagogical artistry is waning as the script takes over. I also detail how teachers, despite the script, try to overcome the challenges in order to serve their students' educational needs.

Theme One: Professional Responsibility

The most common theme I found through my analysis was that teachers are being disregarded as educated professionals. Teachers said that they wanted to be a part of the curricular discussion. Teachers want to be engaged stakeholders in the curricular and pedagogical decision-making for their schools. Interviewees noted they wanted to be respected and trusted with their knowledge and experience to make professionally responsible decisions for their students. Research (e.g., Datnow, 1999) has shown that successful student outcomes often rely on a teacher's knowledge of their subject matter and how a teacher feels about their subject matter. However, many educators around Rhode Island are being asked to teach from a district-wide mandatory scripted/narrowed curriculum. Most participants noted they were being withheld from the conversation in making curricular and pedagogical decisions in their content areas has caused two major issues: lack of curriculum and pedagogical decision-making, each a component of professional responsibility. Participants suggested there were several reasons professional responsibility was being taken away. These reasons included the implementation of and rationale for a scripted/narrowed curriculum, issues with equity and equality, the ability to make accommodations, issues with missing curriculum, and the question of whether they are able to prepare their students for life after high school. In the following section, I review teachers' understandings and perceptions of how scripted/narrowed curricula have subtheme impacted professional responsibility.

Subtheme One: Implementation of and Rationale for a Scripted/Narrowed Curriculum. Districts rely on top administrators to choose the scripted/narrowed curricula for their schools. Unfortunately, the consensus of participating teachers is that top administrators have not turned to those qualified in specific content areas, nor are they choosing programs for

the right reasons. For teachers experiencing scripted/narrowed curricula, a common concern is that one or two curriculum directors are purchasing programs for the whole district. Participants explained many personal issues with district administration choosing the curriculum without their input and suggestions. The two glaring concerns are that the district administration is not doing the groundwork in the classroom and they are not qualified in all areas:

> I believe that one of the major shortcomings of the district having control of the curriculum is that they do not listen to the people who are working with the students every day. Many times, the people making the decisions have not been in the classroom for a very long time and aren't really aware of what we deal with on a day-to-day basis. (Sarah)

Even for a district specialist, specifically an English as a Second Language or English Language Learners educator, Sarah feels that choosing a curriculum that works for her kids is crucial. Due to the critical nature of teaching ESL/ELL students, she stresses the curriculum needs to go beyond differentiation, so flexibility for teachers is a must. Yet, in a district with a growing number of ESL and ELL students, she is being pushed to teach what the district chooses:

> I feel like I'm being told which curriculum to use. When in the past, I felt like a specialist, and I feel this in my building and in the district; we've had more flexibility as to what was best for our students and how to differentiate. (Julie)

Julie was not the only specialist who has felt the restrictions of scripted/narrowed curricula. The Math and Literacy specialist interviewees feel limited in their options to support their students. Opportunities to pull their targeted students to provide support are limited because students cannot miss the scripted/narrowed curricula day to day in the classroom because they do not offer time for targeted intervention.

When I asked participants to elaborate on why district administration may have chosen their specific curriculum, participants discussed money, state requirements, and accountability. The most common reason for chosen curricula, according to interviewees, is cost. Participants explained their districts are often choosing the cheapest route over the quality of materials:

> I think it was cheaper than Springboard, which is why they decided to switch this over. (Mia)
>
> It always comes down to the dollar sign. It doesn't matter if the curriculum is horrible. (Molly)

Other participants discussed expectations from the state. These expectations included issues related to the backlash of NCLB, the accountability era, and RIDE's expectations for districts to move to a "green curriculum." A participant explained that for districts to review any curriculum in Rhode Island, it must be rated in the green on edreports.org. In reviewing the website, when a curriculum is labeled "green," it means "Instructional materials that claim to deliver all grade-level or course level standards" (*EdReports*, 2024). June explained how RIDE representatives set the expectation for all Rhode Island school districts to have implemented a "green" curriculum by a certain year, these "green" curricula are scripted and/or narrowed curricula.

Some of the scripted/narrowed curriculum users discussed the district looking for teacher input in curriculum choice. In some cases, the teachers were heavily involved in choosing the curriculum, working in teams, piloting different programs, and then making the choice as a group with the curriculum director:

> We have our ELA curriculum, and we have our math curriculum. We had a team, including our professional development people, looking at when we were ready for new programming, looking at the different programs available in trying to find the

> green-lighted ones, and then a pilot happened. Feedback was given in addition to budgetary concerns, then a program was developed or chosen. And what happened after that was grade-level teams were called to admin to work with our curriculum. People, to make sure that we were hitting all those Common Core standards, were doing a cross-check, like looking at it piece by piece, right? For module one for ELA, a team of people went over and looked at module one and cross-checked with Common Core standards to make sure that we had the pieces that if we were missing any pieces that would be worked on by the curriculum. (Kate)

While other participants detailed experiences in piloting new curriculum programs. Throughout the piloting process, their opinions were sought by upper administration, but that did not mean these opinions were considered when choosing the final product.

Interviewees using scripted/narrowed curricula noted their unhappiness with the lack of voice in curricular decisions. Many participants explained that they are not making these decisions because the district is choosing to keep them out of the discussion despite research suggesting teacher input is beneficial for students and teachers.

Subtheme Two: Making Curriculum Modifications. One of the most concerning themes to arise from scripted/narrowed curricula user feedback is the lack of opportunity to make accommodations or modifications to support student learning. The interviewees suggest the expectation to follow a curriculum to fidelity and the fear of administrative reprimand, has created fear and tension when it comes to supporting their students' needs. However, based on the participant feedback, the ability to veer off the curricula seems more of a possibility at the secondary level compared to the elementary level, where fidelity is required. A few secondary educator participants explained how they had a bit of freedom in modifying the curriculum, as in

skipping around the topics for clarity, eliminating topics or lessons due to time constraints, or providing additional supplemental materials from outside of the curriculum. It is important to note, some of these teachers are making these modifications with the permission of their administration and several choose to do it without permission. On the other hand, elementary educators noted there were explicit expectations that they teach to the curriculum, oftentimes, regardless of student ability:

> We're being held accountable . . . we are not to go backward. We are to start where they are expected to start. (Molly)

Based on the interviews, teachers are under the impression they are being removed from the curriculum decision-making process.

> The commissioner of education chose our curriculum for both reading and math. There was no input from teachers and the curriculum was implemented to all grades at the beginning of the school year. (Sarah)

The data suggest that teachers are also expected not to question the decision. Instead, they are expected to follow the new curricula to fidelity and not do what is necessarily best for their student population.

Subtheme Three: Question of Equity. A trend amongst the scripted/narrowed curricula users is the concerns related to equality and equity when using scripted/narrowed curricula. Despite all students learning from the same curriculum, many teachers discussed that this does not necessarily support their students due to their diverse student populations. Several participants noted that equality and equity do not seem to be top priorities for their school district or are certainly misunderstood concepts by the people in charge:

> I do not believe that [equality] is a top priority in this district. (Abbey)

> I honestly do not think the district promotes equality in the curriculum. All students are taught the same curriculum. As a teacher of ELLS and special needs students, I will take it upon myself to supplement materials to be more diverse and incorporate equality in the classroom. This is not something the district really promotes. (Sarah)

Equality appears to be less of an issue at the elementary level. One elementary teacher shared:

> Variety of cultures . . . an inner city . . . a lot of really rich diverse cultures . . . appropriate literature and exposure to fiction and nonfiction in a lot of scenarios. Like the grandfather was raising the boy and there was no mention of a mom and a dad. (Molly)

Molly is explaining how her elementary students are exposed to stories about families of different cultures and different family structures. For the most part, the participating K–5 teachers felt their students are exposed to different scenarios in both fiction and nonfiction texts, people of different cultures and different races, people living in different countries, and children experiencing different family structures.

As for equity, elementary teacher Helen discussed her belief in the importance of all students having the same academic target. She suggested that, regardless of the student's abilities, teachers should be able to provide accommodations for all students to reach those targets:

> Working with them to get to that target. The scaffolding, making different accommodations, the prompting, the queuing, rolling it back, making that initial connection so they can make the leap into what you're trying to teach them. I mean, there's so many different strategies and things you have to do to pull that child in order to get them to get to the target, and we do a lot of that. A lot of differentiation, a lot of small

> group learning. The struggling students, those are the ones you're working with the most, helping them meet that target. They need the extra. (Helen)

Helen is arguing that all students can and should be learning from the same curriculum, but supports the need for educators to be able to make accommodations when needed to ensure mastery of skills and standards.

In some situations, a need for more understanding of the differences between equality and equity exists:

> The district uses the word equity a lot, but they're using it incorrectly. What they're seeing is equity is actually equality, and it's not equitable. (Julie)

Julie is trying to clarify that within her district, they are seeing equality, but the district administration is labeling it as equity, a mistake that needs to be rectified. Julie also discussed the issue of curricula promoting equity by offering multiple languages or ELL/ESL accommodations. She suggests it all comes down to a teacher's ability to use the curriculum resources properly.

> When you open up the curriculum, you literally see English language development. Like these are the standards, these are the questions to ask. But just having those there doesn't mean that that teacher is equipped to actually work with ESL. (Julie)

These findings overwhelmingly support the research that suggests scripted/narrowed curricula do not solve issues related to equity and equality as they were expected to do. Instead, they have created a necessity for a greater conversation regarding what equity and equality are in K–12 public education.

Subtheme Four: Missing/Missed Curriculum. According to participants, scripted/narrowed curricula fail to cover necessary topics and subjects teachers believe are crucial for students' knowledge, growth, and future. Many participants noted missing curricula or missing topics in their current scripted/narrowed curricula, and their inability to change or add lessons has caused sometimes impossible challenges to change this. The most common response for the missing subjects at both the secondary and elementary levels is social studies/history.

> YES SOCIAL STUDIES. We barely cover history and social studies in the elementary level and it is severely affecting our students. (Jane)

Other participants noted topics missing from their subject areas. A few mentioned that the formatting of the scripted curricula skipped basic foundational skills. A secondary math teacher mentioned the lack of pre-calculus material; a secondary science teacher discussed that humans are burning the world they live in and are not learning environmental science. An elementary teacher addressed the lack of a writing curriculum, especially one geared toward inner-city students.

Subtheme Five: Curricula for Informed Citizens. The final theme I uncovered throughout the interview process is that teachers do not believe their scripted/narrowed curricula are adequate for preparing the nation's students. Most of the participants said their current curriculum is not preparing their students for the future. Whether it be as citizens of the world or preparing for future education, due to missing curricula, lack of engagement, or lack of skills-based learning, scripted/narrowed curricula are not preparing Rhode Island students for life after K–12 education:

> The way the world is shifting, many companies and workforces don't require as high-level mathematics as I teach. Not too many places are asking for pre-calculus or calculus

> backgrounds. Algebra One geometry and Algebra Two are still things that are required in many workforces. However, I don't feel that the scripted curriculums are doing them justice because of the amount of materials that's missing. (Abbey)

Abbey and a few other teachers noted how their curricula are not keeping up with the times. Teachers suggested the need for schools, districts, or state departments to revisit what core courses students should be taking in school to be successful after high school, not on standardized tests.

> I think it is preparing them for some aspects of life outside of K–12 education but lacks in application to "real world" tasks that one would see as an adult in society. (June)
>
> This curriculum is not preparing our students to be fully engaged citizens. (Roberto)
>
> It's a watered-down version of "let's make a better citizen." (Mia)

Other teachers simply noted their current curricula are inadequate. They mentioned there are some important skills they are learning, but they are not learning all the valuable skills they need because of the missing topics and subjects. Because most teachers are unable to make modifications, it makes it nearly impossible for teachers to properly prepare their students.

Theme Two: Pedagogical Artistry

A teacher's classroom is a safe place for teachers and students, or at least it is meant to be. It should be a place where teachers are able to use their experience, knowledge, and reflective practices to create a constructive learning environment where their students feel safe. In order for this learning environment to be created and sustained, teachers must have the professional respect to make these decisions each day for their diverse student population. However, with scripted/narrowed curricula being implemented across the state, teachers are feeling the strains on their day-to-day curricular and pedagogical decisions. The findings suggest there are several

areas that are of pedagogical artistry being challenged, including pedagogical and curricular decision-making in the classroom, creativity, accommodations and modifications, equity and equality, and the overall issues of deprofessionalization.

Subtheme One: Curriculum and Pedagogical Decision-Making in the Classroom. Several interviewees explained how educators in their districts have been prevented from making decisions at the curriculum implementation level, and they have also been unable to make changes in the classroom to a mandatory scripted/narrowed curriculum. Teacher participants explained that all decisions are made, from materials, accommodations, skills, and formative and summative assessments. Participants explained that their scripted/narrowed programs go as far as telling them exactly what to do, what to say, and when to say it every single day:

> Teachers are given a scope and sequence with calendars that note the dates of when assessments are to be done. The units were to be followed with fidelity following the program's lessons. The curriculums follow the common core state standards. (Sarah)
>
> Pacing guides with exam dates are predetermined. (Abbey)

Teacher participants explained how they were unable to engage in collaborative or reflective practices to choose the right teaching strategies to make their lessons effectively work each day for all students. Due to the nature of a scripted/narrowed curriculum, this also means these teachers revealed experiences of being denied the opportunity to create teaching materials or assessments. A few teachers felt their curriculum is a "teach to the test" guide. Despite this, they also discussed how the assessments do not prepare their students for state or nationwide tests.

Subtheme Two: Creativity. A major issue in teachers losing curricular and pedagogical autonomy is they are losing their creativity. Many interviewees detailed the chance to incorporate their creativity is eliminated. For many educators, incorporating creativity into a

lesson is crucial. My study participants explained how creativity supports student understanding, engagement, and the overall success of a lesson. Many participants detailed the challenges they encountered when using scripted curricula and their ability to develop more creative lessons. They explained how this can lead to dissatisfaction for them as an educator and for students:

> There was such a mass exodus. The time when I left with many other teachers it was because they were being told what to do every minute . . . You're losing that part and that creativity of teaching. (Julie)
>
> If you don't have that creativity option, you're screwed . . . I have to find a way for them to be engaged. (Ryan)
>
> Trying to adapt a sometimes-boring curriculum to keep it engaging is like performing on stage. (Jane)

Teachers prepare their lessons ahead of time in an effort to create engaging and creative lessons that support the diverse learners in the classroom. Creativity is also how educators interpret their passion for their subject into their practice.

> I try my best to change what I can, but the lessons in the curriculum take creativity out of the teaching. We are left with trying to trying to remain engaging in a curriculum that seems lifeless most of the time. (June)
>
> There was such a mass exodus. The time when I left with teachers on because. They're being told what to do every minute and then when it's spilling over into specialists, we're supposed to specialize and differentiate. And now you're saying no, you have to use this. You're losing that part and that creativity of teaching. (Julie)
>
> If my lessons aren't engaging, the students' behavior lets me know. (Kate)

When educators teach with passion, it changes the dynamic of the classroom, keeps the students focused on the lesson, encourages students to maybe find a connection in the subject, and helps deter behavioral problems.

Subtheme Three: Making Accommodations and Modifying Curriculum. Despite the many different scripted/narrowed curricula being used throughout the state, many teacher participants noted taking the adaption versus adoption approach. When dealing with decision-making for modifying, accommodating, or providing supplemental material, many participants chose to take consequences over not following their pedagogical beliefs:

> I'd rather ask for forgiveness than ask for permission. (Mia)
>
> I can't say we are given the authority, but I definitely do this. Our educational coaches always tell us that we can make changes (additions/modifications) to curriculum as needed. However, when administration observes and do walk-throughs, they are always looking for specific things that pertain to the curriculum, so it makes it difficult to really go "rogue" and do what WE think is best for the students in front of us. (Sarah)

In some situations, their schools encouraged independent decision-making. When I asked about his ability to make accommodations and whether he was allowed to go off script, Roberto and Ryan discussed the following:

> There's a script, and we can go off of it, so long as we move the student forward and prove that we are moving them forward, but that's a school-based decision. (Roberto)
>
> They recommend I do [make modifications and accommodations] and again, that's a personal belief, I would not leave a kid behind because they don't understand the script. (Ryan)

For most participants, doing what is best for their students to succeed takes top priority over following a scripted curriculum to fidelity. Most of the participants noted creating or finding additional supplemental resources to clarify critical skills and concepts.

A few participants felt they could not or were not encouraged to add supplementary materials:

> This scripted curriculum, we are limited to what we're able to teach aside from the textbook . . . it's not that we are not allowed to make decisions. It's just that those decisions are not necessary. (Abbey)

Abbey explains that due to the pacing requirements of the curriculum and the nature of the textbook, she felt she could not make accommodations or add supplemental materials to support student learning. Many participants mentioned the lack of accommodations available for their students, and the quote below encompasses many of their concerns with scripted curricula:

> Scripted curriculum is a one-size-fits-all. (Roberto)

Many participants teach students at various learning levels, students who may be identified as having learning disabilities, or students who are identified as ESL or ELL. Yet, they are expected to teach each student an identical curriculum. Many participants detailed their modifications and accommodations for their students to succeed:

> I have to differentiate my lessons with visuals, movements, and vocabulary due to the fact I teach both ELLs and special education students. Center activities are developed and planned to support the whole group lessons. Assessments are usually observational depending on what is being taught. Progress monitoring is done on a rotating basis to ensure students are understanding the material. (Sarah)

> We might switch up how the lesson is taught, break it down some more, and refer back to something they may know. (Jane)
>
> If students can identify with the curriculum, they are not only more likely to do very well at learning concepts but also in acquiring the lessons and objectives. (Roberto)
>
> Scaffolding, making different accommodations, the prompting, the queuing, rolling it back, making that initial connection they can make the leap into what you're trying to teach them. (Helen)

Unless a child has an Individualized Education Plan, a 504 Plan, or is an ESL/ELL student, teachers remaining in districts where fidelity is required are not able to serve all student needs.

Subtheme Four: Maybe There is Equity, but There is a Lack of Equality Within the Curriculum. Participants discussed using their accommodations to make the curricula more equitable by creating video lessons, using manipulatives, adjusting questions, and using small-group learning, but creating equality has been a much more difficult task. The accommodations the teachers are making to ensure equity are not built into the curricula but are instead placed on the shoulders of the educators to implement in their classrooms.

> We use our own ideas and follow up with it so that is a nice little liberty that's going to actually close the gap in equity. (Roberto)
>
> I use manipulatives, pictures, body movements, selective seating, small group instruction in order for all my students to be given the opportunity to learn the content. (Sarah)

Participants discussed equality or an inclusive education within a curriculum much less. As mentioned above, many participants feel it is not the district's top priority, and others say equality is exposing students to different cultures within a text.

> As far as gender, socio-economic, race, it is on me to look at a lesson and think about food insecurity, biased information, etc. (Victoria)
>
> No, the stories are not connected to their lives at all. They struggle to understand them because they have no context for them. (Erin)

An interesting pattern I noticed while discussing equity and equality was the lack of teachers being able to talk about equity or equality at length. When I led the interview questions about these two topics, many participants seemed confused about how to answer the question or seemed unsure about how to answer it. One participant shared her experience explaining how many teachers in her district disliked hearing the word equality after an optional club was created in her school that addressed equality, a topic in their curriculum:

> I find teachers here have a complex about being asked about how we promote equality, and they interpret it as being called racist. (Theresa)

Theresa is revealing a complex issue regarding teachers' understanding of equality. The term equality goes beyond the concept of racism, and this evidence suggests that the teachers in this district are limiting this concept to a very narrow box.

Subtheme Five: Challenging the Role of Educators. From lack of control in decision-making to feeling undermined, teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula are experiencing their role as professionals being challenged, while a few presented the positives of a script. Many teacher participants were quick to respond how they understood their role has been challenged:

> Insulting my role as an educator. (Roberto)
>
> I'm not trusted. (Abbey).

> Like every four to five years, the rug gets pulled out from under you . . . I feel like there's always a gun to your head. Somewhere, some way, someone's going to say you know what, you're not doing this right. (Molly)
>
> I think it takes away creativity. I think it takes away autonomy in the classroom for a teacher to be able to really get to the needs of the student. (Mia)
>
> I think that's changed my role a little bit in terms of how I approach. (Julie)

From a lack of trust to a lack of creativity, many of them are feeling challenged at every turn. A district's implementation of the scripted/narrowed curriculum can play a vital role in an educator's perception because, when not done properly, it leads to feelings of distrust and insult. Teachers may expect the typical patterns of education to continue, one where the curriculum and standards' expectations change every five years. Christina, a reading specialist, discussed how, despite liking the scripted curriculum she uses for her student population, her role in the school undermines the program and, therefore, her profession:

> I see myself as an [elective] teacher. Because I'm scheduled as an [elective] teacher. So, I'm just there to fill in when the kids aren't in their other academic areas. So, for me, scheduling is a big issue and because I don't think I'm unable to schedule, is that in the best interest of children? (Christina)

While on the opposite end of the spectrum, a few teachers weighed the pros and cons of their programs. Ryan discussed how, after years of developing his curricula from scratch, his scripted curriculum had been a breath of fresh air for him:

> I can walk in the room blindfolded and not have any plan and have something in front of me, that is the biggest stress relief. (Ryan)

But for Ryan, his experience with the scripted curriculum in his current district is one of adaption versus adoption. He can decide what parts of the script he wants to use and when he wants to modify them. In contrast, Helen discussed the idea that it is all about how the teacher approaches the subject:

> It's in how you are choosing to teach. It's in how you are choosing to help those children who are struggling getting to that target that you know they need to get to . . . teaching is like an art. (Helen)

Two participants mentioned that scripted curricula can impact educators based on their novice or veteran status. Mia noted that scripted curricula are not good for novice teachers who do not have a foundation in their content area:

> They just kind of barrel through rather than looking at their classes in cohesion . . . they're not able to look at something and teach it holistically. (Mia)

Sarah, a veteran teacher, discussed the positives in working with a scripted curriculum due to issues of getting stuck with what has always worked rather than trying new ideas that may benefit the evolving 21st-century student:

> I feel that sometimes veteran teachers (like myself) get stuck in our ways and don't always want to try new things. However, sometimes, I feel that exploring a new curriculum is a good way to keep growing as a teacher. Incorporating old ideas with new ideas is the best way to adjust a curriculum. (Sarah)

People have been challenging the professionalism education since women became the dominant gender in the role (Apple, 2009). It has not been surprising that it continues to be challenged with school reforms requiring scripted/narrowed curricula as women continue to dominate the role, yet no one can come to an agreement as to what they want student outcomes

to be. As the top-down hierarchy continues to rule the public education field, the trickle-down effect will continue to challenge the roles of educators. Currently, a workplace of dishonesty, finger-pointing, and distrust is not a conducive learning environment.

Teacher Developed Curricula

For teacher participants developing their own curriculum, the following categories emerged through the inductive analysis: curricular and pedagogical autonomy, collaborative planning, the lack of feeling challenged, equality, and equity, which are non-issues. A few themes were constructed from the data in these categories.

Theme One: Curricular and Pedagogical Autonomy

A major theme amongst teachers designing their curriculum these educators have complete autonomy over their curricular and pedagogical autonomy. Participants explained that they make the decisions related to the topics, materials, and assessments. The teachers choose the instructional strategies and approaches for each standard and when and which skills they want to focus on at any given time:

> Instructional strategies are the biggest decision—allowing for learning opportunities for the diverse abilities, interests, and needs of the students. Assessments are fairly easy to modify with the help of the co-teacher. (Elizabeth)

Teachers designing their courses have the opportunity to plan their curriculum by choosing the subjects, topics, and skills that are covered and when they are covered. They plan their daily lessons and are able to use reflective practices to modify throughout the day and day-to-day. The teachers are choosing or creating the materials they know are accessible to their student population. Lastly, they are arranging assessments that test the appropriate skills with appropriate projects or tests.

Subtheme One: State Standards. The one expectation for teachers designing their curricula is that they must be based on the state standards:

> Teachers have the autonomy to evaluate the standards and put them in order. (William)

The only restriction on designing a curriculum is that it must cover the subjects, topics, and skills presented in the state standards. For example, in English, skills can be learned using any text as long as it is grade-level appropriate.

Subtheme Two: Collaborative Planning. Each participant developing their curriculum discussed the importance of collaboration among colleagues. Teachers designing their curriculum noted working together to develop strategic plans across grade levels vertically and horizontally to ensure consistency in standards coverage, skill development, and consistent assessment and evaluation processes:

> Our teachers took the NGSS standards and divided them up to the three grades (6-8) in a way that made sense to them. They tried to plan the sequence in a way that allowed for the scaffolding of skills and knowledge throughout the grade span. (Elizabeth)
>
> At the beginning of each unit, we select a particular skill we want to focus on and use rich primary/secondary sources to work on that skill. (George)
>
> I choose activities, assignments, and delivery methods. Another teacher and I collaborate for a layer of consistency. (William)

There is more cohesion when working collaboratively, and this consistency only supports student engagement and learning:

> It also makes sense because the routines are in place if it is being used the majority of the time. Students feel a comfort level when the same language is carried throughout, the routines are expected, and they are free to learn and engage. (Victoria)

Teachers working in departments where they have been able to collaboratively plan their curricula from grade to grade believe they and their students are more comfortable. Instead of going to a new teacher each year and learning new terminology for the same concepts, departments are working together to ensure alignment. The teachers who are engaging in collaborative planning did not mention feeling stifled or feeling like they lost their voice in making decisions. Instead, because their individual courses remained theirs, they could make modifications when necessary.

Subtheme Three: Some Missing Curriculum. Similarly to scripted curricula users, a few teacher-developed curricula participants feel there are a few missing subjects and topics from the curriculum. A teacher mentioned students are struggling in high school history due to the lack of social studies/history classes at the elementary level. She explained how she is often starting from scratch with her students at the high school level with topics that are critical for them to be citizens of the United States. Another interviewee mentioned the lack of health education and real-world skills. These three subjects are crucial for students to become functioning members of the country's society.

Theme Two: Non-Issues

An additional theme amongst the teacher-developed curricula participants was the number of non-issue issues for these developers. Teachers designing their own curricula did not feel equity or equality was an issue. They also had full autonomy to make modifications and accommodations. Lastly, most of the participants felt that they are preparing their students for their futures.

Subtheme One: Ensuring Equity and Equality. None of the participants mentioned problems with equity and/or equality, nor did they feel their profession was being challenged. This may be due to the autonomy these individuals have. These teachers are not facing equity issues because they can listen to their students and modify their curriculum based on student performance:

> I won't give the quiz of the exams until I feel the students have at least a general idea of what they are doing. (Abbey)
>
> I work with small groups, I offer extra practice, I provide whole class instruction, or I take time to work with the student one-on-one. (William)
>
> I have to take a look at where the problem was—not enough time spent on the material or a poorly designed assessment. Then I either do a few more lessons and retest or just redesign the assessment. (Elizabeth)

When these participating teachers have decision-making authority in their classrooms, this means they can use their skills and knowledge to adjust the curricula so that students still meet targets properly and equitably.

Subtheme Two: Accommodations and Modifications. An important theme across teacher-developed participants is having full flexibility to provide accommodations to all students. Making an accommodation for a student does not require a legal document. A student can simply be on a lower learning level but not low enough to need an IEP, so the teacher provides some intervention in order for the student to master the skill. Teachers mentioned using small groups, one-on-one instruction, using special education strategies, providing movement, giving manipulatives, and many more to support different learners. When teachers feel a lesson is not working or they know it will not work for a specific class due to the population, the teacher

can modify the curriculum as long as they meet the standard. Examples of modifications may be providing supplemental materials, changing the pacing of the lesson, adjusting instruction, and taking a step back to build background knowledge. The main goal for these teachers was to build a curriculum geared towards supporting all students.

Subtheme Three: Curriculum That Prepares Students for Their Futures. Teachers developing their own curriculum believe they are preparing their students in one way or another. Many of the participants felt confident in the skills their curriculum focused on in order to achieve mastery of standards and how these skills would transfer to real-world experiences:

> It provides them with skills that will be valuable. (William)
>
> Yes. We are using phenomenon-based teaching with a focus on collaboration, problem-solving, communication, and arguing from evidence. (Elizabeth)

Theresa shared a more extensive perspective of how her skills-based curriculum prepares students to be engaged citizens of the globe, and she details her beliefs of how scripted programs could never do the students justice:

> I focus on skills that will help my students be an informed, empathetic, critically engaged citizen who can question and think historically and globally. While I also focus on skills that they need to develop to be successful in high school and college, I am not concerned with preparing them for the work force. I see them as children and not as a future labor source. I think the curriculum I currently teach prepares them because I designed it that way. I am very doubtful that any scripted curriculum prepared by a for-profit company, probably out of Texas, and approved by a department of ed which prioritizes test scores from for-profit testing companies over teacher expertise and student well-being will be

> able to prepare them for anything but a future as an obedient worker and docile citizen unable to think critically. (Theresa)

Teachers developing a curriculum were confident in their ability to prepare a curriculum that engaged and connected students to their learning.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contains the findings of my mixed methods study to answer the research question: How do teachers understand the impact of scripted curriculum on curriculum autonomy? Data analysis reveals the correlations between teachers' experiences with scripted curricula and how it impacts their curriculum autonomy. Grounded in the conceptual framework of democratic curriculum leadership, I created an adapted Curriculum Autonomy Survey (Freidman 1999; Pearson & Hall, 1993) and interview questions to analyze how scripted curricula impact a teacher's professional responsibility in content choice, pedagogical approaches, and their day-to-day teaching strategies to maintain student engagement and success.

Several themes emerged for each curriculum type and these themes are supported by the quantitative data findings. For example, teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula continue to do what is best for their students by supplementing, modifying, and accommodating students to meet the state standards. Whereas, teachers developing their curricula have the teacher autonomy to make professional decisions and maintain their pedagogical artistry. These findings reveal an egregious difference in the experiences between teachers teaching scripted/narrowed curricula versus those teachers who can develop their own curriculum.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions and understandings of the impact scripted/narrowed curricula have on their curriculum autonomy. Such a nuanced understanding of teachers' experiences with scripted/narrowed has the potential to provide insight into how working with these curricula affects a teacher's overall role as a democratic curriculum leader. The study's findings indicate that educators faced with scripted/narrowed curricula view their professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry as being challenged. From being excluded from curricular and pedagogical decision-making at the district and school-wide level to being able to provide accommodations for struggling students, scripted/narrowed curricula users indicated feeling challenged professionally.

A convergent mixed-methods research design provided me with a robust and nuanced understanding of teachers' experiences with scripted/narrowed curricula. The quantitative data collection consisted of an 18-question Likert scale adapted Curriculum Autonomy Survey (Freidman 1999; Pearson & Hall, 1993; see Appendix E). After collecting 103 surveys, quantitative analyses indicated a significant difference between the responses of teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula and those using teacher-developed curricula for all but one survey question (i.e., Q5: I pick and use specific instruction subjects out of the mandatory curriculum). These findings give a broader sense of how educators are understanding the impacts of scripted/narrowed curricula around the state.

The qualitative data collection consisted of seven semi-structured in-person interviews and 12 online interviews/questionnaires completed through Google Forms. After transcribing the

in-person interviews, I conducted three stages of coding: structural coding, focused coding, and thematic coding. From this coding process, I determined several categories, and from these categories, I developed several themes. The overall coding process, as well as within and cross-group analyses, informed me of the explicit differences between the experiences of scripted/narrowed curriculum users and teacher-developed curriculum users.

This final chapter discusses my interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative findings as they pertain to the research question. The chapter also discusses both pragmatic and conceptual framework implications. Lastly, the chapter discusses the study's limitations and explores the potential for future research to examine the impacts of scripted/narrowed curricula.

Interpretation of Findings

As described in the previous chapter, I found several themes that emerged through qualitative and quantitative analyses for scripted/narrowed curriculum users and teacher-developed curriculum users. Curriculum autonomy emerged as an essential aspect of teacher autonomy. Due to the structure of both the survey and interview questions, several themes were under the umbrella of professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry. The following two sections discuss my interpretations of these themes as they relate to prior research.

Professional Responsibility

Henderson and Kesson (1999) stressed that teachers must be a part of the curriculum development process, which is directly related to professional responsibility. Having the expertise, trust, and respect to practice professional responsibility is a crucial aspect of democratic curriculum leadership (Friedman, 1999; Henderson, 2015; Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018; Pearson & Hall, 1993). Educators have many responsibilities, including the physical and emotional safety of students, the moral growth of students, students'

intellectual development, preparing students to move on to the next grade level and become lifelong learners, and supporting strong habits and intellectual curiosity—all while continuing to create lessons which help students find the joy in learning (Noddings, 2009, 2013a). Being included in curriculum development is crucial for teachers to develop a more robust understanding of their content and one of the best ways for teachers to emerge as democratic curriculum leaders (Henderson & Kesson, 1999).

Education Deliberations and Decision-Making

A key element to being a successful democratic curriculum leader is partaking in education deliberations. Henderson and Kesson (1999) explained that such deliberations are a "decision-making process where people conceive of the problem, create and weigh likely alternative solutions to it, envision probable results of each alternative, and select or develop an optimum course of action" (p. 34). Therefore, to engage in education deliberations requires that educators be included in the curriculum development in their districts. Unfortunately, a common theme among participating scripted/narrowed curricula users was their involuntary non-participation in defining curricular goals or making decisions on curricular preferences. Several participants explained that the district administration chose the curricula, and often, these decisions were made by people who were not experts in curriculum development or the subject/content area. These findings suggest district administrators around Rhode Island do not value their educators as experts in their content and grade-level areas to make curricular and pedagogical decisions. In my experience, a lack of professional courtesy can cause devastating issues with interpersonal relationships between administrators and teachers.

Issues with administrators alienating teachers in decision-making have been a common issue in the top-down managerial education system that exists in the U.S. (Henderson et al.,

2018; Wyatt, 2014). A study by Datnow and Stringfield (2000) found that administrators were choosing scripted programs quickly without considering the differences between programs and simply trusting curriculum developers. Datnow (1999) further found that in schools where there was a strong teacher buy-in to the curricular choices, implementation success was greater. Ainsworth et al. (2012) detailed the importance of creating new curricula with teachers in mind, especially for new curricula to be effective. According to Ainsworth et al. (2012), one reason for this recommendation was the resistance that can occur due to the anxiety and insecurity of taking on a new curriculum or the lack of support, whether it be in professional development or by administrators in the classroom. Since existing literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Datnow, 1999) has demonstrated greater success with new curriculum implementation when teachers are considered in the decision-making process, more Rhode Island districts should include educators in this process. District leaders should remember their teachers have taken similar educational steps as administrators to achieve their roles in education. By obtaining their educator's license, teachers have become experts in their field, and their expertise grows by continuing teaching and further developing their skills.

The only constraints these teachers experienced were the state standards or the district's expectations to "teach to the test." Participating teachers who designed their curriculum indicated their ability to choose the subject, topics, and skills they want to focus on and when. Furthermore, these teachers were able to collaborate with their colleagues to address any questions or problems. Conversely, participating teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula indicated that teaching from a scripted or narrowed curriculum meant that student learning activities were chosen for them. These teachers had little say in the content they intended for students to engage with because they were unable to add or delete topics, and student evaluations

and assessments were provided for them. They also indicated a need for more opportunities to develop new curricula to support students in learning essential skills they were not learning at home or presented in the curriculum. Such skills support student preparation for their futures in a democratic society. Henderson (2001) would suggest these teachers were trying to ensure their students engage in 3S understanding for democratic living. Overall, the study's findings suggest that participating scripted/narrowed curriculum users were not engaging in education deliberations or making professionally responsible decisions for their student population.

The ideals of democratic living (e.g., equal participation and learning community) are being stripped from participating teachers, so it is no surprise they have lost opportunities to provide their students with a democratic education. Participating teachers also stated that due to the restrictions imposed by a scripted/narrowed curriculum, they believe they have lost opportunities to holistically educate students based on student inquiry and student interactions. One of the most essential qualities of a democratic curriculum leader is the ability to engage in deliberative inquiry, a crucial process in problem-solving and reflective inquiry that supports growth (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). Educators use curriculum as a tool to help students grow, make meaning, and understand the world. As such, curricula provide a problem-solving method that supports teachers in taking professionally responsible actions and encourages them to ask questions in a reflective manner (Eisner, 1979; Gornik & Samford, 2018). Tienken (2017) and Dewey (1990) defined a curriculum as a tool used for the reconstruction of thought and development by co-constructing (between teacher and student, student and student, student and resources) in solving problems. Participating teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula indicated their districts had not created environments for democratic curricula, let alone safe environments for teachers to question the reliability and validity of the curriculum.

Safe Work Environments for Collaborative Decision-Making

The lack of provision of caring and safe environments makes districts non-conducive to successful and productive education deliberations about democratic living (Henderson, 2001). Group deliberations require trust, and one scripted/narrowed-using interview participant plainly stated she didn't feel trusted, while another felt disregarded as an educator. Henderson (2001) explained, "Trust is not built in an environment where participants fear each other's views. However, participants should not 'play nice' and accept alternative perspective without any questions" (p. 120). Teachers and administrative teams must be able to come together to deliberate and develop the best product for their students. Part of such deliberations requires reflective inquiry. By not including teachers in these deliberations, administrators in scripted/narrowed curricula districts are removing a tool (i.e., curriculum) from educators to use, change, and revamp to engage students in active learning. Mokelky (1995) explained that support from the administration is crucial to ensuring teachers can cope with change, especially during the implementation process. Without positive interprofessional relationships and trust, teachers lose their opportunity to make decisions for their students.

Curricular decision-making does not only come down to skills, but it is also about making sure your student population will succeed no matter their beginnings. Rhode Island is becoming more diverse each year. Despite the explanations of scripted/narrowed curricula ensuring equity, with public school districts becoming increasingly culturally and racially diverse, it is not possible to make one curriculum equitable for all (Ede, 2006). In her research case study, Grace Kang (2016) discovered the importance of students being able to identify themselves within the literacy they are being taught. Students lose the subject matter connection when teachers lack curriculum autonomy to "build on students' interests and to capitalize on

students' contexts and cultures to make learning more meaningful and appropriate" (p. 43). A second finding cultural values, beliefs, and stories are co-constructed into the curriculum, social interaction increases social learning. When students are engaged in both subject and social learning, it supports them in self-learning and the development of their holistic being (Dewey, 1902; Henderson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018). However, Kang (2016) stressed that literacy instruction cannot be "reduced to following a curriculum, method, or a series of skills, but more so viewed as an individualized dynamic decision-making process" (p. 48). The inability to modify or make accommodations to scripted/narrowed curricula contradicts Kang's (2016) research findings. If Rhode Island educators cannot support students to engage in subject and social learning by making changes to their curriculum, the state is choosing to fail the students.

Collaborative Planning

Participating teachers in districts that allow teachers to develop curricula does not have a dictated, mandatory curricula. While most teacher-developed curriculum participants felt there were no general curriculum constraints, some felt they could not change the curriculum once it was set. The teacher-developed curriculum interview participants mentioned the importance of state standards when developing curricula and "teaching to the test." Despite the limitations deriving from the state standards, one crucial theme emerged from the teacher-developed curriculum participants: collaborative planning. Every single interview participant involved in creating their curriculum mentioned the word collaboration. Whether this meant collaborating with a co-teacher, department, or their students, these teachers engaged in collaborative education deliberations. If the participating teachers engage in these education deliberations, it is possible for these educators to practice reflective inquiry. Then, based on these reflections, teachers can then make educated and professionally responsible decisions to meet the needs of

their students (Eisner, 1979; Gornik & Samford, 2018; Henderson & Kesson, 1999). Making professionally responsible decisions sometimes means moving away from an ideological society (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). Since curricula may not always be linear, teachers need opportunities to take a more holistic teaching approach (Henderson et al., 2018).

Limitations Due to State Standards

This study's findings also indicated that teachers using scripted/narrowed and teacher-developed curricula felt their curriculum was limited due to state standards and state standardized testing. The high mean values, 78%, for Q18 (The curriculum is largely focused on standards and state testing) may reveal that since the introduction of common standards (e.g., NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), teachers perceive the decisions their districts are making are due to the pressures to reach state and national goals. Fitz and Nikolaidis (2020) explained that by adopting the Common Core State Standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), many states increased accountability, and schools were encouraged to adopt scripted/narrowed curricula. With school report cards and funding attached to state tests, many schools have emphasized these standards and state testing (Noddings, 2013a). This is supported by a study by Crocco and Costigan (2007) who found teachers were frustrated due to the tailoring of the scripted and mandated curriculum with testing. In this study, interview participants using scripted/narrowed curricula discussed curricula driven by Rhode Island's state tests. According to these teachers, the pacing was far too fast to be meaningful, the amount of work was unrealistic, and it kept them from digging deep into subjects with project-based learning opportunities with their students.

Deprofessionalization of Teaching

Teaching has been under the microscope since "teacher proofing" began during the Sputnik era (Greer, 2018; Tienken, 2017). An alleged benefit of scripted curricula is that the scripts make it easier for supervisors to monitor their teachers, effectively reducing teaching by de-skilling and deprofessionalizing educators (Rice, 2004; Wyatt, 2014). Several teachers detailed how their experience has deprofessionalized their career, or that education no longer aligns with teaching values. It is my belief and personal experience that the current education system is taking the passion out of teaching, making teachers uncomfortable in their own classrooms, making teachers feel like targets, and making some teachers feel untrusted and disrespected. Teachers' opportunities to make the best decisions for their students are being taken from them, but the state continues to hold teachers accountable for a curriculum they did not create. Noddings (2013a) explained that it is simply unfair for teachers, "Teachers should not be held accountable, then, for adhering strictly to the prescribed curriculum. Rather, professionals should expect to justify what they do when they depart from it in recognition of their deeper responsibility to students" (p. 8). In their study, Crocco and Costigan (2007) found the teacher participants were similarly frustrated by their inability to "use expertise acquired through their professional preparation," not only did they feel the scripts deprofessionalized their work, but they also felt they could not make the best decisions for their students (p. 521). To be held accountable for a curriculum they did not have a voice in choosing and cannot change is not only unfair, it is unethical.

If the findings presented in my study are exhibited throughout Rhode Island, an increase in the use of scripted/narrowed curricula across the state will mean that more teachers will lose important decision-making practices, and thus continue to deprofessionalize teaching in the state.

Research has shown that students perform better when teachers are stakeholders in curricular and pedagogical decision-making processes (Datnow, 1999). Including teachers also supports their continued growth and expertise in their content and subject areas. Creating safe spaces for teachers to emerge as democratic curriculum leaders is crucial for teacher satisfaction and teacher retention as educators continue to leave the profession.

Pedagogical Artistry

In terms of democratic curriculum leadership, pedagogical artistry is described as a teacher's ability to teach holistically, which focuses on the transactional relationship between a teacher's professional journey and a student's journey of understanding (Henderson et al., 2018). Pedagogical artistry means giving teachers the professional freedom to make day-to-day curriculum judgments based on new ideas, creativity, student and teacher growth, and the different views in the classroom. Pedagogical artistry is making creative judgments in action to support the whole classroom and individual student learning and to respond and cope with the unexpected (Eisner, 1979). According to Tienken (2017), the curriculum should "evolve and be customized based on experiences, passions, and interests students bring to the curriculum" (p. 5). When teachers have curriculum autonomy, they also have pedagogical artistry, which supports active construction and learning in the classroom, as stressed by Tienken (2017).

District Administration Influence

Teachers using a scripted/narrowed curriculum noted they must teach from a mandatory curriculum, and to some, to teach this curriculum with fidelity. For these teachers, the district administration determines the curricula, chooses the topics and materials, and, often, the teaching approaches and strategies. Tanner and Tanner (2007) defined curriculum as a reconstruction of knowledge and experience. For Tienken (2013), this means curricula should evolve and be

customized to the student population. In order for this reconstruction and customizing to occur, teachers must have a voice in curricular and pedagogical decisions; that is, teachers must have the authority to practice pedagogical artistry. Pedagogical artistry supports active learning and active construction in the classroom each day. Participating Rhode Island educators using scripted curricula do not have this autonomy.

Districts lean towards scripted/narrowed curricula for several reasons. The reasons include ensuring state standards are being met, poor standardized test scores, and money-driven choices. Districts also want all students to be taught the same materials and topics in the same way. Districts may be seeing a lack of consistency across grade levels, especially in larger districts, as a reason for scripted/narrowed curricula. Horizontal and vertical alignments may be another reason for a scripted/narrowed curriculum. When scripted/narrowed programs are implemented, teachers can collaborate during professional development readily and have a good map for every teacher to get the students where they need to be by the end of the year. Districts may also be moving to scripted/narrowed curricula due to the Rhode Island Department of Education asking districts to choose curricula labeled as “green” according to Edreports.org. This practice may work for some districts, but for many others, it may not.

All of the reasons stated above have led to teachers feeling pressured to conform and follow the script to fidelity, leading to the loss of pedagogical artistry. Scripted curricula tell teachers “what to say, what materials to use, and how to evaluate” (Ryan). Teachers no longer rely on their personal experiences and judgments to make decisions in the classroom (Hlebowitsh, 2012; Schwab, 1983). This conformity in following a scripted curriculum also means teachers are teaching a uniform one-size-fits-all curriculum, abandoning the holistic teaching aspect of pedagogical artistry (Henderson et al., 2018). However, a classroom is a

constantly changing environment; as Schwab (1983) explained, “Moments of choice of what to do, how to do it, and whom and at what pace, arise hundreds of times a school day and arise differently every day with every group of students” (p. 245). These ever-varying situations cannot be controlled or accommodated by a scripted curriculum.

The scripted/narrowed curricula are labeled as one-size-fits-all curricula, not only by teachers but also by the likes of Henderson (2015), Senge et al. (2012), and Tienken (2017). Curriculum theorists and teachers agree that it is not a realistic expectation for our society because students are not identical. Participating teachers using these programs raised concerns about equity and equality despite scripted/narrowed curricula developers emphasizing equity because all students receive the same education (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020; Levinson, 2012). However, scripted/narrowed programs often do not encourage differentiation, although it is making people equal, it is not making it equitable because of the lack of options. Similarly, these same teachers believe equity and equality are either not a top priority for the district or are offered in the script, but feel they are not trained to properly use them (for example, ESL options) or feel it is adequate but could be better. Unfortunately, after the passing of NCLB (2002), schools with high levels of diverse student populations found themselves teaching scripted curricula (Ede, 2006; Wyatt, 2014).

Despite advocates of culturally responsive teaching stressing education cannot and should not be standardized, school districts around the United States were told teaching scripted curricula was the way to see progress (Wyatt, 2014). However, Wyatt (2014) conducted a research study focused on culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and determined that “scripted programs sit in contrast to culturally relevant/responsive education with little common ground between approaches” (p. 463). She concluded CRT and scripted curricula are not mutually

exclusive, but instead, when teachers can modify and adjust instruction, they are able to meet the needs of their culturally diverse students. In my study, I learned teachers rely on their experiences and knowledge to make the scripted/narrowed curricula more equitable for the students by using manipulatives, providing graphic organizers, translating documents for students' native languages, finding supportive materials, working one-on-one when possible, and trying to create real-world experiences. While creating curricula that support equality and equity is something every district and teacher should strive for, a one-size-fits-all curriculum is not the answer. Curriculum needs to constantly evolve because classrooms are constantly evolving.

As early as 2007, teachers were already feeling the loss of certain subjects after the implementation of the NCLB legislation. In the conclusion of their own research study, Crocco and Costigan (2007) discovered the pressures of high-stakes testing led many schools in NYC to devote more time to reading and math. They uncovered the subjects of science and social studies were given less focus, and any focus that was given was a mandated curriculum with a restricted focus (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). I uncovered similar findings. There are several missing subjects and topics, and many teachers stressed the issue of their curriculum not adequately preparing students. From kindergarten through 12th grade, history/social studies is the one subject consistently identified as missing. The loss of history means students are not learning important background knowledge that supports them in becoming well-rounded global citizens.

Whether it is topics within the subject at the secondary level or the subject altogether at the elementary level, teachers believe the loss of this material is detrimental to students' futures. Interview participants explained other missing subjects like environmental science and writing curriculum. Some teacher participants discussed topics within their subjects that they wished they could cover. For example, a high school math teacher said he wished he could adequately

prepare his students for pre-calculus. A middle school science teacher said they were limited by the state standards and standardized testing to the point that some topics are not touched on to cover the standards and teach to the test. Many teacher participants believe their curriculum lacked in teaching essential skills, while others discussed a need for curricula to build stamina and perseverance. A goal of democratic curriculum leaders is to seek ways to redesign educational programs. This means they are supporting teaching that encourages authentic inquiry learning, and when educators are limited to a script and lose their voice, this aspect of democratic curriculum leadership is lost (Henderson & Kesson, 1999).

Teachers developing their curricula noted complete autonomy in creating their curriculum and choosing teaching approaches, and the district's only influence is ensuring those teachers are covering state standards. Teachers are developing curricula in teams or as a department by dividing up the state's standards. Teachers also choose the skills to focus on, create or select materials, and choose the teaching strategies they know will work for their student population. Teachers developing their curriculum did not mention issues of equity and equality or missing curriculum. This reveals that these teachers have complete democratic curriculum freedom. These participating teachers are engaged in collaborative planning and this planning is a great way to develop a democratic curriculum focusing on active inquiry-based learning (Henderson et al., 2018). Participants practice pedagogical artistry because they can make real-time decisions and creative judgments. They can develop and grow as they move through their units without being stifled by standardization (Eisner, 1979; Henderson et al., 2018).

Making the Right Choices for Their Students

When NCLB was implemented in 2002, a study of an early scripted model, America's Choice program, conducted by Supovitz et al. (2002), discovered a teacher's talents and understanding of the learning process were translated into the scripted curriculum structure to meet the individual student needs, meaning these teachers adapted the curriculum for their students. My study reveals that teachers in Rhode Island are doing the exact same thing. Despite many teachers feeling pressured to follow the curricula to fidelity, research supports that there are many reasons for teachers to make changes to these programs (Wyatt, 2014). Teachers are choosing to make modifications and accommodations and provide supplemental materials for students or their districts to encourage it.

For many teachers, their professional decisions were rooted in their pedagogical belief in what is right for the students. Eisner (1979) explained how educators rely on their pedagogical artistry to make everyday decisions in their classroom based on students' needs and achievements (Eisner, 1979). A part of being a democratic curriculum leader is modifying and accommodating curriculum and providing supplemental materials to ensure student success (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). For many educators, supplementing means preparing or adding external materials for different learning levels and different learning styles, accommodating learning disabilities and multilingual students, or even taking a step back because a student is struggling (Henderson & Kesson, 1999). As Schwab (1983) and Eisner (1979) explained, teachers are making creative decisions for issues that arise day to day and moment to moment, and no formula or prescription can accommodate all the learners in the classroom. Therefore, participating educators view students as individual learners and provide a more democratic education by promoting equity (Dewey, 1990). However, this is not the case for every teacher.

Delivering grade-level content and grade-level standards has been required despite student readiness. In her 2000 study, Remillard noted substantial learning occurred when the texts or curriculum's role was "least direct" (p. 343). When the teacher made decisions based on how they and the students worked through the process together, the teachers were more engaged with changing their beliefs and, therefore, in their curricular decision-making. However, not every teacher works in a district that allows or promotes curriculum autonomy to make the best pedagogical choices for their students. According to my study, many Rhode Island educators are feeling the restrictions of their district's scripted program, from supplemental materials to pacing requirements. Participating teachers in my study revealed that they were expected to follow a pacing guide that did not allow extra time to clarify concepts. They felt their curriculums were "teach to the test" curriculums for exams created by the curriculum developers and the state. Despite many students entering school a grade behind grade level, teachers are expected to start at grade level and continue forward. Instead of being engaged with their students, participating educators are being asked to take a backseat to their instinctual teaching knowledge and, essentially, leave the children behind.

In my study, the teachers noted they have been trying to create as many social and cultural learning opportunities as possible to fill in those gaps of missing curriculum and/or tending to teachable moments that help build lifelong learners. In their study of first-grade teachers faced with teaching a semi-scripted reading curriculum, Ainsworth et al. (2012) found their participants had similar experiences; "they frequently experienced difficulty in capturing the 'teachable moment'" due to emphasis on pacing and direct instruction that impacts pedagogical choices (p. 89). According to Henderson et al. (2018), the teachers who take these

opportunities focus on encouraging active learning through reflective inquiry, a key element of holistic teaching and democratic curriculum leadership.

Dewey's (1990/1902) goal for education was for more individualized education where the focus was the students, so they gained interest and skills in communication and constructivism inquiry. For this to occur, Dewey (1990/1902) stresses the teacher's role as one of guidance to provide connection, motivation, and quality of learning. Henderson and Kesson (1999) suggested an individualized education can be achieved by guiding students through their journey of 3S Pedagogy. In order for students to engage in their journey through the 3S pedagogy, as described in Chapter 2, it is important we offer students the opportunity to make connections with their schoolwork. When "content is relevant to students' lives, active constructions of meaning" will occur, or constructivist learning (Henderson, 2001, p. 10). Constructivist learning requires teachers to "facilitate artistry" and "invites students to make personal sense of subject matter" through past experience or current experiences and the content they are studying (pp. 9–10). In order for this to occur, many teachers using scripted programs would need to modify the curriculum in order to accommodate the differences in their student population.

Teachers of scripted/narrowed curricula need social and cultural teachable moments because the quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that many teachers do not feel their curricula adequately prepare their students to become future citizens or 21st-century learners. Looking back at the history of education, the purpose of public education, according to President Thomas Jefferson, was to ensure that everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, was afforded an education (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). At the same time, John Dewey (1990) went a step further and wanted a democratic education that prepared our students to become active citizens

of the world. My study's findings should make state education departments ask several questions: Are the standards necessary for the student's educational future and/or future as citizens? Are the standards skill-based for real-world problems? Are schools teaching to the state test, and, if so, is this an adequate way to prepare our children for their future? When educators are asked to teach from a script with limited changes, the people in a top-down managerial environment must use reflective practices to see how and if these scripted programs are truly making the differences and changes they promise.

Learning Environment

Many of the scripted/narrowed curricula users and teachers developing their curricula take great pride in developing and creating guidelines and procedures to follow in their classrooms. These teacher participants still create a classroom environment according to their expectations of student behaviors and procedures. The classroom environment is critical because teachers practicing pedagogical artistry not only create a supportive environment but also a transactional environment (Alqorni et al., 2023; Henderson et al., 2018). However, based on the survey data and interviews, teachers using scripted/narrowed curricula find it more challenging to insert their creativity into their lessons due to the script's nature. Some teachers feel that their decision-making opportunity is wholly eliminated because the materials are already chosen. In contrast, others try to insert creativity because they struggle with student engagement or behavior. Some teachers have tried including interactive lessons that encourage movement, and many have been including manipulatives, not just paper and pencils.

A major point for many participating educators is that the lack of opportunity to use their creativity has been a huge factor in their happiness. Teachers are losing the opportunities to pursue their creativity and the growth of their own 3S understanding. This means losing the

opportunity to create engaging activities to support student growth and engagement through their educational journeys (Eisner, 1979; Henderson & Kesson, 1999; Henderson et al., 2018; Schwab, 1983). When teachers lose these opportunities, they lose their pedagogical artistry. From my experience, the minute I feel my room is not my own and the teaching is not my own, I feel like I have lost myself as an educator. Wyatt (2014) uncovered the need for a scripted curriculum for teachers to give more time for "activity settings which foster collaboration and contextualization in the classroom" (p. 464). This means giving teachers more opportunities to adjust the teaching and learning based on the who, what, when, where, and why instead of focusing too much on academic content; this would allow for "varied pedagogical methods" (p. 464). What many teacher participants have suggested, similarly to Wyatt (2014), is that teachers would be more comfortable with their curriculum if they had more freedom to change it when necessary.

Pedagogical artistry is the soul of teaching. It is where a teacher's passion shines. It is where a teacher shows how much they love and care about their student's success. If the Rhode Island Department of Education is adamant about pushing forward with scripted/narrowed curricula, district administrators need to take on an adaption over adoption approach. This approach gives teachers the freedom to use their expertise and passion to ensure students understand the subject, engage with the curricula, and succeed in finding multiple ways to solve real-world problems day-to-day. When teachers cannot engage in holistic teaching practices, they lose the opportunity to empower students to embrace intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth, a key feature of being a democratic educator (Henderson et al., 2018).

I end my discussion of curriculum autonomy and a scripted/narrowed curricula experience with this quote from an interview participant. This interview participant is working in a district that allows an adapted approach to using a scripted program and has this to say:

> Teaching is not a manual base. It's not an open book. It's not at all. It's a foundation for us. It's a place to launch from, a place to begin, and to kind of track you along the way. But it's definitely not teaching . . . but it's in the delivery, right? It's in how you're choosing to teach. It's in how you're choosing to help those children who are struggling to get to that target that you know they need to get to. Teaching is like an art, right? You have to be reflective. You have to be well-planned. I feel a lot of people can't do our job and I feel it is crucial.

Teachers Understandings and Use of the Curriculum Framework

Considering the findings, participating teachers would benefit from working through the transformative democratic curriculum leadership framework. Teachers are looking for more curriculum autonomy to make the best learning decisions for the students in their classrooms. To achieve this, educators would benefit from gaining the skills and knowledge required to emerge as curriculum leaders.

Lacking curriculum autonomy frustrates educators and it hits at the heart of the teacher's purpose of their education. An important practice of democratic curriculum leadership is 3S understanding Pedagogy (explained in Chapter 2). One of these 3S's is subject understanding. To be a strong democratic curriculum leader, it is crucial to be an expert in both the content and pedagogy. Teachers spend at least four years in higher education to learn their content and build an understanding of pedagogy. Teachers only improve in these areas when given some

semblance of autonomy in order to grow and learn to become expert teachers. This journey educators explore is the self-learning S in the 3S Pedagogy. It is one we model for our students.

A step in the fourfold process in the theoretical framework towards mastering democratic curriculum leadership is holistic teaching, which focuses on the "transactional relationship between teachers' professional journeys of understanding and their students' holistic journeys of 3S understandings," a student's achievement of subject learning, self-learning, and social learning (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 23). Teachers are finding they are only able to scrape the surface of their content due to the pacing of the curricula and the amount of work expected day-to-day because of the pacing, and this has hindered opportunities for students to engage more deeply with content they may find more connected to or more interesting. When teachers are given scripts or a narrowed curriculum, they are faced with limiting the conversation because they must constantly revert to the script. This limits the chances for teachers to support students in social learning, engaging in different social settings, and responding to become well-rounded global citizens.

The data collection phase of the research study required my participants and I to engage in reflective inquiry. Reflective inquiry is a crucial skill for democratic curriculum leaders to incorporate into their practice. In Henderson et al. (2018), *Democratic Curriculum Leadership* stresses the importance of using professional reflective inquiry to teach "for 3S understanding," "model . . . holistic journeys of understanding for one's students," and "to communicate the power of . . . pedagogical artistry to colleagues and other curriculum stakeholders" (p. 33). Many teachers suggested ways for district leadership to make working with scripted/narrowed programs conducive for all educators. These educators displayed their abilities to use professional reflection as democratic curriculum leaders: from encouraging modifications and

accommodations for student success, making equity and equality a bigger part of the conversation, and promoting productive educational deliberations to make vertical and horizontal changes to the curriculum as situations, settings, and student.

Fear

Based on my conversations with my work colleagues, I concluded there is a culture of fear related to curriculum autonomy in the district for teachers in subjects with scripted curriculums. In school districts where teachers are being told to teach from a script to fidelity, this may reveal that teachers fear deviating from the script without repercussions which translates into losing their voice. In workplace environments where fear exists, "People are alienated from each other, and all relationships are evaluated through the prism of risk" (Ağalday & Yiğit, 2022, p. 204). In passing conversations with colleagues and some interview participants, I learned some teachers have felt targeted by administrators or have even had a greater presence of administrators in their classroom due to the scripted curriculum implementation. The constant presence of administration has changed the relationship between teachers and administrators, resulting in teacher anxiety (Ağalday & Yiğit, 2022, p. 205). According to Çelik and Kahraman (2019), an environment in which a teacher works will ultimately determine their work to be "psychologically better or worse" (p. 320). Çelik and Kahraman (2019) defined the culture of fear as the culture formed due to fears arising based on teachers' experiences and relationships with administrators, colleagues, and legal processes (p. 320). Applebaum et al. (1998) determined that the main fears in a workplace include "fear of organizational change and fear of risk-taking which includes fear of failure, success, what others will think, and fear of uncertainty" (p. 114). This means that some people may already have general fears in the workplace. Administrators can create additional fears.

Fear is preventing teachers from using their voices to discuss matters related to their student's success (Applebaum et al., 1998). This fear of speaking against curricula or policies is not isolated to my district; this is an issue faced by many. *The Washington Post* (Mathews, 2022) recently reported on teacher fear. Mathews (2022) found that some teachers fear retribution, scrutiny, and targeting to the point of leaving a school district. One teacher encouraged his students to complain to their parents because faculty suggestions were blatantly ignored by school and district administration. Some teachers point fingers and encourage those who are unhappy to find jobs elsewhere (Mathews, 2022). Others confirmed that administration makes all the difference. When problems occur, from curriculum implementation to behavioral issues, if the administration is at least trying to listen and doing their best, the teachers appreciate even a little support (Mathews, 2022).

Implications

This study has implications for state education departments, school administrations, teachers, and students. From supporting the growth and success of students through their educators to mastering the principles and ethics of becoming a democratic curriculum leader, curriculum autonomy is vital for teachers as we move forward.

Implementations of scripted/narrowed curricula continue to be on the rise within the district where I work. It began in math and English language arts, and it is my understanding there are plans for a rollout in science, followed by social studies. Based on my conversations with the 19 interviewed participants, a crucial aspect of success in rolling out a scripted and/or narrowed curriculum is involving the teachers who will be teaching the curriculum in making decisions. The participants who expressed the most displeasure with scripted/narrowed curriculum were teachers working in districts where teachers were just handed the curriculum

and told to teach, without any professional support. As my district and other districts move forward, educators need to be stakeholders in curricular decisions. The inclusion of educators in curriculum and pedagogical decision-making should be considered an element of professional development as a way to support teachers in emerging as curriculum leaders. It also promotes collaborative professionalism and consistent growth in building expertise in their field and content.

A second and dominant consideration for all districts in Rhode Island is the importance of adaption over adoption of scripted/narrowed curricula. Prior research and teacher participants highlight the importance of teachers being able to meet student's individual needs in the classroom. Research has shown that scripted/narrowed curricula are not as culturally responsive as they have been said to be. Despite some programs offering strategies for different learning levels, there is no better accommodator than the person in the classroom trained to provide those accommodations. As long as grade or course targets and objectives are being met, teachers should be given the authority in the classroom to adapt programs on an as-needed basis. Many teachers mentioned the need to allow for split-second or even day-to-day decisions based on differences among learners—daily, from class to class, and from year to year. Currently, according to participants, there are several districts in the state asking teachers to follow scripts to fidelity, including my own, and many teachers are choosing to put their careers or evaluation scores on the line by making these modifications. As researcher Wyatt (2014) learned, when teachers are making modifications to a curriculum, there is probably a reason to do so.

The purpose of education is to . . . ? One concern that grew throughout the research process for me is that many educators felt their mandated curricula were not preparing their students for their future. From missing subjects, missing topics, missing skills, and even missing

opportunities to build human qualities like perseverance, teachers said that students in Rhode Island are not being properly prepared. Teachers enter their classrooms every day knowing there is often nothing they can do to change the curriculum due to district and school expectations, state legislation, and national law.

In 2019, Rhode Island passed a law, RIGLS 16.22.30-33, that requires all districts to implement high-quality curriculum material in K–12 by June 2023 for Math and ELA and June 2025 for Science. These high-quality curricula were selected with the expectation they are (a) aligned with academic standards, (b) aligned with forthcoming frameworks, and (c) aligned with the statewide standardized tests (Curriculum, RI Department of Education, n.d.). However, Rhode Island does not require districts to choose the same curriculum in each subject or in each grade level. Although these programs are labeled as a high-quality curriculum by EdReports.org, teachers feel these programs are not adequately preparing their students. In order for state legislators to identify if scripted/narrowed programs are truly effective, Rhode Island schools would need to implement the same curricula across all schools and subjects and conduct a state-wide curriculum evaluation. This means the low-income, diverse students in Providence should be learning the same curriculum across all subjects and grade levels as the affluent students in Barrington Public Schools. By conducting this scripted/narrowed curricula implementation, the Rhode Island Department of Education would have better data to determine the effectiveness of these programs. A curriculum evaluation would provide valid and reliable data about chosen scripted/narrowed programs for all educators. It would provide opportunities for educators around the state to engage in collaborative curricular and pedagogical decision-making while also creating opportunities to engage in education deliberations to question the data provided by the statewide curriculum evaluation.

Limitations

This study had some limitations. One limitation I encountered when collecting survey data was non-response bias. I sent the survey to more than 5,700 Rhode Island public educators and received only 103 in return. There are no documents available that have determined the number of teachers currently teaching K–12 core subjects in public education. If the state had a better idea of the number of public educators teaching in the state and or a directory available, it would be easier for researchers, including state officials, to readily survey teachers and create change. One hundred and three teachers are only a small proportion of the public school teacher population in Rhode Island. Despite the small sample, I do believe in the strength of the data collected from both the quantitative and qualitative combined.

From a cultural perspective, this study lacked a discussion of the specific experiences of culturally diverse educators. According to Liz Bateson (2023), who wrote the article *Equity gaps evident in Rhode Island public schools,* Rhode Island's WJAR stated as of 2023, only 12.4% of fully certified Rhode Island teachers are people of color. I could have asked demographic questions related to teacher participants' identification of race and ethnicity. This could have created opportunities for me to ask questions more specifically related to a teacher of color's experience with scripted/narrowed curricula. It could have uncovered different perspectives concerning questions related to equity and equality in scripted/narrowed programs.

I believe additional questions related to demographics would have added more quality and power to the study. For example, knowing what districts the participants are teaching in would have provided greater insight into teachers' experiences based on geographical area information. Understanding how teachers are experiencing curricula in Providence, Rhode Island, versus how teachers are experiencing curricula in Narragansett, Rhode Island, are likely

different due to funding and the student population's racial, ESL/ELL, and socio-economic makeup.

The number of participant interviews totaled 19. There were seven face-to-face interview participants and 12 online interview survey participants, and I would have preferred more face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face surveys provide rich, detailed information because the interviewer is able to ask clarifying questions and/or additional questions, and these possibilities are limited when using the online interview survey format. However, time and availability became a factor for interview participants because teaching is time-consuming and exhausting. Due to these time constraints, more interview participants were available to complete the online interview survey, which was crucial in increasing interview participation.

Future Research

Research on the issue of scripted programs has been conducted for many years, but not to the extent it needs to be in this age of accountability. There needs to be more significant research and greater transparency in what these scripted/narrowed programs have done. We should also see more studies done in the targeted urban areas where it has been said there was a great need for scripted curricula (Ede, 2006).

Continued research into these scripted programs' impacts on future educators is essential. Prospective teachers in their higher education practicum stages are heading out into schools and are given limited opportunities to develop pedagogical ideals and skills. Research into how novice teachers are performing in their first years of teaching with scripted programs and how this supports pedagogical skills and student learning could provide vital information about the goals of scripted curricula. Researchers should be asking if these new teachers are developing pedagogical skills, if they have classroom management skills, and if their students are mastering

standards and tests. All these questions are alleged benefits of scripted/narrowed curricula. There is great concern for when novice teachers enter the classroom alone for the first time, struggle with the classroom management end of teaching, and realize reading from a script is not teaching.

Conclusion

> Just as writers, sculptors, painters, and composers must develop their craft, so must teachers. Throughout their careers, they must continually refine their skills in the general areas of program designing, lesson planning, and classroom management. They must become highly skilled problem solvers while engaged in complex teaching-learning activities. In other words, they must become masters of their particular classroom domain. (Henderson, 2001, p. 16)

Dresser (2012) determined, "Scripted reading programs have had a negative impact on teachers and students around the country" (p. 71). My research study, done 11 years after Dresser's, suggests that the increase in the use of scripted/narrowed programs is impacting teachers in all subject areas. Not only are teachers feeling impacts on their curriculum autonomy, but in the deprofessionalism of the career choice many have spent thousands of dollars and years preparing for. Investing in our educators and the education system could solve several problems the American education system faces today, one being whether or not teachers will choose to stay in the profession. Back in 1993, Pearson and Hall determined in their study that teacher autonomy is crucial for teachers if they are going to stay in the profession; this includes curriculum autonomy and general autonomy. They determined teachers want to make decisions in content and pedagogy while also having the flexibility to "elevate" the professional status of teaching (p. 177). Pearson and Hall (1993) determined that "teachers who are autonomous will

not only exert control over student work habits but will also perceive control of the overall work environment" (p. 177). It seems that my study, done 30 years later, only reiterates the sentiments of teachers experiencing the same issues we continue to face today.

Democratic curriculum leadership is crucial as we move forward in the American education system. But if we enter discussions, or educational deliberations, about curriculum with evidence of its impacts on teachers and students, democratic curriculum leaders can emerge in a positive way. With evidence suggesting students' success is linked to teacher expertise, a curriculum developed through co-creation with teachers is most effective, and administrative support and trust are crucial, "acknowledging the importance the teacher plays in conveying the comprehensive curriculum, it is crucial to restructure staff development session to meet the needs of the classroom teacher" (Ainsworth et al, 2012, p. 80). We should be investing in teacher knowledge because our students' learning is on the line (Ainsworth et al, 2012).

More faith needs to be placed in our educators. We certainly are not here for the money. Many of us are here for the children and our opportunity to be a co-constructor in their journey through the democratic education system. I leave you with words from an interview participant:

> Scripted curriculum is the death of critical thinking, the death of impactful learning, the death of real teaching, the death of student-driven lessons. Teachers are leaving the profession and citing student behavior, administrators, and insufficient salaries as the reason. I would withstand all of that for the rest of my career because I love teaching and I love helping students learn to engage with the world. Scripted curriculum is the only reason I consider leaving the teaching profession. I did not go into debt and get a master's degree to become a glorified script reader and standardized test facilitator. Maybe one day those in charge will care more about student learning, student mental health, student

joy, and community needs more than test scores. Until then, I anticipate being given scripted curriculum very soon. Along with a career change. (Theresa)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF RECRUITMENT SURVEY

Appendix A

Letter of Recruitment Survey

My name is Natalie Bolino, and I am a doctoral student in Interprofessional Leadership with a focus in Curriculum and Instruction at Kent State University. I am conducting research about public educators and their experiences with a scripted curriculum versus a teacher-developed curriculum and the impacts on professional responsibility and teacher artistry.

I would like to conduct a survey with as many 7-12th grade science, math, English language arts, and social studies teachers as possible. Participation is fully voluntary, and you can end the survey and withdraw from the study at any time. There should be no exposure to risk and your identity will be fully protected.

If you agree to participate in the survey, you will receive an email with "informed consent to participate agreement" before starting the survey. I thank you so much for your consideration to participate.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF RECRUITMENT INTERVIEW

Appendix B

Letter of Recruitment Interview

My name is Natalie Bolino, and I am a doctoral student in Interprofessional Leadership with a focus in Curriculum and Instruction at Kent State University. I am conducting research about public educators and their experiences with a scripted curriculum versus a teacher-developed curriculum and the impacts on professional responsibility and teacher artistry.

I would like to conduct an interview with you for approximately 30 minutes. Participation is fully voluntary, and you can end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. There should be no exposure to risk, and your identity will be fully protected.

If you agree to be interviewed, I will email a "participant's agreement." I may ask for oral consent to record the interview, and I will ask if I may use excerpts from the transcript. I thank you so much for your consideration to participate.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM SURVEY

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form Survey

Study Title: The Impact of Scripted Curricula on K-12 Public Educators' Curriculum Autonomy in Rhode Island: A Mixed Methods Multi-Case Study

Principal Investigator: Scott Courtney

Key Personnel: Natalie Bolino

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of scripted curriculum on teacher professionalism.

Procedure: For this study, I am asking all the 7 through 12 grade math and English language arts teachers to complete a brief survey. The first section of the survey gathers demographic information regarding individual teaching experience; the second section of the survey asks questions that relate to the two teaching constructs I will be closely examining in my study: professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry. The survey will be conducted only once for my study. The survey itself, 18 questions, scaled questions in total, takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. At the completion of the interview, the participant will be offered the opportunity to conduct a member check to ensure accurate interpretations are presented.

Benefit: This research will not benefit you directly. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand the future of the teaching profession, by helping legislators understand how their choices impact a pillar of our society, public education.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality: No identifying information will be collected. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your study data, and responses will not be linked to you. Your study-related information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data will be used.

Compensation: There is no compensation for this study.

Voluntary Participation: Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate, or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss

of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Natalie Bolino at nbolino@kent.edu. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330-672-2704.

Consent Statement and Signature

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF CONSENT INTERVIEW

Appendix D

Letter of Consent Interview

Study Title: The Impact of Scripted Curricula on K-12 Public Educators' Curriculum Autonomy in Rhode Island

Principal Investigator: Scott Courtney

Key Personnel: Natalie Bolino

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of scripted curriculum on teacher professionalism.

Procedure: For this study, I am asking several 7 through 12 grades science, math, social studies, and English language arts teacher to complete an interview. The first part of the interview gathers demographic information regarding individual teaching experience; then we will transition to 12 open ended questions that relate to the two teaching constructs I will be closely examining in my study: professional responsibility and pedagogical artistry. The interview will be conducted only once or twice based on the answers for in the first interview, however, the questions will remain the same each time.

Audio and Video Recording and Photography: The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. The information provided in the interview will be used in a publicly available doctoral dissertation. You have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the dissertation's submission. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to your personal identity, anonymity is guaranteed. Recordings will be destroyed upon the passing of the research study. You have the right to refuse to be recorded.

I agree to be (audio/video/photography) recorded: YES____ NO ____

I would like to review the (recordings/transcripts) prior to their use: YES____ NO ____

Benefit: This research will not benefit you directly. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand the future of the teaching profession, by helping legislators understand how their choices impact a pillar of our society, public education.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. Some of the questions that you will be asked discuss work experience and you may feel more

comfortable conducting the interview via google meet or in person. You may ask to see the questions before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality: No identifying information will be collected. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your study data, and responses will not be linked to you. Your study-related information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data will be used.

Compensation: There is no compensation for this study.

Voluntary Participation: Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate, or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Natalie Bolino at nbolino@kent.edu. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330-672-2704.

Consent Statement and Signature

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

APPENDIX E

CURRICULUM AUTONOMY SURVEY

Appendix E

Curriculum Autonomy Survey

- Please answer the following questions based on your teaching experience.

Part 1 – Demographic Information

(1) Name (not required!)

(your name will not be used for any purpose in the research study, only to contact you for any further questions or member checking)
Member checking means I would share my final written chapters with you to ensure data collected is accurate.

Text Response

(2) Subject Emphasis

a) Math
b) English Language Arts
c) Social Studies / History
d) Science
e) Add option

(3) What kind of curriculum is used?

a) Scripted/Narrowed curriculum: mass-produced curriculum that may be required by the district to teach, materials are already provided, possibly even given a script to read from
b) Teacher-developed curriculum
c) Add option

(4) Total Years of Teaching Experience

Text Response

(5) Grade Level Teaching; Please check all that apply
a) K – 5
b) 6th
c) 7th
d) 8th
e) 9th
f) 10th
g) 11th
h) 12th

i) Special Education / Intervention Educator
j) Reading / Math Specialist
k) Other

(6) Highest Academic Degree
a) Bachelors
b) Masters
c) Doctorate

Part 2 – Teacher Autonomy

- The following questions, in Part 2, each require a response based on the following Likert-type anchors: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree

(1) Day to day, I am free to introduce changes and modifications to the formal curriculum to accommodate student needs.

(2) I am free to be creative in my teaching approach. (ex: I am able to teach a lesson according to my teaching style/ I can change a lesson according to the student population's needs/I can create my own lesson materials).

(3) I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.

(4) Based on student response and engagement, I can develop unique learning opportunities for the social cultural, and general enrichment activities of students.

(5) I pick and use specific instruction subjects out of the mandatory curriculum.

(6) My teaching mainly follows approaches specified by the school.

(7) I am free to initiate and develop completely new curricula. (ex: I am free to make curricular decisions day to day or I am a part of the curricula decision-making process with the district).

(8) I am free to add or delete teaching subjects from the official curriculum.

(9) In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.

(10) My instructional planning is dictated by a mandatory curriculum.

(11) The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.

(12) In my situation, I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.

(13) Day to day, I can initiate and administer new enrichment and cultural activities.

(14) The evaluation and assessment activities used in my class are selected by people other than myself.

(15) The staff supports in defining the school's curricular goals and determining their order of preference.

(16) I compose and formulate new, innovative curricula for students to discover self and social learning.

(17) The materials I use in my class are chosen for the most part by myself.

(18) The curriculum is largely focused on standards and state testing.

APPENDIX F

POST-SURVEY INTERVIEW

Appendix F

Post-Survey Interview

(1) I would like to support the researcher by participating in an interview. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience.
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Maybe

(2) I would like to support the research by answering the interview questions in a document and sharing them with the researcher.
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Maybe

(3) If yes or maybe to the last two questions, please provide the best email or phone number that would be best to contact you. The interview can be done online via Zoom, Teams, Google, OR in person. If no, please write NA.

Text Response

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