An Examination of Teacher Beliefs and Educational Policy Implementation Mandates in

an Urban Ohio School District

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ANDREW J. SMITH, III

has been approved for

the Department of Educational Leadership

and The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education by

Dwan V. Robinson

Associate Professor of Educational Studies

Sara Helfrich

Interim Dean, The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education

Abstract

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An Examination of Teacher Beliefs and Educational Policy Implementation Mandates in an Urban Ohio School District

Director of Dissertation: Dwan V. Robinson

This qualitative study used cognitive dissonance theory as a lens to examine the experience of elementary teachers and administrators implementing policy mandates and its potential impact on their beliefs. Additionally, this study sought to identify barriers and supports to implement educational policy mandates. The primary objectives of the study were: (a) to highlight educational policy evolution to the Ohio Improvement Process; (b) to give insight on the impact of policy mandates on teacher and administrator beliefs; (c) to give practitioners in priority schools an opportunity to share their experience implementing the mandates of the Ohio Improvement Process. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to collect the data. The sample is comprised of seven elementary educators from the same urban school district. All seven participants had worked in a priority school for a minimum of three years at the time of this study. Of the seven participants, three were principals, two were classroom teachers, one was an instructional coach, and one was a special education teacher when this study was conducted. What priority schools have in common, policy impact on the work, and what policy mandates miss were the three major themes that emerged from this student. Recommendations for policy makers, principals, and teachers was discussed.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who has supported me through this journey.

Acknowledgments

This journey has been long and rough. The support and encouragement received especially during the last leg of this process has been tremendous and greatly appreciated. From the highs and lows, I have always had a network of support to which made this possible.

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I am grateful for this opportunity. Thank you, God.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Throughout my twenty plus years as an elementary principal in an urban school district, I have experienced changes in policies that created challenges that impact student learning and achievement. Educators are tasked with implementing mandates that result in comments from them that highlights their exasperation ranging from another policy from those who do not know my students that will not work to this is a waste of time that keeps me from doing what I need to do to meet the need of students. Additionally, satiating student needs often go outside of the classroom so that students can focus on learning. I have experience making sure students' basic needs are met before they can focus on learning content. While there are times that educators go above and beyond the challenge of teaching and learning, there are requirements of implementation practices that impact the culture and climate of school. How teachers have responded to implementation mandates over the years has piqued my interest in the impact of policy implementation mandates on teacher beliefs. I have been drawn to examining what happens if there are conflicting thoughts about policy implementation mandates while educating children in a low performing state identified priority school. This study highlights some historical aspects of notable policies and a pivotal report that over time has directly impacted elementary school classroom practices in an urban setting.

Teacher beliefs can facilitate or hinder practice depending on the implementation of policies (Fives & Gill, 2015). These beliefs can cause educators to filter and guide decisions and cause them to frame their decisions and actions. Teacher beliefs can be

seminal to how policies are carried out because those who are tasked with policy implementation are also those who directly affect change and are those with day-to-day contact with students. "In classrooms, teachers, those responsible for the organization, structure, and tone of learning experiences and social development, rely on their implicit and explicit beliefs, particularly those that underlie their intuition, automaticity, and habit, to meet the demands of practice" (Fives & Gill 2015, p. 1).

The low performance of many public schools has inspired the creation of school improvement policies and initiatives with the idea of turning schools around to improve performance (Cosner & Jones, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2015). However, those who make policy and those who carry out policy are often not on the same page when it comes to implementation. Hinnant-Crawford (2016) notes that "since the dawn of public education in the United States, there has been a failure to acknowledge the expertise of teachers when deciding and implementing policies for education" (p. 1). The Center on Education Policy (2016) published the results of a national survey of public-school kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers in the winter of 2015-2016 in an effort to "amplify teachers' voices about current education issues" (p. 3). The survey noted that teachers believe their voices are not often taken into consideration with the decision-making process. A total of 76% of teachers surveyed believed that their voice is not considered with the decision-making process at the district level, 94% at the state level, and 94% at the national level again believed their voice is not considered with making decisions.

An example of the dynamic between policy and teacher practice can been seen with federal educational policy, such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) or even

with the previous major education policy No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These policy actions are often made thousands of miles away from school sites but result in educators at the local level being impacted daily by the ensuing federal regulations. Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005), note that "Educators and many of the pressing issues affecting learning and the abilities of children and their families to thrive are often not represented well in these powerful arenas" (pp. 30-31). As a result, educators are "frustrated when policy makers ignore reports or pay attention to one particular constituency" (p. 31). Further, frustration increases because it seems that policy makers develop policies with little regard for the needs and perspectives of educators (Asbury & Kim, 2020; OECD, 2020). Further, "school leaders feel powerless and angry when they must convince staffs and communities to accept policies they know will not work well" (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005, p. 31). Policy is ever-changing and educators are repeatedly bombarded with transformations and augmentations regarding how they carry out their work in schools. Schools are at the whims of federal, state and local agendas which change from year to year and which are at the mercy of the priorities and budgetary allocations of political actors. Hinnant-Crawford (2016), in reflection on Spillane's work from 2005 noted "Policy implementation is much like the telephone game: the player at the start of the line tells a story to the next person in line…, the story is morphed as it moves from player to player" (p. 1). As a result, the teacher is last in line to receive the message and the message is often distorted. The constant policy disruptions and the resulting impact on teacher confidence in the system and teacher beliefs can be disheartening and can ultimately impact teacher effectiveness on policy implementation and student

achievement. Milner (2013) suggests that certain policies can often be a cause for the "de- professionalization" of teaching and can result in teachers being looked down upon or criticized for being ineffective in the public domain (p. 4). Further he suggests that at times certain policy mandates can be hinderances to teacher innovation and teachers support of students

Santoro (2011) posits that, federal policies have affected teachers in ways that lead to burnout and demoralization or "in ways previously unimaginable" (p. 1). Santoro also suggests that as a result of policy mandates, teachers feel as though their professional growth, autonomy, creativity has been undermined. She notes that policy mandates also take away time that educators would have to focus on teaching and learning and impact the time teachers would have to establish meaningful relationships with their students. Santoro (2011) cites Valli et al., (2008), suggesting that, policy implementation has had a negative impact on teaching and learning that has been considered destructive to teacher productivity (p. 6).

There seems to be a historical perspective regarding policy handed down that impact the conditions of teaching. Samuels (1970) notes "As a group, public school teachers have not enjoyed a high level of professional autonomy" (p. 152). This historical perspective aligns with the 2007 study conducted by Margaret Crocco and Arthur Costigan regarding the experiences of urban teachers. They found that

> as a result of the curricular and pedagogical impositions of scripted lessons, mandated curriculum and narrowed options for pedagogy in New York City (NYC) middle and high schools, new teachers find their personal and professional identity

development thwarted, creativity and autonomy undermined, and the ability to

forge relationships with students diminished. (p. 513)

Hinnant-Crawford (2016) contends that classrooms function somewhat

autonomously and that they are cushioned from the trickledown effect of educational

policy. However, the notion of policy creation occurring outside of the classroom with

minimal or no input from teachers, influences teacher buy-in to the policy process and

can cause them to half-heartedly implement policy mandates. One can infer that

educators feel powerless and angry and much of their frustration stems from their

feelings of alienation from the policy and decision-making process and their inability to

fully control their work. Teachers are then placed in the position to have to comply with

these mandates. Baggini (2005) contends that educators have to be diligent with their

focus on achieving rigid outcomes, which as a result, restricts their freedom in the

classroom. In addition, suggesting that teachers have to deliver on the mandated policy

implementation requirements is demeaning because "the increased expectations for

schools and teachers often seemed to make improving teaching and the conditions for

improving teaching more difficult" (Valli et al., 2008, pp. 125-126).

Statement of the Problem

According to Guerra and Wubbena (2017), educator beliefs and practices are

linked and are integrated throughout the functions of a teacher. "Beliefs and practices are

fundamentally interrelated and, in the classroom, a teacher holding two beliefs that are

inconsistent with each other may experience tension" (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017, p. 35).

Hinnant-Crawford, (2016) suggests that there is a lack of indulging teacher expertise and

knowledge when creating and implementing educational policies. "The scholarly literature on education policy and teachers is a diverse body of work, most of which is theoretical in orientation or narrowly focused on the implementation of instructional policy" (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016, p. 1). By this notion, there appears to be little evidence that highlights the impact of policy implementation on teachers' beliefs or the impact of teacher beliefs on policy implementation.

To address this gap in literature, this study will examine elementary teachers' beliefs and perspectives of their experience implementing policy mandates in an urban district in the state of Ohio. The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. How does the experience of policy implementation for elementary teachers and administrators impact their beliefs?

2. What do elementary teachers and administrators identify as barriers and supports to implement educational policy mandates?

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine elementary teacher perceptions of their experience implementing educational policy mandates from the Ohio Improvement Process across Priority schools. The historical implementation of federal policy requirements through policies such as the reauthorization of ESEA (NCLB and ESSA) and the resulting state policies associated with the OIP Turnaround Model. Over the course of the development and implementation of NCLB requirements, there have been changes throughout K-12 education. This study reviewed aspects of the implementation requirements at the building level that have been beneficial and detrimental to the

influence of teacher beliefs. The implementation requirements of the Turnaround Model of the OIP was reviewed to highlight influence on teacher beliefs. Lastly, this research provided an examination of teacher's beliefs involving the Turnaround Model with the intention of providing insight from teachers who have to implement the policy that was created by policy makers and not those who are directly in the classrooms.

Significance of the Study

This study highlights notable historical policies and a historical report that led to the evolution of significant educational policy that is implemented to date. When researching teacher beliefs and educational policy implementation, there is a gap in the research on the intersectionality of teacher beliefs and educational policy implementation. There is also a gap in the research that discusses teacher beliefs impacting policy implementation or policy implementation influencing teacher beliefs. This study is significant due to the gap in research.

According to Fives and Gill (2015), teacher beliefs "are constructed through interactions with others in their school, and as such they both shape and are shaped by teachers' personal beliefs and experiences" (p. 5). With the maturing of educational federal policy and the low performance of many public schools, school improvement mandates are developed with the idea of turning around schools (Duke, 2006). By examining teacher perspectives on beliefs and policy implementation mandates through the theoretical lens of cognitive dissonance theory, this study aims to gather the practitioner insight on barriers and supports to implementing policy along with how the mandates may have influenced their beliefs. Guerra and Wubbena (2017) stated that,

"…no research has used cognitive dissonance theory to understand how teachers' heterogeneous beliefs… are parsed in accordance with practices" (p. 36). This study will also add to the small body of work that links teacher beliefs to educational policy implementation through the lens of cognitive dissonance theory.

Given the heightened stress and concerns of implementing educational policies, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in conjunction with the Badass Teachers Association, surveyed 30,000 teacher constituents in 2015 through the Quality of Worklife Survey regarding stress in the workplace. The survey found that 71% of the teachers indicated that the adoption of new initiatives (often initiated by policy) was a source of major stress for them in their professional activities (American Federation of Teachers, 2015, p. 4). Further, based on the survey results, many teachers expressed that they are often stressed because they are less likely to be able to make their own decisions and have opportunities to be included in decision making, planning and goal setting (American Federation of Teachers, 2015, p. 3). Finally, a majority of the teachers (79%) suggested that elected officials or policy makers did not respect their opinions (p. 2). In the survey, many teachers also commented that to improve the situation "teachers should be treated with respect in every way" (p. 6). As such, providing pathways for teacher input and engagement could improve teacher beliefs regarding the implementation of policies affecting teacher practice.

The published results from a survey conducted by the Center on Education Policy (2016) noted that 84% of the K-12 nationally surveyed teachers stated that their greatest challenge is state or district policies getting in the way of teaching along with constant

changing demands placed on teachers. The survey concluded with stating that policy makers at federal, state, and local levels should seek input, guidance, and advice from teachers when creating and implementing policy that impacts teaching and student learning. If they do not, teachers will continue to feel powerless or unheard and thereby contribute to decline in teacher preparation programs along with shortages in the teaching profession.

Findings from this study will inform teachers in their practice related to policy implementation on how their beliefs may be impacted. Additionally, this study will inform policy makers as they deliberate on education policy, to have an awareness that teacher beliefs should be considered when policy decisions directly impact the classroom. This study is relevant to supporting the notion that attention to teacher beliefs and advocacy for teacher voice should be included with policy design and creation before the roll out to classrooms.

Theoretical Perspective

Cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) was formulated by Leon Festinger in the 1950's. Festinger theorized the notion that when a person has two or more aspects of knowledge that are germane to each other but are inconsistent with one another, a state of discomfort is established. CDT suggests that the discrepancies among cognitions (knowledge, opinions, or beliefs) and the creation of discomfort in motivating feeling establishes what is called the state of dissonance. "Dissonance is aroused whenever a person engages in an unpleasant activity to obtain some desirable outcome" (Jones & Jones, 2007, p. 8). Additionally, people feel discomfort when they experience cognitive

dissonance and as a result attempt to achieve an acceptable state. "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, motivates the person to reduce the dissonance and leads to avoidance of information likely to increase the dissonance" (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019, p. 3) As it pertains to this study, education policy is imposed on educators and educators are expected to implement policy mandates without question thus creating dissonance. For instance, the desire to be autonomous with lessons and to teach content for the sake of learning as opposed to for the sake of passing a standardized test may create cognitive dissonance for educators. As a result, educators may seek ways to lessen the discomfort and "pretend to comply with a policy they do not agree with, behaving in ways that may actually ignore the policy or contradict it" (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016, p. 3). Further, CDT has implications for educator beliefs because it can be inferred that there are discrepancies between what the educator wants to do to educate children and what the educator has to do by way of policy mandates. The state of dissonance is created due the educator possibly not agreeing with the mandates but having to do them anyway (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016).

This qualitative case study uses the theoretical lens of cognitive dissonance. As noted earlier, cognitive dissonance theory highlights the notion that the discrepancies among cognitions create a sense of discomfort which is called the state of dissonance (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). When someone is exposed to information or engages in tasks that are inconsistent with their beliefs, dissonance is established. "If the dissonance is not reduced by changing one's belief, the dissonance can lead to misperception or misinterpretation of the information, rejection or refutation of the information, seeking

support from those who agree with one's belief, and attempting to persuade others to accept one's belief" (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019, p. 6). This therefore raises issues regarding the influence of the teacher and administrator beliefs over the successful implementation of policy mandates.

Cognitive dissonance is established when someone's personal belief is in conflict with their actions or public comment. Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) discovered that when the pressure to speak increases or to do something against their personal beliefs, the dissonance they experience decreases. In other words, as the pressure increases, a person will do their part to lessen the dissonance they are experiencing. Based on this theory, educators work towards bringing personal beliefs and public actions or statements into consonance. Many educators are facing the challenge of holding on to the belief that some educational policy mandates do not have a positive impact on student learning or the success of the school but held accountable for the results of the implementation (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Additionally, teachers and administrators often feel a tension related to what they would like to do versus what they have to do. Consequently, when what they would like to do versus what they have to does not align, cognitive dissonance develops.

In short, cognitive dissonance theory as a theoretical perspective for this study is important because it may give insight on dissonance established and the impact of policy mandates on the beliefs of elementary administrators and teachers. Lastly, making the connection to the importance of teacher and administrator perspectives on policy mandates that directly impact the school from climate to the classroom.

Notable Policies and Report

When examining policy mandates and their impact on teacher beliefs, it is important to consider which policies or related policy action might potentially cause dissonance for educators. Consequently, I highlight several impactful policies or reports that have directly influenced educational practices in schools. To do this, I begin in the 1960's with a policy that highlights major, if not the most extensive, involvement of the Federal government into education policy. It should be viewed as major because it is an act that has had far-reaching impact on schools and that has been continually reauthorized over the course of fifty years. The report and policies that are highlighted in this section attempted to improve academic achievement for students, however, they do not appear to fully include perspectives from teachers or their beliefs. Additionally, the policies and report highlighted in this section are interconnected in a manner that inform what is eventually established in the Ohio Improvement Process.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Over the years, governmental officials and politicians have been engaged in policies that effect schools and teachers without providing these educators with avenues for a voice. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) first signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, expanded the federal government's role and presence in K-12 education. This legislation was designed to provide quality and equality in the United States educational system by making additional resources accessible for vulnerable students. At that time, the policy action was received with a lot of optimism about improving the lives of the poor with a focus on building hope for economically

deprived children. For teachers, ESEA was intended to address the educational needs of the poor by attempting to improve the education of the disadvantaged through Title I. It made provisions to distribute funds to school systems with high numbers of low-income families. Title I was designed to help close the skills gap in academics between students from low-income/low-wage families, urban/rural students and middle class who attend schools in suburban school systems.

A Nation at Risk

In, the 1983, A Nation at Risk (ANR) was a pivotal report that described how the United States educational system was failing to provide a quality and globally competitive education for students. ANR recommended rigor in schools and the adoption of standards. This report blamed educational professionals for many of the ills of education. One might expect that teachers, many of who were blamed for the low performance of students, felt demoralized by the ANR report. According to ANR (1983), "More and more young people emerge from high school ready for neither college nor work" (p. 5). As a result of ANR, the urgency to reform education and standardize achievement became a portion of the political platform for elected officials to demonstrate their level of concern and willingness to take action to make the state of education better for children.

No Child Left Behind/ESSA

For several decades, based on the concerns or viewpoints of the sitting president, ESEA has been reauthorized or renamed multiple times. Education has been discussed and considered a national priority both by the Executive Branch and the

Legislative Branch of government. In 2001, ESEA was reauthorized by President George

W. Bush and renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The overarching goal of

this policy was to ensure students are on grade level and proficient in reading and math

by 2014. More recently on December 15, 2015, President Barack H. Obama again

reauthorized ESEA and renamed it The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This policy

was intended to streamline efforts toward equity by maintaining protections for

disadvantaged and high need students while ensuring teaching and learning for students

are at high academic standards with the aim of preparing students for college and careers.

NCLB policy changes directly impacted the classroom through the establishment

of various accountability measures. These NCLB measures included state initiatives that

resulted in school improvement policies designed to increase student academic

performance in low performing schools. These policies included consequences that

directly impacted schools at the classroom level. The focus became more on increasing

the number of students passing standardized tests. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

became the expression of holding schools accountable. If schools were unsuccessful with

meeting AYP goals for two consecutive years, the school would go into School

Improvement Status.

The far-reaching goals of NCLB were also riddled with challenges. In the August

2011 report to congress on ESEA, it is noted that the number of Title I schools identified

in improvement status in 2005-2006 was "around 9,900" (p. 44) and by 2009-2010 there

were "over 14500" (p. 44). In the September 2016 report to Congress, the number of Title

I schools identified in improvement status increased to 19,498 (p.42). The concerns for

schools that were underperforming initiating strategies at the state level of government for addressing these challenges continued to rise. Teachers noted concerns about the impact of NCLB in a 2008 case study that revealed educators "believe instructional time and classroom practices have been altered in the district to accommodate NCLB requirements…" (Spohn, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, Spohn (2008) states, "Federal legislators must recognize that NCLB and high-stakes tests are forcing schools to take measures that will produce developmentally and educationally malnourished citizens" (p. 10). With the implementation of federal educational policy, "a feeling of a lack of success with students has become much more public and personalized and not simply the result of self-assessment or building-level evaluations" (Santoro 2011, p. 6). Fives and Gill 2015 note that teacher beliefs are influenced by teachers participating with certain practices and experiencing success (p. 69).

It has been previously noted that with NCLB and the continued low performance of many public schools led to the idea that there is a need to quickly improve student achievement and thereby the turnaround school concept was developed. The turnaround school concept is the assertion of strategies, policies, programs, resources, and ideas that are touted as best practices or research-based approaches that are implemented with the intentions of quickly improving low performing schools. "With the advent of NCLB and various state-based educational accountability programs, the heat was turned up on perennially low-performing public schools" (Duke, 2006, p.3). When NCLB was signed into law, as previously noted, the creation of the turnaround concept was eventually established to bring about more of a spotlight on improving consistently low performing

schools. The increase of interest in the concept of turning a low performing school around grew as a result of the number of schools in need of improvement increased. Kahlenberg (2009), stated that U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan "has noted that for years districts allowed failing schools to slide, and has called, instead, 'far-reaching reforms' that fundamentally change the culture in the country's worst 5000 schools" (p.1). Schools are considered low performing based on the criteria put into place by NCLB. These low performing schools are labeled and threatened with restructuring in a manner that would potentially layoff or redistribute members of the staff. The whole idea is that, improvement will be made with drastic changes in leadership, staffing, high stakes accountability (achievement testing), and professional development. Santoro (2011) states that for teachers, "it is difficult to maintain a good sense of doing good work when policies foreclose opportunities to teach in ways that they believe are right" (p. 6).

Ohio Improvement Process

In the State of Ohio, there was notable policy action that was also intended to influence school improvement and student advancement, and that impacted teacher beliefs. The creation of the Ohio Improvement Process has been instituted to address consistently low performing schools with the implementation of specific requirements in order to receive funding as a solution to increase performance of the low performing schools. The U.S. Department of Education released the "Guidance on School Improvement Grants" in March 2015 to detail what school districts were required to do in order to receive School Improvement Grants (SIG) to support consistently low performing schools and facilitate improvement. It details the schools that are the lowest

performing in the state that have implemented the Turnaround Model specifically for Priority Schools that will be explained in chapter 2.

The top down approach to policy implementation is of great concern. Teachers continue to accept and implement educational policies that were created with minimal to no input that ultimately has directly impacted the process of teaching and learning within educator classrooms. These policies continue to be created by policymakers and politicians who often are not experienced teachers or educational practitioners. As a result, performance goals and targets are unrealistic thereby leading to low morale and high levels of stress as evidenced by the AFT (2015) survey of thirty-thousand teachers. Additionally, the more recent reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB and renaming it the Every Student Succeeds Act may also have an impact on teacher beliefs. It is worthy to note that "A Blueprint for Reform" was published in March 2010 by the U.S. Department of Education that became the platform for ESSA. Two areas that are highlighted are improving teacher and principal effectiveness and improving the lowest performing schools. When considering reform measures put in place by policy makers, the question then becomes, what is the influence of the implemented governmental policy such as NCLB/ESSA on teacher beliefs especially if seventy-nine percent of the thirty-thousand teachers surveyed believe they are not respected by elected officials (AFT)?

Delimitations and Limitations

The scope of the study will focus on teachers and administrators who teach in low performing schools that are known in the State of Ohio as Priority schools. This study will not address the non-academic and societal issues that become barriers to the

improvement of consistently low performing urban schools due to the focus highlighting teacher beliefs and educational policy implementation. This study will provide a limited focus on what may happen to educator beliefs when faced with the school improvement and turnaround initiatives based on their perspective through the lens of cognitive dissonance.

Definition of Terms

Cognitive Dissonance: When a person's private beliefs are in conflict with their actual public statement of actions. (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959, p. 209). "When an individual holds two or more elements of knowledge that are relevant to each other but inconsistent with one another, a state of discomfort is created" (Harmon-Jones, 2012, p. 71).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): an educational reform measure signed into law in 2001 that focused on improved student achievement for all students including low performing students. Additionally, NCLB provided increased educational accountability for states, school districts, and schools. It paved the way for parents with students attending low performing schools to have options or choice for attending charter or private schools with vouchers. Lastly, NCLB had a stronger emphasis on reading and math for students in grades 3 through 8 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P. L. 107-110, 20 U. S. C § 6319 (2002)).

Turnaround School Concept: a process developed as a result of the NCLB's focus on improving chronically low performing schools. The turnaround school concept is a process by which program, staff, and/or curriculum changes are implemented to bring

about quick and sustainable success and continuous improvement with student achievement in low performing schools (Duke 2006).

The Ohio Improvement Process: An organizational strategy that provides school districts with a framework that supports focused and intentional action for improvement. It has five components that is designed to bring educators together as a collaborative team to learn, communicate, and establish informed decision-making. The components are as follows: First, identify critical needs, second, research and select evidence-based strategies, third plan for implementation, fourth, implement and monitor the plan, and fifth, examine, reflect, adjust. (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, pp. 1-2)

The Turnaround Model: is defined by the United States Department of Education and the Ohio Improvement Process as, "a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low performing school that produces significant gains in achievement within two years and readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high performing organization" (United States Department of Education, 2015, pp. 4-5). The Turnaround Model is an implementation tool for Priority schools. The model requires replacement of principal and staff with not more than fifty percent of the staff returning after the hiring process. The model also requires the implementation of a research based instructional program. (United States Department of Education, 2015, p. 35).

Priority School: a school that has been in the lowest five percent of performance among all schools in the State of Ohio. Priority schools are identified by meeting at least one of the three following criteria:

1. Schools with a four –year graduation rate of 67 percent or lower

2. Lowest performing schools using the state report card overall grade methodology

3. Failure to improve subgroup performance over the three-year identification period. (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, p.85).

Teacher Beliefs: Teacher beliefs are an "individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Pajares, 1992, p. 316). "Teacher beliefs are the filters for interpreting their experiences, frames for addressing problems they encounter, and guides for actions they take" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 49).

Summary

In short, this is a qualitative case study aiming to highlight teacher perspective on the barriers or supports to implementation requirements of policy mandates along with how their beliefs may have been influenced. I acknowledge that this is an anecdotal assumption and I will remain open to the participant responses regarding policy implementation within their schools. In addition, the intentions of the study will be to dispel the notion of policy makers who are not or have not been a K-12 educator, knowing what is necessary to improve chronically low performing schools. Lastly, the study will provide insight on the dissonance created within teacher beliefs by way of policy implementation requirements.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section will review literature that is relevant to the theoretical and historical perspective of this study. This section will also discuss other research that sheds light on the issues related to the influence on or lack of educator beliefs on the implementation of educational policy and the issues related to the cognitive dissonance that can result. Some of these discussions will share how the neglect of educator beliefs has the potential to impact overall school improvement in consistently low performing schools.

Specifically, this chapter will highlight literature that explains the significance of teacher beliefs, school culture and climate, the evolution of relevant educational policy mandates, and the experiences of educators in implementing the policy mandates while reconciling dissonance. This chapter will also review federal foundational policy mandates that serve as a catalyst to the recent state mandates and turnaround school concepts. Leadership theory, organizational theory cognitive dissonance theory and relevant research highlighting these subjects will follow. However, it is worthy to note that there is a dearth of research on the intersectionality of the impact of teacher beliefs and policy implementation mandates, which supports the significance of this study.

Federal Entry Into Local Education Affairs Through Policy and National Guidance

Although constitutionally education falls in the State and local purview, as early as 1965, the federal government made a foray into education policy. The following overview highlights Federal and State policy and various mandates that ultimately shaped teacher behavior and that has impacted teacher beliefs. The pivotal policies are highlighted in this study because as they evolved over time built upon each other to

ultimately inform the direction of the Ohio Improvement Process - the policy context of my discussion on teacher beliefs. For example, ESEA of 1965 established Title I. Title I is currently utilized to fund and support low performing and high poverty schools – an important contextual component of the setting in my study. ANR, published in 1983, although a report, blamed the educational system for the lack of the ability to cultivate a qualified and competitive workforce by and suggesting that the system and educators contributed to the rise of mediocrity. The NCLB Act of 2001 brought to light a focus on accountability measures with the intent of improving academic performance for students by way of regulating and redistributing funds spent to support improvement (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Additionally, the disaggregation of student achievement data by subgroups along with evaluating schools based on the achievement data, and requiring that each classroom has a highly qualified teacher. Hinnant-Crawford (2016) notes that a component of accountability that rely on high-stakes testing based on policy mandates have "changed the nature of teaching" (p.6). Additionally, it is noted that the component of accountability that rely on high-stakes testing has led to disempowering and deskilling of teachers. The following policies and report are directly related to the evolution of the OIP because of the time and era in which they were introduced.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) made provisions to allocate funds to school systems that contain high numbers of low-income families. According to Jeffrey (1978), Title I was designed to also help close the skills gap in academics between students from low-income families, urban/rural students and middle

class students who are enrolled schools that are in suburban school systems. Title II intended to support school libraries along with the acquisition of textbooks, pre-school programs, and improve school attendance. Further, Title III required educational opportunities whether school was or was not in session. Additionally, Title III required special education services and ancillary support in less populated and rural areas. As a result, schools began to adapt to the policy mandates to receive the funding.

Jeffrey (1978) studied the origins and implementation impact of ESEA of 1965. She reviewed how the act came to existence. Noting that although President Johnson inherited plans for addressing poverty, it became a major portion of his legislative program. According to Jeffrey (1978), ESEA of 1965 failed because many politicians made compromises that undermined the implementation of the act. She also noted that another reason the act failed was because local school decision makers lacked the experience to create and implement programs that addressed the needs of poor children. Alternatively, Jeffrey (1978) noted that the funds provided from ESEA of 1965 was not used for poor children but was used for children from communities that were more affluent. Lastly, Jeffrey (1978) highlights the ESEA of 1965 failed due to not having proper methods of evaluating the act along with several internal weaknesses.

Casalaspi (2017) studied how ESEA came to fruition in 1965 by reporting the legislative process that occurred to get the act signed. Casalaspi (2017) noted that ESEA of 1965 was the start of federal government's incremental buildup of power and influence over education due to the increasing Title expenditures and not wanting to waste money. As a result, Casalaspi (2017), noted "the federal government today leverages ESEA

dollars to promote ostensibly proven policy reforms like standardized testing while

concerns about local control remain marginalized" (p. 276). Despite noting the

shortcomings of ESEA of 1965, Casalaspi (2017) did highlight its success accomplishing

the goals of addressing the epidemic of poverty and the government's commitment to

education.

A Nation at Risk

In, the 1980's, A Nation at Risk (ANR) a pivotal report commissioned by the US

Department of Education, described how the United States educational system was

failing to provide a quality and globally competitive education for students. ANR

recommended rigor in schools and the adoption of standards. This report also blamed

educational professionals for many of the ills of education. One might expect that

teachers, many of whom were blamed for the low performance of students, felt

demoralized by the ANR report. According to ANR (1983), "More and more young

people emerge from high school ready for neither college nor work" (p. 5). As a result of

ANR, the urgency to reform education and standardize achievement was embraced by

elected officials as a part of their political platforms to demonstrate their level of concern

and willingness to take action to make the state of education better for children. ANR put

a national focus on educating children, thereby making it a priority among policy makers

and increasing governmental reform measures coming from the top down that impacted

teacher beliefs. Additionally, Hunt (2008) shared that ANR had a negative impact on

teachers that created morale issues upon its release. Mehta (2015) noted that educators, as

a result of ANR, were resentful of the notion that the economic problems of the nation

were to be blamed on them. It is also noted that ANR highlighted the increased focus on teacher accountability whereas teachers countered the claims for accountability due to the unfairness of being judged on results that are in some parts out of their control (Mehta, 2015). Additionally, Mehta, 2015), shares that the political reformers who supported ANR continued to focus on teacher accountability under the mantra of no excuses. As a result, Mehta (2015) noted that the mistrust between policy makers and educational practitioners steadily increased. Also, ANR, according to Mehta (2015) ignored and disregarded the perspective of school performance being the result of both school and societal factors.

Goals 2000, No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds Act

For several decades, based on the concerns or priorities of various presidents, ESEA has been reauthorized or renamed multiple times. Education has been discussed and considered a national priority both by the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch of government. On March 31, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227). It was focused on outcome-based education with the premise that students will ultimately gain high levels of achievement when more is expected of them educationally.

In 2001, ESEA was reauthorized by President George W. Bush and renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The overarching goal of this policy was to ensure students are at grade level and academically proficient in reading and math by 2014. A more detailed overview of NCLB is discussed later given that it is key to the development of the turnaround school model. NCLB also created cognitive dissonance

for teachers as the policy suggested that there was a lack of highly qualified teachers in schools, and according to Hill (2007), the perception that teachers were inadequately prepared. In addition, Sunderman et al. (2004) conducted their national study in an effort to highlight teacher voice and hear directly from the field about NCLB. The authors noted that teachers reported that sanctions related to AYP "would unfairly reward and punish teachers" (p. 3). Sunderman et al. (2004) also noted that sanctions would generally create problems for teacher retention, and that school improvement designations would cause teachers to leave high need environments (p. 3). The authors found that due to NCLB, important content from the curriculum was ignored along with not focusing on untested subject matter (p. 4). Lastly, the study conducted by Sunderman et al. (2004) concluded that if policies such as NCLB were to be successful at the building level, policy makers are to take into consideration teacher attitudes and beliefs along with engaging teachers in a positive manner to encourage participating with the long-term work of school improvement. They suggest that it is to be done by giving teachers voice on how to address the issues or problems they are tasked to solve.

The Evolution of NCLB as the Foundation for the Turnaround School Concept

Illustration of how ESEA has evolved into ESSA is intended to underscore the primary policy focus of this study which is to highlight federal policy implementation mandates regarding improving low performing schools by way of school turnaround. More specifically, the policy action related to NCLB will be highlighted to serve as a foundation for an examination of the Turnaround School Initiatives which are the

resulting activities related to NCLB that teachers are still grappling with even under ESSA.

NCLB policy changes directly impacted the classroom through the establishment of various accountability measures including those highlighted in this study. Husband and Hunt (2015) share that these NCLB measures included state initiatives such as high stakes testing that resulted in school improvement policies designed to increase student academic performance in low performing schools. These policies included consequences that directly impacted schools at the classroom level. The focus became more on increasing the number of students passing standardized tests. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) became the expression of holding schools accountable. If schools did not meet the AYP for two consecutive years, the school would go into School Improvement Status (Hunt & Husband, 2015). Therefore, NCLB forced local administrators to focus on schools that had not made AYP.

While NCLB was not a panacea related to improved accountability, the Act established some positive processes in support of student advancement. The positive attributes of NCLB that are noted by the United States Department of Education included the development and establishment of standards of accountability designed to facilitate growth and achievement that is to be measured annually by each state. Student growth and achievement results were to be shared annually with parents and specific standards for teacher qualifications were outlined. Based on NCLB, educators were also required to ensure a connection between state academic content and student learning outcomes. Further, it was required that implementation of school improvement measures were to be

done so by way of utilizing scientific-based research practices and methods within the classroom. Additionally, parent engagement programs and teacher professional development sessions were to be established. NCLB also emphasized reading, writing and math and was intended to measure educational growth by ethnicity, while seeking to close the achievement gap between white and minority students. In addition, NCLB emphasized that schools should focus on providing quality education to all students with particular attention to students who are often underserved. This included those students who have disabilities, those from low-income families, those who are non-English speakers, and those from underrepresented groups such as African-Americans and Latinos. Many of these guidelines have been integrated into the most recent ESSA legislation.

The expansive goals of NCLB were also wrought with challenges. In reviewing the annual Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 Report to Congress dated August 2014, it is noted that the number of Title I schools identified in improvement status in 2008-2009 school year was 12,718 and by the 2011-2012 school year the number of schools in improvement status increased to 19,498. Teachers noted concerns about the impact of NCLB in a 2008 case study that revealed teachers "believe instructional time and classroom practices have been altered in the district to accommodate NCLB requirements…" (Spohn, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, Spohn (2008) noted, "Federal legislators must recognize that NCLB and high-stakes tests are forcing schools to take measures that will produce developmentally and educationally malnourished citizens" (p. 10). Spohn (2008) conducted a case study of an Ohio public

school district that reviewed the perspectives and experiences of teachers under federal policy. The study conducted by Spohn (2008) examined the state of an art program in a public school under NCLB. Qualitative and quantitative methods were taken to provide context with the changes that happened along with the reasons for the decrease in learning opportunities among the arts. Additionally, the study conducted by Spohn (2008) revealed teachers were mandated to change teaching strategies because the new strategy, from the perspective of the decision makers, showed that moving away from traditional methods of teaching was not effective and that students were not succeeding. Teachers were told to keep teaching the standard and testing the student until they know it. Spohn (2008) noted that the strategy the teachers were mandated to follow did not work because the students became aware of the cycle of teaching and retesting, thereby, did not put forth additional effort to pass or were confused. Therefore, the initial instructional content was drug out over an extended amount of time, yielded no positive results, and did not attain student achievement. Spohn (2008) also noted that academic content and disciplines that were not included on the standardized assessments were left out and the arts classes were cut. Lastly, Spohn (2008) stated, "blanket policies meant to produce, at any cost, desirable outcomes in tested subjects are negatively affecting the learning of other subjects such as the arts" (p. 9).

Santoro (2011) in her study underscored these sentiments by advancing that with the implementation of federal educational policy such as NCLB, "a feeling of a lack of success with students has become much more public and personalized and not simply the result of self-assessment or building-level evaluations" (p. 6). She researched the

altruistic approach that teachers take when wanting to do good for students through teaching and what happens when faced with implementing policy that is counter intuitive to their beliefs and/or purpose for teaching. She found that as opposed to teachers experiencing burnout due to the demands of teaching, they are demoralized because of the violation of moral principles that are intertwined with their ethical life. The resulting thought and wonder is whether or not they are doing right by the students when examining what they are mandated to do versus what they want to do to ensure students academically learn and grow. Further, she found that the teachers did not find moral value in the work there were tasked to perform. This was not because of a not being committed, incompetence, not wanting to teach, or being prepared. Ultimately, it was found that teachers were not able to access the moral reward of teaching which led to the feelings of depression, discouragement, hopelessness, and shame.

School Turnaround Concept

Under the mandates of NCLB, the continued low performance of many public schools led to the idea that there is a need to quickly improve student achievement and thereby the turnaround school concept was developed. The turnaround school concept is a comprehensive and intense approach to improving low performing schools quickly within two years. With the signing of NCLB and many state-based educational accountability programs, the pressure mounted against low-performing public schools to improve and produce fast results (Duke, 2006). When NCLB was signed into law, as previously noted, the creation of the turnaround concept was eventually established to bring about more of a focus on improving consistently low performing schools.

The turnaround school concept was established so that districts could quickly implement strategies that were to improve student achievement based on the requirements and initiatives of NCLB. Turnaround concepts aim to facilitate a process in schools that turns low performance into high achieving in a short period of time (Hess & Gift, 2008, p. 31). Teacher beliefs work as "filters, frames, and guides, and that beliefs about particular concepts/activities may be more or less salient during different teaching tasks" (Fives & Gill 2015, p. 252). Hess and Gift (2008) suggest that as a result, school improvement initiatives will fail if educators and school staff are not fully committed to the turnaround school strategies. This suggests that unless teachers are passionate and believe in the process, efforts to implement school reforms can be hindered.

The increased interest by the Federal and State government in the concept of turning a low performing school around grew as a result of the number of schools in need of improvement. Schools are considered low performing based on the criteria put into place by NCLB. These low performing schools are labeled and threatened with restructuring in a manner that would potentially layoff or redistribute members of the staff. According to Cosner and Jones (2016), the whole idea is that improvement will be made with drastic changes in leadership, staffing, high stakes accountability (achievement testing), and professional development.

Santoro (2011) notes that for teachers, "it is difficult to maintain a good sense of doing good work when policies foreclose opportunities to teach in ways that they believe are right" (p. 6). Additionally, the drastic changes may impact school culture and climate that may take time to overcome with the unintended consequence of prolonging the

progression to improving the performance of the school. Administrators are tasked with juggling instructional leadership, shared leadership, and managing the daily operations of the building while improving the overall performance of the school.

Ohio Improvement Process

As a result of policy mandates focusing on school turnaround and improvement, the State of Ohio created the Ohio Improvement Process to address consistently low performing schools with the implementation of specific requirements. According to the Ohio Department of Education, the process is a strategic course of action that addresses standards, assessments, school attendance, student subgroups, and district accountability with a focus on low performing schools. The top down approach to policy implementation is of great concern. Administrators and teachers continue to accept and implement educational policies that were created with minimal to no input that ultimately has a direct impact on the work of teaching, learning, and leading in their schools. According to Hinnant-Crawford (2016), policies continue to be created by policymakers and politicians who often are not experienced teachers, administrators, or educational practitioners. As a result, performance goals and targets are unrealistic thereby leading to low morale and high levels of stress (Fisher-Ari et al., 2017).

Educator Perspectives and Beliefs Regarding Policies and Mandates

This is evidenced by the AFT (2015) survey of more than thirty-thousand teachers. The 80-question survey was circulated using email and social media. An overview of the respondents noted that 47% were from urban schools, 34% were from suburban, and 16% were from rural. 24% of the respondents had been in education for 0-

10 years, 38% of the respondents had been in education 11-20 years, and 38% had been in education for more than 20 years (p. 1). Among the respondents, 89% said they were strongly enthusiastic about teaching in the beginning of their careers but only 15% said they felt the same at the time of the survey (p. 2). Lastly, 73% of the respondents felt their work was stressful and were mentally and physically exhausted at the end of the workday (p. 3). Over half (52%) felt as though not being included with decision making or making their own decisions about the classroom contributed to their job dissatisfaction (p. 4).

The more recent reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB, the Every Student Succeeds Act may also have an impact on teacher beliefs. It is worthy to note that "A Blueprint for Reform" that was published in March 2010 by the U.S. Department of Education became the platform for ESSA. The Blueprint for Reform (2010) was a plan that provided action steps that the federal government put forth to support local education agencies with the purpose of increasing the academic performance and achievement while closing the gap of achievement of students displaying academic deficits in public schools. Two areas that were highlighted were improving teacher and principal effectiveness and improving the lowest performing schools. When considering reform measures put in place by policy makers, the question then becomes, how can educational policy be successfully implemented with the desired outcome if seventy-nine percent of the thirty-thousand teachers surveyed who believe they are not respected by elected officials noted by the 2015 survey conducted by the AFT. Dissonance may be created when implementing policy mandated by those who do not respect the people who are required to implement

the policy. This may lead to the unsuccessful implementation or not implementing with fidelity because they are not respected by the creators of the policy. Although the research is dearth when addressing teacher beliefs and specific policies, Snider and Roehl (2007) note that teacher beliefs influence policy implementation, classroom practices, and expectations for success. According to Fives and Gill (2015), within school settings, teachers work collectively to influence the achievement of students but are also held accountable and responsible for outcomes that have been established by policymakers who are far away from the schools. Fives and Gill (2015) also assert that the collective beliefs of teachers within a school can influence the success or failure of policy implementation which can either vitalize or demoralize the teachers.

When reviewing the implementation of educational policy in urban schools, educators are faced with "consistent and persistent frustrations in accessing the moral rewards of teaching…" (Santoro, 2011, p. 1). As a result, the circumstances of educating children change so dramatically to where the altruistic rewards of helping students learn diminish to the extent of leaving the educator reconciling dissonance of what is mandated by way of policy versus the personal purpose of becoming a teacher or administrator. Based on research published by Santoro (2011), educators reflect on whether a mandate is good for the classroom or school versus what is known about best practices. Santoro (2011) also notes that educators ask the questions of "Is this work worthwhile? Am I engaging in good teaching?" (p. 3). If the answer to either question is no, then what happens when educators are mandated to implement policy that supports the response that the work is not worthwhile and they are not engaging in good teaching or leadership

practices? If the educator does not have favorable beliefs regarding the implementation practices, the policy fails and overall school performance diminishes due to the impact on the organization. Policies are often developed with little to no insight on how they will impact or interact with other school programs, initiatives, or policies. Teachers are expected to implement federal and state educational policy mandates without question and minimal input from the perspective of the educator on the success of the policy which is deeply rooted in their beliefs. As a result, depending on the perspective of the educators, the policy may fail before it is implemented. "If teachers work in policy environments where few opportunities and few incentives to learn about revising their practice, then they are less likely to enact the recent reforms" (Spillane, 2000, p. 142). Additionally, the experiences, knowledge, and educator beliefs influence the understanding of the policy. According to Goldstein (2008), "teachers interpret the range of state-, district-, and school-level policies affecting their work through the lens of their strategic knowledge and then make 'street-level' (Lipsky, 1980) education policy in the form of the curricular and instructional decisions they enact within the specific, particular contexts of their own classrooms" (p. 449). This supports the case study approach to the inquiry. This inquiry will investigate the influence of teacher and administrator beliefs on successful policy implementation along with the dissonance that created as a result of policy implementation mandates.

Historical Policy Actions

Elements From the Beginning

For years, one of the essential goals of federal educational policy makers has been to improve quality and performance in low achieving schools. While policy decisions and legislation has been made by lawmakers, teachers have been left out of the opportunity to shape policy decisions. The 1965 policy activity resulted in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Section 1001 of the Act states, "The purpose of this title is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps" (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, P.L. 114-95, 20 U. S. C. § 6301, 1965, p. 8).

The introduction of A Nation at Risk states that the National Commission on Excellence in Education was charged with making a report on the quality of education in the United States in 1981. The report was published in 1983. The opening statement of this report states the following:

> All regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself (p. 9).

Unfortunately, ANR blamed teachers for the ills of education and educators were criticized for the issues related to student achievement.

Section 1001 of No Child Left Behind states, "The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (2001, p. 17). This led to the heightened focus on standardized assessments and meeting proficiency requirements.

Before President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, his administration released "A Blueprint for Reform," a document charting the course for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The purpose of NCLB was to eradicate the gap of achievement between student groups within the nation's schools and increase student achievement overall. Regardless of whether you agree with or oppose the No Child Left Behind Act, there are an abundant number of chronically low performing schools. The Center on Education Policy released a report in 2011 that noted that under NCLB, the percentage of failing schools across the nation were at twenty-nine percent in 2006 and increased to forty-eight percent in 2011. Additionally, the introduction of a "one size fits all" approach to a policy does not promote or create sustainable success when examining how to improve a chronically low performing school. The whole idea is that, "when turnaround intervention combines accountability and capacity-building strategies, things usually improve" (Fullan, 2005, p. 175). As a result, the three following assumptions were formed: "High-stakes accountability improves teacher motivation. High-stakes accountability positively affects organizational development. The eventual result is instructional change in the classrooms" (Fullan, 2005, p. 175).

Turning Around Schools

Backstrom (2019) conducted a report on behalf of the Rockefeller Institute of Government that examined the introduction of school turnaround beginning with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that was signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. This was the federal government's attempt to highlight the Johnson administration's war on poverty. Backstrom (2019) notes that the war on poverty resulted with increasing federal spending on schools serving low-income students by way of Title I funding. According to Backstrom (2019), the efforts to turn low performing, high poverty schools into achieving schools have not been consistently successful. From the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to School Improvement Grant program, Backstrom (2019) noted that they have failed to accomplish the goal of sustainable achievement in the low performing, high poverty schools because of the inability to empower transformative leaders with the authority and autonomy to make bold changes needed to quickly improve. The necessary political and public support to improve low performing, high poverty schools was lacking and did not support the dramatic and ongoing changes that were to be in place to facilitate improvement, according to Backstrom (2019). It is also noted that ESEA was to be reauthorized every five years and that President George W. Bush led the most notable ESEA policy overhaul with adding accountability measures and renaming it the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Although the accountability measures and changes that resulted in NCLB, Backstrom (2019) states that turning around schools can create sustainable success by way of the following:

- Strong school principal leadership

- Communicate and execute a vision for change guided by extensive collaboration among key stake-holders to hear the voices of all involved

- Schoolwide acceptance of data usage to identify problems, monitor programs and develop solutions along with intensely focusing on data driven instruction

- Establish quality community-school partnerships

- Highlighted focus on transforming school culture

- Build strong and supportive relationships with students and their families

- On-site teacher coaches that are familiar with materials and curriculum content to support classroom teachers.

Herman et al. (2008) published a guide for the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences that focused on providing coherent and specific evidenced based strategies to support quick and effective school turnaround for low performing schools. The results from ten case studies were reported by the guide that examined turnaround practices across thirty-five schools: twenty-one elementary schools, eight middle schools, and six high schools (p. 6). The guide did not give specific details regarding the ten case studies. However, Herman et al. (2008) provided a document that highlights the common strategies among the schools that supported effective school turnaround. The findings in the guide stated that in order

for there to be effective school turnaround, there needs to be strong principal leadership, steady and continuous focus on improving instruction, establishing a dedicated teaching staff, and announce/display improvements early in the turnaround process, highlighting them as quick wins. Herman et al. (2008) noted that the strong principal leadership should be committed to make dramatic changes from what has always been done, known as the status quo and that the leader should set the tone for urgency while establishing a clear vision. The consistent focus on instruction should be data driven to continually reassess student learning progress and instructional practices in a manner that facilitates progress towards improvement and actualizing the vision. Herman et al. (2008) also stated that building a dedicated teaching staff may require releasing, redeploying, or replacing non-committed staff to ensure maintaining the focus on improving student achievement. Lastly, Herman et al. (2008) reported that making visible improvements early and highlighting them as quick wins rallies the staff by creating a sense of momentum that overcomes resistance.

During the era of NCLB, according to Herman et al. (2008), there was an escalation of concern regarding the concept of turning a low performing school around because of the perpetuation of low performing schools remaining low performing. According to Hess and Gift (2008), policy makers were taking an interest in improving schools that were chronically low performing. Duke (2006) also noted that there was a need to reverse the pattern of low performance among schools. In 2005, Margret Spellings, the United States Secretary of Education supported the released guidance by the United States Department of Education for states to use to implement the mandates of

NCLB detailing the following: If schools do not have a passing rate in reading or math that meets the state standard, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), or Safe Harbor (SH) goals for two consecutive years, the school is labeled as being in School Improvement (SI) status (United States Department of Education, 2005). The outcomes and results from the state or high-stakes testing focused on the performance of all students in each grade administering the assessments along with the performance of students in various subgroups. The subgroups consisted of criteria that were based on ethnicity and socio-economic status. It is necessary to have thirty (30) students in a subgroup in order for it to be recognized as an entity that would have an impact on the results. The schools that are in SI status have two years to get out of SI status. According to the United States Department of Education (2005), the first year that a school meets the state standard, AYP, or SH goals, the school goes into Delayed status, according to the guidance provided by the United States Secretary of Education, Margret Spellings in 2005. Then second year of meeting the goals would allow for the school to get out of SI status. According to the United States Department of Education (2005), in order to meet AYP, at least 95 percent of students in each subgroup along with 95 percent of all students within the school must take the mandated assessment and each subgroup must meet or exceed the annual objective set by the state for each year (p. 10). Also, in order to make SH, subgroups needed to show a 10 percent decline in the proportion of students who were not proficient even if they did not meet the annual objective set by the state (p. 10). As a result of not meeting AYP or SH goals, according to Redding and Rhim (2014), the concept of School Turnaround was developed. The premise behind this concept is that

once a school has been established as chronically or consistently low performing or low achieving, measures are taken to turn the school around or improve overall school performance. Mandates are imposed upon teachers and administrators that causes them to set aside beliefs and experiences to do what the policy mandates thereby creating dissonance.

The Turnaround School Concept

A surprising development has been created as a result of the NCLB policy action and has continued on in the era of ESSA. The low performance of many public schools has led to the creation of the turnaround school concept. The turnaround concept is a process by which program, staff, and/or curriculum changes are implemented to bring about quick and sustainable success or improvement with student achievement. Duke (2006) noted that with the onset of the federal NCLB Act and a variety of state-based educational accountability programs, the focus was placed on consistently low-performing public schools. Since the signing of NCLB into law, the creation of the turnaround concept has been established to bring about a pathway to improving low performing schools. These schools are considered low performing based on the criteria put into place by the NCLB. These low performing schools are labeled and threatened with restructuring in a manner that would potentially layoff or redistribute members of the staff. The whole idea is that improvement will be made with drastic changes in leadership, staffing, high stakes accountability (achievement testing), and professional development. Ohio introduced the Turnaround Model to Priority schools that required the

replacement of leadership and staff to foster immediate and harsh change to facilitate a sense of urgency to improve.

Given the turnaround school initiatives designed to bolster student achievement and school improvement, one wonders what do the teachers believe about the turnaround concept and its influence on their ability to be successful based on the mandates of educational policy? "Achieving successful school turnarounds depends upon understanding the root causes of performance problems, as well as the root causes of obstacles standing in the way of improvement" (Duke, 2014, p. 81). Policy is created in a manner that appears to be more of a shifting platform of political gain as opposed to a foundation to build upon for sustained improvement. Root causes and policy impact on the educators and their beliefs are not mentioned when the directive is given to implement. Further, there should be consideration given regarding cognitive dissonance created with implementing policy. In addition, consideration should be given towards whether dissonance influences the successful implementation of the policy, along with impacting the overall performance of the school.

According to Redding and Rhim (2014), there has been an ongoing interest among United States policy makers regarding the concept of turning a low performing school around due to accountability initiatives and the possibility of extreme consequences for school that consistently display low academic achievement for two decades. "No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is even more problematic. High-stakes accountability through Annual Yearly Progress and escalating primitive measures swamps any notions of capacity building" (Fullan, 2005, p.179). According to Redding

and Rhim (2014), the focus shifted from incremental efforts to improve that sought growth after three to five years of implementation to more of a rapid and dramatic improvement and growth. Therefore, the School Turnaround concept has been developed. The focus has been on the leadership needed to turn around consistently low-performing schools to schools that are consistently performing proficiently or above based on student achievement data. There have been common threads from research done on turning low performing schools around.

During President Obama's tenure as president, *Education for K-12 Students* on Whitehouse.gov, there was notable mention of reforming NCLB. Although NCLB initiated a national conversation about student achievement, unintended consequences of NCLB have reinforced wrong behaviors in attempting to strengthen public education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). NCLB created incentives for states to lower their standards; emphasized punishing failure over rewarding success; focuses on absolute scores, rather than recognizing growth and progress; and prescribed a pass-fail, one-size-fits-all series of interventions for schools that miss their goals (Husband & Hunt, 2015). As the result of NCLB shortcomings, in 2010, President Obama and his administration created the Blueprint for Reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to address the issues created as the result of accountability measures established by NCLB with an emphasis on closing achievement gaps. The Blueprint for Reform (2010) became the precursor to the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. It highlighted the ambition that in order to be successful in college and careers, the focus was strengthened on all student graduating from high school. The Blueprint for Reform (2010) also put forth a system of

accountability that highlights and supports highly impoverished school communities that demonstrate improvement. In addition, the Blueprint for Reform (2010) called for states and local school districts to create tools for evaluating principal and teacher effectiveness that are designed to incentivize excellence to strengthen the profession, ensure high quality educational professionals by way of supporting instructional strategies, educational practices, and leadership. In an effort to improve low performing schools, the Blueprint for Reform (2010) offered funding for states that would allow for them to encourage districts to implement an intervention model to dramatically improve the status of the low performing school. There were four intervention models that are suggested to improve the status of low performing schools. The Blueprint for Reform (2010) defines the four intervention models are as follows:

- Transformation Model – Replace the principal, enhance instructional staff, implement a research based instructional program, support extended learning time, and implement new governance and flexibility.

- Turnaround Model – Replace the principal, hire no more than 50 percent of the existing staff, implement research based instructional program, support extended learning time, and implement new governance format.

- Restart Model – Convert or close the school then re-open under the management of an effective charter operator, charter management organization, or education management organization.

- School Closure Model – Close the school and enroll students in higher performing schools throughout the district (p. 12).

As noted earlier, this study will focus on the implementation of policies related to the Turnaround Model and their influence on teacher beliefs.

According to the Ohio Improvement Process, schools that are in "Priority" status based on standardized assessment data utilized by the Ohio Department of Education may implement what the Blueprint for Reform (2010) suggested called the Turnaround Model. Priority schools are identified as schools that are among the fifth percentile of percentile of performance for three consecutive years or more among all schools in the State of Ohio. In essence, the State of Ohio ranks schools based on the results of student performance in the reading and math Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA). The schools that have had three consecutive years of performance in the lower five percent of the state have been given the Priority School title. If a school is designated as a Priority School, the Turnaround Model may be implemented to improve the academic performance of students. The Turnaround School Concept and what the State of Ohio calls the Turnaround Model are defined differently. The Turnaround School Concept refers to changes that are implemented in order to have quick and sustainable impact on increasing student achievement. According to the Ohio Improvement Process Guide (2012) the Turnaround Model of the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) is a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in low performing schools that produces significant gains in achievement within two years and readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high performing organization (p. 35). As a result, the Turnaround Model is utilized to implement the following within a consistently low performing school which is built upon from what the Blueprint for Reform (2010) suggests but is listed in

detail by the Guidance on Fiscal Year 2010 School Improvement Grants (2011) as follows:

- Replace the building principal

- Review and release the teaching staff, with the option of no more than 50% of the released staff to be rehired

- Implement a research based instructional model based on student needs

- Job-embedded professional development is designed to build capacity and support staff

- Continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction

- Increased learning time for students and staff

- Social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports are established (pp. 26-27).

In short, the No Child Left Behind Act, although well intentioned, did not fulfill its purpose. Thompson and Barnes (2007), suggested that the problems that NCLB intended to address remain. "Achievement gaps between white students and racial and ethnic minorities and students with disabilities are still unconscionably large" (Thompson & Barnes, 2007, p. 12). NCLB has its pros and cons, however, the attention brought to subgroup achievement in reading and math has been informative and shocking. What is the impact on the teachers' beliefs as a result of NCLB, the school turnaround initiatives, the Ohio turnaround model? Considering the dissonance that may be created as a result of policy mandates, educator beliefs and practices can pose a challenge due to the internal

conflict that may occur when facing policy implementation that changes the dynamic of the classroom or school (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

Teacher Beliefs

"Teacher belief is defined broadly as tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught" (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). Additionally, Fives and Gill (2015) highlight the notion that many types of beliefs are held concurrently by teachers. It is important to note that beliefs center around the individual's "…judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do" (Pajares, 1992, p. 316). The term teacher beliefs is used broadly when referencing the teacher's knowledge and understanding of their specific content or how students are perceived to learn. According to Fives and Gill (2015), teacher beliefs are the overall interpretive perspectives that teachers establish about themselves, students, achievement, instructional strategies, pedagogy, learning content, and the school as an organization. "Characteristics prevalent in definitions of teachers' beliefs include their (a) implicit and explicit nature, (b) stability over time, (c) situated or generalized nature, (d) relation to knowledge, and (e) existence as individual propositions or larger systems" (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 473). As it relates to federal education policy, Fives and Buehl (2012) noted the behavior of teachers when receiving information about policy and how it is interpreted, is unknowingly guided by their beliefs. According to Kagan (1992), teacher beliefs are generally stable and are resistant to change and can be linked to their style of teaching. Fives and Buehl (2012) conducted a comprehensive review of the research on

teacher beliefs. They examined a variety of research and studies to identify the ways teacher beliefs are defined and highlighted in trends among the empirical findings. Fives and Buehl (2012) reviewed investigations of teacher beliefs that spanned from 1992 through 2006. Additionally, they reviewed published literature through 2009 that supplied more than 745 articles that yielded 627 that were applicable to the basis of their criteria. As a result, they "found that the topics of teachers' beliefs could be framed to include beliefs about (a) self, (b) context or environment, (c) content or knowledge, (d) specific teaching practices, (e) teaching approach, and (f) students" (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 472). In addition, their investigation suggested that teacher beliefs may serve various roles or functions in regards to teachers' knowledge and actions. This is by way of teachers using beliefs to process information, address a problem or task, and guide immediate action.

Wilkins (2008) conducted a study that included 481 elementary teachers which focused on their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of inquiry. The study revealed the strongest predictor of inquiry instructional practices was their individual beliefs. The study concluded by noting that when teacher beliefs are aligned with, correlated to, or evident in their practice, their beliefs influence their practices.

Conversely, Fives and Gill (2015) suggests that teacher's beliefs are molded by participating with specific actions and practices. They note that changes in teacher beliefs can be revealed after participating in specific endeavors that support the classroom. Fives and Gill (2015) noted that educators gain knowledge and information about their capability to engage a task by personally performing it. Lastly, they concluded by noting

that teachers engaging in specific teaching practices can influence their beliefs when they experience success with those practices.

Love and Kruger (2005) produced a descriptive survey research study on teacher beliefs and student achievement in six urban schools that serve African American students (p.88). Five of the six schools were in one metropolitan area in the southeastern United States and the sixth school was located in a different city (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 88). They noted that the study included 244 participants and utilized a survey to reflect culturally relevant beliefs and practices (Love & Kruger, 2005, p.88). There were a total of 48 statements centered around the beliefs of knowledge, student race/ethnicity/culture, social relations in and out of the classroom, teaching as a profession, teaching practice, and student strengths/needs (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 88). The study noted that, "successful teachers of African American students have an eclectic array of beliefs" (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 97). In short, Love and Kruger (2005) highlighted that successful teachers of African American students do whatever they believe is necessary to appropriately meet their needs (p. 97).

The implication that teacher's professional knowledge is synonymous with teacher beliefs which is counterintuitive to knowledge is fact oriented and belief is opinion oriented. Therefore, teacher beliefs are "filters for interpreting their experiences, frames for addressing problems they encounter, and guides for actions they take" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 49). Additionally, beliefs are based on the foundation of the knowledge of materials, people, experiences, and relationships established that guide the thought process of planning and instructional strategies. "In classrooms, teachers, those

responsible for the organization, structure, and tone of learning experiences and social development, rely on their implicit and explicit beliefs to function in the complex context of classrooms, embedded in schools, embedded in communities, embedded in larger national, international, diverse cultures" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p.1). It is worthy to note that although teacher beliefs are based on judgment and evaluation they have been established as a result of experiences. These experiences may include but not limited to personal experiences as a child and adult, family traditions, social interactions, professional development, scholarly readings, and teacher preparation programs. "Beliefs influence how we attend, interpret, and respond to events and those involved in them, by functioning as 'filters,' 'frames,' and 'guides'" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p.191). "If teachers' beliefs influence their teaching, and therefore their students' opportunity to learn, then beliefs should be a central concern of teaching and teacher education" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 49). Perhaps teacher's beliefs should also be a concern to educational leaders and policy makers as they help to guide and navigate policy action. This study will focus on how the lived experience of implementing federal policy and the turnaround model of the OIP has impacted or influenced teacher beliefs.

Urban Teacher Beliefs

According to Bridwell (2012), there is minimal information that highlights the stresses of working in low performing high-poverty urban schools and the impact on their perceptions of the teaching profession. She notes that the working conditions in low performing high-poverty schools have daily challenges with few opportunities for quality development. Bridwell (2012) suggests that due to the systemic difficulties along with the

accountability policies, there is an impact on the optimal conditions for student achievement and teacher beliefs in the low performing high-poverty urban school. Bridwell conducted a study in 2012 that consisted of twelve African-American urban teachers who worked in low performing high-poverty schools. Her findings noted that the impact of mandated accountability measures of NCLB had negative effects on their beliefs about the teaching profession. Bridwell (2012) shared that the policy mandates of NCLB increased the teachers' level of stress, feeling drained, being overwhelmed. As a result, the teachers felt the mandates created a culture that focused on teaching to the test, which they noted as being "antithetical to their own educational philosophy of a student-centered pedagogy and saw it as running counter to their students' best interest" (Bridwell, 2012, p. 60).

Fisher-Ari et al., conducted a study in 2017 that consisted of thirty-eight Teach for America Corps Members that were teaching across twenty-six traditional public urban elementary schools in a southern urban school district. The purpose of the study was to examine the oppressiveness of policy mandates from the perspective of the teachers. According to Fisher-Ari et al, (2017) mandated policies from high-stakes accountability reforms created a volatile and vulnerable context for teachers and student learning. The teachers from the student felt that the mandates were not aligned with teaching practices and had a negative impact on student learning. However, the teachers from the study noted that they were held to a high level of accountability for the implementation of the mandates even though what best supports the needs of students does not fall into what is mandated. As a result, the teachers from the study shared that the policy makers "don't

want growth, they want results and they are corrupting an entire generation of children because of that" (Fisher-Ari et al.,2017, p. 8). The implications from their findings noted that "educational reformers should partner with members of the communities they purport to serve" (Fisher-Ari et al., 2017, p. 13). They also highlighted the notion that being situated in the communities would allow for them to be a listening leader and learner in a manner that would enable them to have insight on meaningful change that can support those they have been advocating for, when more often they have little knowledge of the individuals and communities they serve.

Shernoff et.al (2011) conducted a qualitative study aiming to highlight the sources of stress and its impact among urban teachers. Twenty teachers were randomly selected from three low performing, high poverty elementary schools. The study was situated in a large midwestern urban district. Six teachers declined to participate. Of the six, five reported they were not returning to their jobs, thus did not want to participate. One teacher reported health issues and declined to participate. The final sample was fourteen teachers. Twelve females and two males. Eight teachers had less than 3 years of teaching experience. There were three teachers with 3-5 years of teaching experience. Three teachers had 12-18 years teaching experience. Eighty-five percent or greater were low-income, low-wage families. Reading scores from the state assessment were below the thirty-third percentile in the state. Ninety-nine percent of the students from the schools were African-American and ninety-nine percent of the students from the schools are categorized as free and reduced lunch status (Shernoff et al., 2011).

The findings from the study conducted by Shernoff et al. (2011) revealed three primary causes of occupational stress in the urban high poverty, low performing schools. The first cause of occupational stress highlighted from the study was the demands of teaching seen as overwhelming. The contributors to the work overload and demands were intense behavioral and learning needs of students, accountability pressures from policy mandates, lack of support, and limited control and autonomy. The second source of occupational stress from the study listed the overcrowding of the schools, insufficient resources, and a high number of students with unmet mental health needs. The third cluster of causes highlighted in the study was work setting and job characteristics that were considered as chaotic school environments that focused on managing negative student behaviors.

The study produced by Shernoff et al. (2011) noted that the impact of occupational stress in high poverty, low performing urban elementary schools from the study. They highlighted fatigue, illness, mental health problems associated with stress was among the findings of the study. The study also noted that the negative impact on work performance led to negative interactions and relationships with students. Lastly, the study noted that the lack of job satisfaction caused the participants of the study to be disengaged, withdrawn, high absenteeism and attrition.

Ullucci and Howard (2015) suggest that students in low performing and high poverty schools are less likely to have access to resources that support a better quality of life. Lack of medical care and living in dilapidated homes that most likely led to exposure to lead-based paint. According to Ullucci and Howard (2015), the exposure to lead-based

paint has shown to be associated with behavioral problems and cognitive delays. "These circumstances undoubtedly influence school performance and academic outcomes" (Ullucci & Howard, 2015, p. 172). Students from high poverty areas often had a parent or parents with low-wage jobs or no employment/income at all, leading to high mobility rates disrupting the continuity of being in school, thereby compromising learning and achievement for students (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Additionally, students from these challenging backgrounds are also more likely to be exposed to violence, abuse, drugs, crime, and death. Ullucci and Howard (2015) note that the exposure to the aforementioned, has a significant impact on students' social, emotional, mental acumen, and overall well-being.

Ullucci and Howard (2015) note that in order to move forward in impoverished school communities and increase achievement, there needs to be an understanding that students should not be blamed for being poor. They assert that there should be an acknowledge that their circumstances and living conditions have significant impact on their everyday lives, which also impacts their learning and achievement. The implications for policy makers is to get involved with and acknowledge the enormity of what teachers and administrators in low-performing, high poverty school communities are tasked to accomplish by way of policy mandates (Ullucci & Howard, 2015).

Demoralization of Teachers

An interesting revelation is brought to light by the research of Santoro (2011) regarding teacher demoralization. "Teaching is an intellectual and moral practice fraught with contradictions, impediments, and challenges both quotidian and extraordinary"

(Santoro, 2011, p. 1). Additionally, Santoro (2011) highlights the notion that despite the challenges that are deep-seated in teachers' work, federal educational policies have affected teachers in their classrooms in unimaginable ways that lead to potential angst over necessary funding, possible reorganization, or closing of the school. Santoro (2011) notes that teachers experience demoralization with the phenomena of the crisis that many teachers face while teaching in high-poverty schools. Federal educational policy mandates under Title I require the implementation of scientifically based instructional practices/programs in the low performing schools. According to Santoro (2011), teachers ask the questions, "How is what I am doing bettering the world or myself?" and "Is this approach a good method for teaching my class given what I know about best practices?" (p. 2). As a result of the aforementioned questions, the cognitive dissonance created may overwhelm by way of not only grappling with the challenges of policy implementation but by also creating the question of one's own ethics by questioning their character.

When teachers are faced with consistent and ongoing frustrations with the inability to access the moral rewards of teacher, they become demoralized and feel they can no longer fulfill the altruistic thought of teaching to help students. Other scholars have observed the sense of demoralization with educational policy mandates and interference. For example, McFaddin (2018) noted that policy mandates are leading to diminishing professional skills of teaching. She suggests that teachers are spending time on mandated tasks that are prescribed or formatted in a manner that takes away from the ability to utilize their professional judgement. Additionally, she highlighted that the workload of teachers due to mandates is overwhelming. As a result, teachers feel they are

not trusted as professionals and are complying with tasks that are not necessarily aligned with supporting improving student learning.

As noted earlier, it has also been suggested that policies and policies related reports further exacerbate the feeling of not being respected and trusted because teachers are often accused of not being adequately prepared as in NCLB (Hill, 2007) and teachers are blamed for poor student performance and "mediocracy" as in ANR (Sunderman et al., 2004). These continued deficit perspectives about the teaching profession contributes to feelings of demoralization.

Decline in Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Attrition

According to Farmer (2020), the number of teachers projected to leave the profession is staggering. She notes that approximately twenty percent will leave the profession by their third year of teaching and fifty percent will leave by the end of their fifth year. Additionally, Farmer (2020) notes that seventeen percent of first year teachers leave the profession and seasoned teachers with ten years or more in the profession leave at a rate of ten percent per year. She highlighted that according to the United States Labor Department, k-12 teachers quit at an average rate of eighty-three per ten-thousand each month for the first ten months of 2018. Public school teachers had the highest departure rate among workers since the record keeping began in 2001 (Farmer, 2020).

Farmer (2020) highlights the notion of the high stress of teaching is well-known with causes in every facet of the teacher workday. She notes that due to the totality of the job of teaching ranging from policy mandates to knowing the mental state of students to being on the forefront of student safety, teachers and administrators are experiencing

"compassion fatigue at a level that is unprecedented" (Farmer, 2020, p. 41). She highlights that teachers are leaving the profession because of high levels of emotional exhaustion and low levels of personal accomplishment. This leads to high rates of teacher burnout (Farmer, 2020, p. 41).

According to Wronowski and Urick (2019), with the federal accountability era in education, teachers became targeted as the focal point for improvement linking them to accountability standards and improving student achievement. As a result, according to Wronowski and Urick (2019), teacher autonomy over the essence of teaching diminished. Due to the loss of autonomy, pressure to perform, and policy mandates led to the reporting of higher levels of stress, increased anxiety, longer work hours, low morale. Wronowski and Urick (2019) assert that the aforementioned brought on by the federal era of accountability was also described as de-professionalizing, demoralizing, and in general the cause of teacher burnout. The federal accountability measures and the loss of autonomy coupled with other factors has created unsatisfactory workplaces for some teachers that generate negative feelings towards the profession. They noted that this is especially prevalent in high poverty and low performing schools, which ultimately leads to teachers transferring out of low performing schools or leaving the profession altogether (Wronowski & Urick, 2019). "There is a relationship between teachers' perception of accountability and assessment policy implementation and the way in which teachers' perception of their work influences intent to leave and realize turnover" (Wronowski & Urick, 2019, p. 20). Lastly, when policy implantation mandates create the sense of hopelessness, loss of autonomy, compassion fatigue, emotional exhaustion, or

demoralization, according to Wronowski and Urick (2019), the only way teachers can remedy those feelings is by way of exiting their position or leave the profession of teaching.

When looking at teaching as a profession, teachers should be allowed a voice with the ability to determine and make decisions regarding the needs to improve student achievement. This sentiment aligns with what Pearson and Moomaw (2005) noted by stating, "If teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students, as doctor/lawyers do for their patients/clients" (p. 38). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) defined the freedom from the aforementioned as autonomy.

Santoro (2011) conducted a study of three high poverty elementary schools in a high achieving school district. She reviewed key elements and discovered that as a result of policy mandates that focused on high stakes testing, teaching and learning deteriorated due to the focus on the test and test preparation. The empirical case study analyzed the moral dimension of teaching in wanting to do good educating children. She took an interesting approach to analyzing teach attrition by analyzing the perspective of teachers finding moral value in the career of teaching. The results of Santoro's study found that educational reforms and policy mandates prevent teachers from meeting student needs and lessen the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, teachers become demoralized by way of not accessing the moral rewards of teaching.

According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), teacher autonomy is where teachers aspire to work independently as opposed to the external factors of consequences and rewards

determining their actions. Additionally, "people resist and struggle against pressure from external forces such as rules, regulations, orders, and deadlines imposed by others because it interferes with their need for autonomy" (Hoy & Miskel 2008, p. 134-135). In December 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released a study that examined perceptions of teacher autonomy across the school years of 2003-2004, 2007-2008, and 2011-2012. The results revealed that the perception of autonomy for teachers who taught in low performing schools went from high to low from 2003-2004 to 2007-2008. From 2007-2008 to 2011-2012, the perception of autonomy remained low for teachers who taught in low performing schools. In short, implementation of federal educational policy is a factor that has led to the decline of the perception of autonomy which in turn leads to lower self-esteem and feeling less competent (Hoy & Miskel 2008). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) also state that teacher autonomy, a form of empowerment, is critical to the successful implementation of any policy initiative.

Baggini (2008) also expressed skepticism about the declines in teacher autonomy suggesting that teachers had greater leeway and freedom to teacher the way they wanted by using their knowledge and expertise before the mandates around the National Curriculum. Further, according to Baggini (2008), mandated compliance supporting the National Curriculum was restrictive on what teachers should teach and teachers were forced to focus on standardized test outcomes, which in turn impacted teacher autonomy in a negative way. The result was teachers having less input on what to teach. Thereby the notion of what teachers teach and how it is taught is prescribed as opposed to allowing teachers to showcase their abilities or make instructional decisions for

themselves. This concern was echoed by Quaglia and Lande, (2017) who put forth that rather than building on and highlighting the contributions of our educators and their professional expertise "we have imposed systems that dictate policies and procedures, with little room for teacher voice" (p. 23). Additionally, Ingersoll (2016) highlighted the notion that policy implementation mandates may contribute to schools' low performance or make matters worse by hindering the teachers' ability to feel successful with increasing student achievement. Also, Ingersoll (2016) suggested that a key reason for the aforementioned is the lack of teacher autonomy in the classroom along with not being part of the decision-making process for improvement.

Organizational Systems – Culture and Climate

In order to fully understand the impact of educational policy on schools, as it relates to school culture and climate, a brief examination of the role and definition of school culture/climate is necessary for this study. "Behavior in organizations is not simply a function of formal expectations and individual needs and motivation" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p.175). Additionally, the purpose is to bring together individuals to work together as a unit to produce a good or service that could not be done alone. The vision of this organization is to use its resources, in the most meaningful way possible, to meet the needs of its stakeholders. The organizational system is rational, which "views organizations as formal instruments designed to achieve a specific organizational goal" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 10). It is most important that the organizations accomplish its goals as it relates to the vision and follow the established rules and guidelines. It has a clear hierarchical structure of authority that is designed to ensure consistency and

discipline with a focus on punishments and rewards. It is important that the members of the organization follow the written rules and remain in their formal roles. Hoy and Miskel (2001) suggest that schools are "a system of social interaction" (p. 22). When examining the organization as a social system, they are considered open systems (Bohlman & Deal, 2017), meaning that they are affected by the community and the external environment and politics. According to Hoy and Miskel (2001), schools are a social system that have goals, structures, and bureaucracy (pp. 22-23). The system has formal and informal guidelines that drives the behavior within the system which makes it normative (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 23). There is an assumption of rationality in the behavior of the members of the system. Roles and expectations are clearly defined to fulfill the goals and vision of the school. The school's social system is sanction bearing where the norms for behavior are supported through punishment and reward. As a result, the school's social system can create positive and negative ways of ensuring compliance. The school's social system creates a unique dynamic that distinguishes one school from another by defining the school culture (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 27). DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that, "the culture of an organization is founded upon the assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute norms for that organization – norms that shape how its people think, feel, and act" (p. 131). This is consistent with perspectives from scholars such as Bolman and Deal (2017). "In a school, shared beliefs and informal norms among teachers have a significant impact on behavior" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 27). As noted above, Hoy and Miskel (2001) generally view schools as open systems and that external factors impact them. In the context of this study, the external factors being explored are policies.

Each school has its own distinct organizational culture. Hoy and Miskel (2001, p. 27) note that organizational culture includes the shared norms, values, and beliefs of the individuals within the organization. Organizational culture "distinguishes one organization from another and provides members with a sense of organizational identity" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 27). Organizational culture can hinderance or an essential part of the effectiveness of the organization. When looking at the demands of a building administrator, "failure to grasp local culture and conditions can cause misjudgments regarding the obstacles to be overcome in order to raise student achievement" (Duke, 2014, p. 81). This could be initiated by way of dissonance created when required to implement policy that may not align with thoughts or beliefs regarding improving the school.

In 2009, MacNeil et al. published a study that focused on how school culture and climate impacted student achievement. They utilized the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) and reviewed the measures of the 10 dimensions of school climate. The authors of the study compared the schools that were rated Exemplary, Recognized, and Acceptable based on the Texas Accountability Rating System. The study found that when school environments have healthy and quality venues for learning, students perform better on standardized tests and assessments. (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 73). "When an organization has a clear understanding of its purpose, why it exists, what it must do and who it should serve, the culture will ensure that things work well" (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 74). According to Hoy and Miskel (2001), "Shared orientations help maintain cohesiveness and feelings of personal integrity, self-respect, and belonging" (p. 27). Thereby adding to

ensuring a well-functioning culture. "School culture is composed of a set of tacit assumptions and beliefs that have arisen as a group of educators has wrestled with the problems of practice over time, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid and that is consequently passed along to new organizational members as the proper way to think, perceive, and behave" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 302). It is also noted that "when the complex patterns of beliefs, values, attitudes, expectations, ideas, and behaviors in an organization are inappropriate or incongruent the culture will ensure that things work badly" (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 74). "The school's culture as a learning environment is fundamental to improved teacher morale and student achievement" (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 74). Organizational climate is the mood of the organization. It is a relatively enduring quality of an organization that comes out in the members' perceptions of the tone and behavior of the organization. The overall way the members feel about the organization, perceive the organization, and their attitude towards the organization.

Leadership Influence on School Culture and Climate

Culture is the deep-rooted essence or way of the organization whereas the climate is the temporary feel of the atmosphere influenced by the current leadership. According to Schein (2004), leaders initially establish cultures when they develop groups and organizations. The criteria for leadership is determined by way of established cultures. If the culture is dysfunctional, the goal of the leadership should be to determine the causal elements of the dysfunction and strive to improve the organizational culture and climate. Hoy and Miskel (2001), suggest that culture manifests itself in norms, shared values, and basic assumptions that occur at different level (pp. 27-28). According to Hoy and Miskel

(2001), norms are the informal and unwritten expectations of the organization that have a direct impact on behavior, whereas values are interpreted as what is desirable (p. 86). Core values are the most prevalent values that are shared by most members of the organization. The basic assumptions are the predisposed thoughts and perceptions about human relationships, human nature, truth, reality, and environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). "Shared beliefs and values describe the dedication of staff, engagement of students, trust and respect among students and adults, high expectations for students and staff, and the belief in the capacity of all students for success" (Rudasill et al., 2017, p.42).

Organizational climate includes characteristics that influence behavior of members of the organization and their attitudes. It may be considered as the personality of the organization. Organizational climate can be comprised of various dimensions and a variety of characteristics that may include being supportive, collaborative, demanding, restrictive, demonstrative, intimate, and/or disjoined (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). "Shared beliefs and values are at the core of school climate, shaping the expression of other variables within it" (Rudasill et al., 2017, p. 42). The climate types are open, engaged, disengaged, or closed. According to the Systems View of School Climate, a published study on school climate done by Rudasill et al. (2017) asserted that school climate is made up of the affective and cognitive impressions centered around social interactions, relationships, values, and the beliefs held by students, staff, and administration within the school. School climate is visible by way of the routine school-wide practices that are important to the school as a whole (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). "The efforts of policy-makers

and school principals to improve student learning in American schools have had less than the expected results education leaders need to reframe and refocus their leadership efforts. Simply altering the structure and expectations of schools has failed over the last 50 years" (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 77). Therefore, the organizational culture of schools are "a critical factor to the successful improvement of teaching and learning" (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 77).

This study examines teachers' beliefs and perspectives on their experience implementing educational policy mandates through the lens of cognitive dissonance. It is important to note the connection between the teacher inputs and the school culture and climate. If the teacher has trepidation surrounding implementation of educational policy, then the "feel" (climate) of the school and ultimately the "way we do things" (culture) will be negatively impacted. However, if there is excitement surrounding the implementation of educational policy, then the climate and culture can potentially be positively impacted. Therefore, in short, teacher beliefs are individual but as a social system, the teacher beliefs impact the school culture and climate. As a result, an examination of the policy impact on teacher beliefs may ultimately reveal the overall impact on school culture, climate, and student achievement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

This chapter will outline the full scope of the methodology for this study. An overview of the approach will be followed by the restating of the research questions. Next, the design of the research along with the rationale for the study will be highlighted and reviewed. The study will proceed to illustrate the details of the setting and the participants along with how these interviewees were selected. Interviews and an explanation of the interview protocol will follow with a list of the interview questions. Data analysis and coding will be followed by trustworthiness supported by an explanation of researcher bias, member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation and limitations of the research design. The chapter will conclude with a brief summary of methods.

Qualitative Methodology

"Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2007, p. 249). According to Merriam (2002), "the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals interacting with their world" (p. 3). It is also noted that "Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as a part of a particular context and the interactions there" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). This qualitative research looked into teacher perspectives on influence implementing educational policy may have had on their teacher beliefs through the lens of cognitive dissonance. Through the interview protocol, this study provided insight on the participant experience. With that, this study highlighted the

notion that the beliefs of educational practitioners, who are on the front lines of improving school performance are a necessary resource for creating and developing policy to be implemented with the purpose of bringing about overall success and improvement.

Research Questions

My experience has revealed that teachers and administrators are often in positions to implement educational policy that may not align with their personal beliefs. "Beliefs influence how we attend, interpret, and respond to events and those involved in them…" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 191). It is also noted by Fives and Gill (2015), that the convictions that are held to be true without evidence or verification are beliefs. It is suggested that teachers' beliefs center around professional attitudes education, teaching, and learning (Fives & Gill, 2015). This study fleshes out the possibility of policy implementation mandates impacting teacher beliefs or teacher beliefs impacting the implementation of policy mandates. This study gave participants an opportunity to share their experience of implementing policy mandates along with their beliefs about the policy through the lens of cognitive dissonance. According to Creswell (2007), "We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored" (p. 30). According to Yin (2018), "A case study is an empirical method that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 15). I used qualitative research and case study as the framework for my methodology and have the following as my primary research questions:

- How does the experience of policy implementation for elementary teachers impact their beliefs?

- What do elementary teachers identify as barriers and supports to implement educational policy mandates?

"Educational research is concerned not only with the activities of teachers and students in schools, colleges and universities, but all lifelong learning from cradle to grave" (Somekh & Lewin, 2007, p. 7). Qualitative research explores the richness, depth, and complexity of experiences. Examining mandates and beliefs through the lens of cognitive dissonance is a connection to understanding the role of educator input on improving student achievement in low performing schools. Qualitative research involves a discovery process that begins with an open-ended question. From there, the researcher gathers information utilizing open-ended data collection techniques to address the question. The research cannot be quantified with statistics. The goal is to gather an in-depth understanding of the human experience through researching a social issue or problem. The research reveals the how and why of the issue and gives the reader an opportunity to experience the good, bad, and indifferent through the lens of the participants studied. In short, qualitative research gives insight into how the participants feel, what they think, and what they experience as a whole. The key to qualitative research is being skilled at collecting data and presenting it in a manner that ensures the reader has an accurate depiction of the experiences of the participants studied in a manner that gives the feeling of being a part of the study.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), "Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information: (a) participating in the setting, (b) observing directly, (c) interviewing in depth, and (d) analyzing documents and material culture" (p. 97). "Observation entails the systemic noting and recording of events" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 98). It is further noted that behaviors are observed along with gathering artifacts (objects) from the social setting that is chosen for the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 98). Participant observation as noted by Marshall and Rossman (2006), "demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for the study" (p. 100). Being immersed in the setting allows for the researcher "to hear, to see, and to begin to experience reality as the participants do" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 100). Yin (2018) states that "Participant-observation is a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer. In-depth interviewing is described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101).

"Case study interviews will resemble guided conversations rather than structured queries" (Yin, 2018, p. 118). Interviews include having open ended questions and engaging prompts that produce in-depth and detailed responses about someone's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The data is exact quotes and explanations that are easily interpreted. "The knowledge of the history and context surrounding a specific setting comes, in part, from reviewing documents" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 106). Documents are written materials and other archived forms that may be clinical notes, programs recordings, memoranda correspondence, official publications and reports; personal diaries, letters, artistic works, photographs,

memorabilia. This also may include written responses to open-ended surveys. Data consists of excerpts from documents captured in a way that records and preserves context. The quality in the qualitative research depends greatly on the persuasive power of the results and how it is presented to develop meaning and understanding.

Rationale for Qualitative Case Study Research

The purpose of this study is to gain insight on whether teacher beliefs are impacted by policy implementation mandates through the lens of cognitive dissonance with elementary teachers who teach in priority schools in Ohio. This study uses qualitative methodology for researching the educator belief impact on policy mandates of the Turnaround Model for the Ohio Improvement Process. "The focus of all qualitative research needs to be on understanding the phenomenon being explored rather than solely on the reader, the researcher, or the participants being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 3). The federal and state initiatives are all well-intentioned yet, there remains low performing schools that are in priority status. Although there are some schools that have been successful, an overwhelming number of consistently low performing schools still exist. Due to the number of low performing schools, there is an increased focus on how to improve these organizations. Schools that implement policy requirements and the Turnaround Model of the OIP do so without monitoring the impact that the implementation mandates have on teacher beliefs. Examining policy implementation requirements and the Turnaround Model of the OIP is done so through a theoretical lens of cognitive dissonance. The approach to this study is to determine the impact of conflict created with educator teacher beliefs and the successful implementation of policy

mandates through the experiences of selected teachers and principals. This study will seek to capture the voices of the educators and their viewpoints about their experienced dissonance and how their beliefs impact the successful implementation of policy requirements of the Turnaround Model of the OIP has been. If the teacher believes the TBT meetings interfere with lesson planning or contacting parents, there may be some hesitance with being fully present and following through with the meeting.

Case Study Design

A qualitative case study design will be used for this research to examine the perspectives of educators regarding their experience implementing policy mandates from the Turnaround Model of the Ohio Improvement Process and its impact on their beliefs through the lens of cognitive dissonance. "A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2018, p. 15). For this study, the phenomenon is implementing mandates of the Turnaround Model and its impact on teacher beliefs through the lens of cognitive dissonance. Participants are able to share their real-world experience and provide contextual clarity on their beliefs while implementing the policy.

This study is a single-case study, and when aligning to what Yin (2018) states, that is supported by the five single-case rationales. They are:

1. Critical

2. Unusual

3. Common

4. Revelatory

5. Longitudinal (p. 49).

Highlighting the impact of policy mandates on teachers' beliefs while implementing with a cognitive dissonance lens is critical, unusual, and common because Hinnant-Crawford (2016) states, "Instead of being seen as a valuable resource in the design of educational policy, more often than not reformers discuss teacher beliefs and knowledge as aspects that need to be managed by policy and reform" (p. 1). This fits the criteria for critical because of the impact policy mandates may have on teacher beliefs if they are to be managed as opposed to valued. Unusual because Guerra and Wubbena (2017) suggested that teachers are expected to align their beliefs and practices with policy mandates while "…no research has used cognitive dissonance theory to understand how teachers' heterogeneous beliefs… are parsed in accordance with practice" (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017, p. 36). Common because the implementing mandates from the Ohio Improvement Process is required for all priority schools. This single case study is revelatory because I, have the opportunity to research and analyze a phenomenon that may be overlooked when policy that may rely on teacher beliefs for its success or failure is designed and crafted for implementation. Lastly, this study is a longitudinal case because if studying the same case at different points of time, the processes being studied should reflect the theoretical propositions currently posed (Yin, 2018, p. 51).

Teachers and principals were given an opportunity to express their story in an effort to bring about an understanding of how their beliefs may impact the successful implementation of a mandated policy along with how dissonance from the mandate may

impact the overall performance of the school. In referencing educational policy implementation, DuFour and Eaker (1998) in their research about professional learning communities state, "Practitioners had become mere pawns in the movement, and the vast majority of the reform efforts had simply been imposed on them" (p. 6). This study highlighted the impact that educator beliefs have on successful policy implementation along with the impact the resulting dissonance created may have on the overall school performance by allowing educators identified for this research to share their view-points based on their experiences. It is noteworthy that during the course of this study, there have been changes to federal policy that may impact teaching as a whole in K-12 schools. Therefore, case study research is the best qualitative approach explore the aforementioned by way of multiple sources to investigate and illustrate the issue.

To delve into the questions of my study, I used cognitive dissonance theory imbedded in the case study of elementary teachers' beliefs being impacted by the policy implementation of the policy mandates set forth by the Ohio Improvement Process for priority schools. This study presents the elementary teachers' perspective on their experience implementing policy mandates of the Ohio Improvement Process. The interviewed participants provided insight on the influence of practice and provide a norm of how educator beliefs influence policy implementation at the building level along with overall school performance. This study specifically sought participants in schools that are directly impacted by the implementation requirements of educational policy mandates in particular the mandates of the Turnaround Model of the OIP. This study hopes to reveal an understanding of the dissonance created when a "one-size fits all" approach is applied

to improving low performing schools. The "one size fits all" approach may not always be sustainable or successful due to the fact that there may be differences in the various school organizations. Often schools have different formal and informal structures that impact the culture of the organization. Thus, a more tailored strategy may be needed when implementing requirements to improve low performing schools centered around educator beliefs. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), "data on the background and historical context are gathered for each qualitative study (p. 107). I reviewed the archived data of past TBT and BLT meeting notes to get a sense of the tone and focus of the meetings while also reviewing the school's state report card data. This provided contextual information regarding the status of the school.

Setting

Given that I am interested in the topic of turnaround schools in an urban Ohio school district, I used these elements to identify a setting for my research that was consistent with these characteristics. The setting for my research is an urban Midwestern school district with approximately twenty to forty thousand students. The elementary teachers and principals were selected from schools that are urban public schools currently in priority status based on the stipulations of OIP. and have worked in their school for a minimum of three to five years. The schools have more than 90% of the student population listed in free/reduced lunch status. The schools had three or more consecutive years of performing in the lower five percent of the Ohio standardized assessment process. The schools implemented the Turnaround Model based on the OIP which requires the implementation of reconstitution (replacing principal and teaching staff to

where no more than 50% are re-hired) and the use of researched based teaching model.

An additional mandate of the Turnaround Model of the OIP is the creation of a building

leadership team and teacher-based teams with regularly scheduled meetings to review

and analyze school data. The school will need improving academically based on the

results of having an F on the school report card in the category of achievement. Student

subgroups of socio-economic, race, and English Language Learners (ELL) are

highlighted on the school's report card to note the organizational diversity of departments

that serve or support students.

Participants and Selection

The selection of the participants was done on the basis of purposeful sampling

strategy. According to Creswell (2007), this approach is used to select participants when

"they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central

phenomenon in the study" (p. 125). This study identified a total of seven elementary

school educators. Of the participants, four were teachers and three were principals who

had been employed full time and who had worked in a priority school since the institution

of the Turnaround Model. I selected educators for this study who had been at their

priority school, a minimum of three to five years. The purpose of the specific three to

five-year parameter was to ensure that the participants have had an in-depth experience in

a priority school setting. In addition, the purpose of the specified number of years

working in a priority school was to ensure that they have a working knowledge of the

OIP and what it means to have a priority school status. This study selected principals that

have been in the role for a minimum of one full academic year. The purpose of a

minimum of one full academic year for principals was for the knowledge of what is required for mandated reporting to the State of Ohio that occurs in the beginning and middle of the school year. In an attempt to bring awareness to the impact that their beliefs have on the successful implementation of policy mandates and the Turnaround Model of the OIP, the experience of the educator working in priority schools is essential to highlight the possibility of the dissonance created by implementing policy mandates and the possible impact on overall school performance that may lead to the consistent low performance of the school.

The participants are selected from priority schools that have experienced the implementation of the Turnaround Model of the OIP. The purposeful sampling was done utilizing the homogeneous sampling strategy in an effort to focus and simplify the interviewing process. The participants were contacted via email and through the selection process, the opportunity to snowball or chain the sampling will be made available in case the number of participants do not meet the initial criteria. Creswell (2007) states that snowball or chain sampling "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (p. 127). According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is "information rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest; sampling, then is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample population" (p. 40). Patton (2002) also contended that qualitative inquiry is usually highlights relatively small purposefully selected cases to bring about an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Description of the Participants

The researcher obtained permission for the school district to interview participants. The researcher directly contacted the participants and emailed the consent forms. The researcher directly contacted 12 eligible educators. Three did not respond. Two responded positively but when the researcher attempted to make follow up contact to schedule an interview, they did not respond. Seven educators responded, positively, returned the signed consent form, and educator demographic. Two of the seven participants taught in the same school. The remaining five were at different schools. Each participant is a member of a professional organization. The four participants that are teachers are members of the teacher's union. The three principals are members of the local and state administrator's association. Pseudonyms are utilized in the table below:

Table 4.1 Educator Demographics

	Shirley	Vivian	Lavern	Gladys	Valerie	Irma	Bruce
Years in priority school	8	3	3	3	5	6	8
Role	Ins. Coach	Teacher	Teacher	Prin.	Prin.	Prin.	Spec. Ed.

Interviews

Interviews provide insight and explanations of specific events by way of the reflective responses of the participants. I conducted in-depth interviews which are according to Marshall and Rossman (2006) "are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories" (p. 101). Interviews are a collection of responses from participants. According to Czarniawska (2004), "an interview is two persons seeking knowledge and understanding in a common conversational endeavor" (p. 47). During this research, I engaged in a conversation with the interviewees. Yin (2018) also states that "case study interviews are usually conversational in nature and guided by the researcher's mental agenda, as the interview questions do not follow the exact same verbalization with every participant interviewed" (p. 287). The interviews in this study are semi-structured with guiding questions to evoke a conversational tone to lead to insights about the teachers' perspective on their beliefs impacted by policy implementation mandates specific to priority schools and the Ohio Improvement Process. I established a conversational partnership to build an open and trusting conversation. Rubin and Rubin (2012) states that conversational partnership "conveys the respect the researcher has for the interviewee's experience and insights and emphasizes that interviewing is a joint process of discovery" (p. 7). According to Adams (2015), semi-structured interviews "are conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time, the SSI employs a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up *why* or *how* questions" (p. 493). As suggested by Creswell (2007), an audio recorded semi-structured interview took place and I transcribed the

interview shortly after it has concluded. Patton (2002) suggested that "interviewing with an instrument that provides respondents with largely open-ended stimuli typically takes a great deal of time" (p. 227). Therefore, interviews were between 60 – 90 minutes in length.

Interview Protocol

The qualitative interview protocol as seen in appendix A, was established to maintain consistency to support reliability of the research. "Case study interviews will resemble guided conversations rather than structured queries" (Yin, 2018, p.118). Rubin and Rubin (2012), note that "researchers talk to those who have knowledge of or experience with the problem of interest" (p. 3). Interviewees were selected from schools that are identified as priority schools. The interview was semi-structured with questions and prompts to engage the participant in conversation in a manner to where they shared their experience and reflected on the dissonance created between their beliefs and policy implementation mandates. The interview was conducted face-to-face following the Covid-19 safety protocol recommended by the Centers for Disease Control to the current state of the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants were informed that the interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and a copy of the transcript was provided to them to support the member checking process for this research. I utilized the same question prompts as shown in appendix A with all the participants. Through the interview protocol, the intention was to examine if their beliefs had an impact on the successful of policy implementation mandates along with possible dissonance created impacting overall school performance. An audio recording device was utilized, with the participant's

consent, to ensure accurate accounts of the participant responses. Participants were in a conversational interview to which questions were asked to elicit details regarding their experience with policy implementation and the dissonance created as a result. The protocol followed the guidelines approved by the Institutional Review Board prior to going into the field for the study. The participants of this study were informed that their involvement was completely their choice and they may reverse course and not participate, quit, or not engage with the interview at any time without penalty. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used to replace identifiers. There was a primary list that served as a key that connected the code and the identifier. The primary list was saved on a password protected file. Consent was obtained either via US mail or electronically, if permitted and confirmed prior to the beginning of the interview. The data collection began after approval for this study is granted from Ohio University's Institutional Review Board. The online consent form followed the guidelines set forth by Ohio University's Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis and Coding

Within the realm of qualitative data analysis, data collection is the first step in the process. Sorting and analyzing data is essential for finding themes or trends applicable to the qualitative research. The analysis of data relates to how the researcher structures what they see, hear, and read and it is also predicated on how the researcher comes to understand his or her learnings (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). Data collected was analyzed and coded based on the responses of from the participants. Saldana (2016) notes that "a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a

summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 4). Data from the interview transcripts was utilized for the coding and data analysis. The coding provided an interpretation of the experiences expressed through participant interviews and revealed themes or patterns in the data. Through the first cycle of coding, descriptive patterns was identified from the transcribed data by way of In Vivo coding. Saldana (2016) notes that this refers to "in that which is alive," he further suggests that the data will be transcribed "… as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, the terms used by participants themselves" (p. 105). The data was examined through the lens of similarity to extrapolate the common themes such as educators who were experiencing dissonance from mandated policy implementation. The second cycle of coding was to categorize the codes and to flesh out themes and concepts that led to assertions and theory. The data was reviewed for trends and patterns.

Coding Process

Interviews were conducted utilizing a recording device. The recordings were transcribed by uploading the recording to the online transcription service Temi at a cost per transcription. Each transcription was compared to the recording. This was done by reading the transcription while listening to the recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. There were minor discrepancies due to background noise or low sound quality periodically during the interview. Throughout the participant interviews, I noted key expressions and terminology in my research field journal that highlighted participant thoughts and beliefs as they related to the research questions. There was one out of the

seven participants who made contact with me for member checking with the desire to expand thoughts on their initial interview.

During the coding process, I followed the In Vivo first cycle of coding by reading the interview transcripts and noting terms and phrases that were attuned to the research questions. From the initial coding cycle, there were 172 expressions and terms shared by participants that I documented in an excel spreadsheet. The interview transcripts showed that the participants shared expressions and terms such as "overwhelmed", "checking boxes", and "out of touch", just to name a few. Cross referencing the field journal notes and the interview transcripts, an excel spreadsheet was created with each participant having their own column. Key terms and expressions were taken and written directly from the participant responses to the interview questions. These codes can be found along with prominent comments from additional information shared. The initial cycle code book is located in Appendix F.

The second cycle of coding that I followed was pattern coding. I grouped the terms and expressions by similarity in responses to the interview questions. Common terms and similar expressions were color coordinated and eventually led to emerging themes that captures the essence of this study. Throughout the interview, terms and direct quotes were written in my field journal that had direct connection to the research questions of this study. Once the interview was transcribed, a comparison of the transcription and what was written in the field journal was made to ensure accuracy of context. This also aided with the emergence of themes as I conducted pattern coding. During pattern coding and the second cycle coding, I was able to extract and summarize

emerging themes from the data. This allowed for a more focused category of themes that were clearly evident and meaningful. Once the three themes emerged of common clustered codes became salient, the process of post coding and pre-writing began to write up the final analysis of my study.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness, there has to be a thorough and intentional collection of data. In qualitative research, it is important to report accurate findings from the participants to support the validity of the research (Creswell, 2007). Validation is the rigorous analysis of data that reveals substantive meaning and understanding. Data collection and analysis thereof needs to be transparent in order for the researcher to demonstrate the thoroughness and rigor of the qualitative research path taken. Transparency of the path provides insight on the process of transforming data to knowledge and findings, which enhances the validity of the research (Merriam, 2002). Providing a detailed narrative of the process that shows the complexities and intricacies that are imbedded with the research will also convince the readers of the accuracy (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Marshall and Rossman (2006) raise four questions to establish trustworthiness. They are as follows:

1. How credible are the particular findings of the study and what criteria can we use to judge them?

2. How transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people?

3. How can we be reasonably sure that the findings would be replicated if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context?

4. How can we be sure that the findings reflect the participants and the inquiry itself rather than a fabrication from the researcher's bias or prejudices (p. 201)?

Amankwaa (2016) notes that trustworthiness is established by the same criteria listed by the four questions but asserts them as the following:

- Credibility – confidence in the truth of the finding

- Transferability – showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts

- Dependability – showing that the findings are consistent and can be repeated

- Confirmability – a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (p. 121).

When highlighting ways of establishing credibility, Amankwaa (2016), notes that triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking are among several techniques that are used. When examining transferability, providing explicit details of the experience step by step, the reader will have the opportunity to draw conclusions on how the process is transferable to other scenarios, settings, times, and participants (Amankwaa, 2016). Additionally, dependability is best served with inquiry audits. Inquiry audits are the process to which a researcher who is not involved with the study inspects methods and

findings of the study in order to evaluate the accuracy of the study along with assessing whether the end results are supported by the data (Amankwaa, 2016). To establish confirmability, utilizing an audit trail will provide a detailed explanation of the process from the beginning of the study to reporting of the finding (Amankwaa, 2016). In short, the trustworthiness and credibility of this study is established through peer debriefing and member checks. I discuss these various approaches to trustworthiness in more detail below.

Member Checking

Member checking will be a formal and informal process where data analysis, interpretations, and conclusive findings are reviewed with the participants for accuracy and validity. According to Saldana (2016) in short, member checking is a way of consulting with participants during analysis as a way to validate findings along the way. The purpose is to give participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge perceived interpretations that appear to be incorrect. Maxwell (2010) recognizes that member checking is a key strategy in avoiding the possibility of misunderstanding participant perspectives and meanings. Creswell (2007) concurs and suggests that member checking is the process of gathering of the data, the analysis, judgments, and conclusions to share them with the participants so they can verify the truthfulness and preciseness of the chronicled study. The process of member checking will be incorporated into my research by way of establishing a follow up meeting after the initial interview has been transcribed and coded. Lastly, the discussion of the transcript and data

analysis will allow for clarification of emergent ideas along with potential new insights about the data collected.

Peer Debriefing

To establish additional means of credibility of the qualitative data inquiry, peer debriefing is an additional bridge to overall trustworthiness. Peer debriefing allows for detailed discussions about the findings and progress of the study. "Peer debriefing contributes to the confirming that the findings and the interpretations are worthy, honest, and believable" (Spall, 1998, p. 280). A peer debriefer is a person who seeks clarity by way of critically questioning the process, methods, findings, and meanings of the study while providing counter or alternative perspectives. Peer debriefer may also serve as a sounding board for the researcher to express feelings about the overall process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing is also a way of making the qualitative research process more transparent.

> Peer debriefing is an effective way of motivating the researcher to document the evolution of a research study to an impartial colleague or a disinterested peer who critically examines information at various stages of the research process and provides feedback to the researcher that he or she might use to make adjustments to future phases of the current study or to future studies (Collins et al., 2013, p. 276).

For this study, I selected two peer debriefers who are professional peers that are not involved with the research but will be relied upon for open, honest, and non-confrontational conversation throughout the course of the research. The purpose of the

study was shared with the peer debriefers so they are aware of the focus of the study. The

peer debriefers asked relevant questions about the study, provided critical feedback

regarding the data, while noting strengths and areas to improve the study. The peer

debriefers have experience as in the education profession. The peer debriefers reviewed

the study and discussed the data collected and provided feedback that focused on the

research process and organizing the data.

Self as Researcher

The qualitative case study researchers collect data themselves by way of

examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants (Creswell,

2007, p. 75). As a principal who has administrative experience in a Priority school, there

are inclinations that I have that may demonstrate subjectivity. I have been a principal in

low performing elementary schools from 2000 to 2016. During that time, I have had the

opportunity to experience professional development at the University of Virginia where

the Curry School of Education and the Darden School of Business and worked in tandem

to create a program called the Turnaround School Specialist Program. The program was

designed in a manner where business concepts of leadership and operation were fused

with the intricacies of educational systems of leadership and operation. This was done to

build leadership capacity and to assist with improving a low performing school. Thus far

over the course of my career I have been able to demonstrate necessary skills and

knowledge to facilitate academic growth and success in four different urban elementary

schools within the same school district. I am compelled to acknowledge that based on my

experience as a principal, federal policy has impacted school climate, leadership roles,

and teacher workloads. Over the course of my experience, in order to circumvent the overall impact of policy implementation, I have learned that in each vastly different educational setting I have been fortunate enough to be the principal, there are four essential questions that are asked of me as the leader either directly or indirectly through the interaction of my staff. They are: Can I trust you? Do you value me? How will you respond when I make a mistake? How will you respond if I face a personal, familial, or health crisis? Trust is essential to establishing an environment that fosters open two-way communication about whatever is necessary to facilitate growth and learning for students. Being valued is essential to knowing that one is being heard and at times sought after to provide input on the needs of the educational setting. Through the way I respond to mistakes has determined the creative and healthy risks that are taken to motivate and inspire challenging ways to keep students actively engaged with the demands of school. My response to a personal, familial, or health crisis, builds and supports the affirmation of trust and value within the organization. Although school settings, school cultures, school climate, staff dynamics are very different, the four questions remain the same and that has guided me to the question of how does the policy implementation impact teacher beliefs?

Additionally, I participate with a state level association for elementary and middle school administrators. Being a participant in the organization has allowed for me to gain insight and perspective on state level legislative educational policy decisions that directly impacts urban, suburban, and rural K-12 schools. These decisions are at times questioned

by administrators from all levels about its impact and as a result, highlights the significance of this study.

Through this study, I must acknowledge that my first role is as researcher. I will interview candidates and reflect on their responses intently so that my subjectivity will not cause me to hear what I want to hear. I also acknowledge that as someone who has experienced the effects of ever-changing policy, I may have credibility with the participants of the study. As researcher, I am a learner to garner an understanding of the impact policy has had on teacher and administrator beliefs. This will lead me to "reflect on all aspects of research procedures and findings" (Glesne 2006, p. 46). I am a student of the research with the intentions of learning from the participant responses therefore preventing myself from diminishing trust by having the appearance of someone who know everything about policy and its impact on teacher beliefs. In short, I will listen to the participants, objectively reflect on their responses, and report data along trends and common themes.

Researcher Bias

For this study, I recognize that I have been an educator under federal and state educational policy implementation mandates that have impacted my work as an administrator. As a principal, I have experienced the cognitive dissonance that many educators have while implementing mandated policies in priority school because I have served as an educational leader in a priority setting. Over the course of my career, I have facilitated improvement or turned around five schools and set them on the trajectory of success. I have served as the principal of each of these five schools for less than four

years each. Further, as the schools gained momentum towards continued success, I was placed at another school with the task of duplicating or exceeding the progress made at the previous school. I understand that I have a certain level of bias as it relates to this study due to having applicable knowledge of approaches used to turn schools around while reconciling the implementation of policy that conflicts with personal beliefs. I will acknowledge my role as the researcher who will be the primary instrument for developing the interview questions and collecting data. I will seek to maintain authenticity of the research while learning about the impact policy implementation has on the participant's beliefs.

Summary of Methods

To summarize, the focus of this qualitative case study is to highlight elementary teacher perspectives on the impact of implementing policy mandates from the Turnaround Model of the Ohio Improvement Process on their beliefs. Through participant interviews and analysis data, this study hopes to highlight the importance of educator beliefs as it relates to the implementation of policy through the lens of cognitive dissonance theory.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study sought to examine the impact of educational policy implementation mandates on teacher beliefs. This research also explored the barriers and supports for implementing the mandates of the Ohio Improvement Process based on the participant's experience. The participants in this study were educators who either taught in a priority school or served as the principal of a priority school for a minimum of three years. There was a total of seven participants - one male and six females. At the time of this study, three of the participants were administrators, three of the participants were classroom teachers. One participant was an instructional coach. Through the lens of cognitive dissonance, this study focused on the experience of the educator and the impact of educational policy mandates on their beliefs. This study also highlighted the participant's perspective on the success of educational policy mandates or lack thereof while providing an avenue for the participants to voice their thoughts and beliefs on the implementation of policy mandates impacting the school environment and workplace dynamics.

This chapter begins with a description of the participants, emerging themes, and quotes to highlight the themes. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview to answer the following questions:

1. How does the experience of educational policy implementation mandates for elementary school educators impact their beliefs?

2. What do elementary educators identify as barriers and supports to implement educational policy mandates?

Participant Profiles

Shirley

"When you mandate it without the proper rollout, training, and support, nobody understands what they are required to do and it all falls apart."

Shirley is a white female in her fifties and was an instructional coach that had worked in a priority school setting for eight years. Shirley stated that her school is a priority school because of student performance data. As instructional coach, she supported reading instructional strategies along with focusing on OIP where one day per week was spent participating with teacher based team meetings supporting the process. This was done to make sure the meetings were meaningful and "not just another box checked." Shirley believes that the research and theories behind what the OIP does actually work, "when done correctly." She highlighted that she has done it as a classroom teacher and as an instructional coach. She spoke about challenges and stated, "Now, when you're already overwhelmed and you already have kids that are reading below grade level, you're trying to make two years' worth of growth, if (OIP) is not done or rolled out correctly, it becomes another thing to do." It overwhelms the teachers and it then gets lost in the process. When Shirley first began working at her priority school, there were "boxes and boxes" of TBT forms that had been filled out with data but didn't mean anything to anyone. No one thought it did any good and they were checking boxes to be compliant, but it was a waste of time. Shirley noted that the OIP does not directly address the needs of ELL and IEP students. She referenced a conversation with her principal where they stated that they "gotta do what we gotta do and watch all of our populations of students and see what group needs our help

because there's no IEP lines at Walmart." Shirley stated that she believes that if you collect data that is meaningful and is used to make changes and implement interventions in your classroom, the OIP works. The difference between priority and nonpriority schools is attitude. Nonpriority schools have a culture where teachers can teach what they want, have less accountability, and less stress. Shirley notes that in priority schools, "there is someone looking over your shoulder." She reconciles it as an opportunity but many people do not see it as an opportunity but as a "gotcha system." It makes for higher stress, however, if a teacher is doing what they need to do instructionally, students are making gains, then there is nothing to worry about.

Shirley notes that almost half of the teaching staff in her priority school was new to teaching or had been teaching in their school less than three years. She noted that as a teacher, she experienced success with the OIP because she had a small group of students for longer periods of time in the day. As an instructional coach, Shirley has noted the success she had as a teacher implementing the mandates of the OIP so that as she is working with teachers, she could have some "buy-in" and not be looked upon as a "talking head." The mandates of the OIP do not address teacher perspective on assigning homework and focusing on a student not doing homework. Shirley spoke to teachers getting "hung up on they didn't do their homework so how do I know they can do it?" Shirley believes that what needs to happen for many students in a priority school does not match with the mandates of the OIP such as coming to school without proper supplies or wearing the same outfit multiple days in a row. In addition, Shirley highlights the notion that the issue isn't that students could not do the work, excel academically, or perform proficiently on

standardized test, the issue she noted is that many students deal with homelessness, not be able to come to school because their parents could not or would not bring them. There is an issue of where families go to various friends or relatives' homes to stay until they find their own place or have to move on to the next. There are also mental health and drug abuse issues that she says are prevalent throughout the school and the school community to where the focus becomes less on the mandates of the OIP but more on how to meet the needs of children to make them feel safe and wanted in school.

Vivian

"We as teachers know what our kids can do, we need more time to work with our kids and not give assessment after assessment and sit in meetings all the time."

Vivian is a white female in her fifties and was teaching first grade at the time of this study. She had taught in a priority school for three years but had been in teaching for twenty-eight years with all of her experience teaching has been in an urban school district. Vivian was a member of a local, state, and national education association at the time of this study. The priority school implemented the turnaround model to where the principal was able to hire the instructional staff. Nine of the eleven teachers hired were new to the school. She stated that she knew the priority school was challenging academically and behaviorally but because of the leadership of the principal of the priority school, "it was something we could all work through together." Vivian stated that it wasn't easy but the teachers that were hired knew that they were working towards the same goal of trying to change the academic and behavioral status of the priority school. She stated that she has learned a lot

about herself and what she could do and what she could handle through the challenges of a priority school.

Vivian stated that the difference between a priority and non-priority school is like night and day. There are notable differences in student behavior where there are more aggressive and negative behaviors in the priority school. She also stated that there was more parental support in the non-priority school. Vivian stated that because the principal hired the staff of the priority school and they had a common goal, a notable difference was that the staff of the priority school was more willing to assist and support each other than at the non-priority school. She stated that the staff at the priority school trusted each other and was very comfortable working together and that was most likely because the principal was able to "handpick" the staff. She stated that she could turn to any staff member of the priority school but there were only one or two staff members she could have turned to in the non-priority school for support. Vivian stated that teachers know what their kids can do but the mandates take time away from being able to thoroughly reflect and collaborate to support the student needs. Collecting data is good but the mandates of multiple assessments get in the way of actually being able to work with the students individually, and as a result, nothing will change.

Lavern

"The OIP 100% conflicts with my beliefs. What we are told to do isn't about what we have to do. It is about figuring out what the needs of the students are and meeting them where they are to get them where they need to be."

Lavern is a white female in her thirties and was teaching first grade at the time of this study. She has been a teacher for a total of twelve years and taught in a priority school for three. All of her teaching experience has been in an urban school district. Lavern states that in order for a school to be a priority school, state test scores are in a certain lowest percentage of the state for three consecutive years. She noted that there are mandates that they are supposed to do as educators but states that there are things that educators do that is in the best interest of children. The key is having a principal that understands both aspects to assist with balancing it out while moving in the right direction. Lavern believes that the mandates require one thing but as an educator, you know what you are supposed to do and there is a need for a "middle ground" in order to be able to do both. "Unfortunately, the people that make the decisions have not been in a school setting and if they have, they are so far removed from what education is like currently in today's world, that the things they say or suggest or demand are not feasible." Lavern states that the policy makers are not looking at what the needs are of students and educators. She believes, "they look at what they think needs to be done to get a certain achievement instead of looking at the steps to get the correct steps to get to the actual achievement." Lavern states that the mandates of the OIP does not drive her instruction but did it because she was supposed to do it. She stated that the mandates of the OIP has conflicted with her beliefs because there are many things that are required to do to improve student test scores and learning to get a better status, however, she states that is not what it is about. Lavern states that "it's about figuring out what the students' needs are and meeting them where they are to get them where they need to be." She stated that when you have a class of students that are all on different levels,

the mandates require doing the same things for the students does not grow the students. She questioned what she is supposed to do and finding the middle ground to finding the balance, and as a result is "part of what is causing teacher burnout."

Gladys

"In failing schools there is this belief that it has to be the kids' fault that they are not achieving. There is this soft bigotry of low expectations because this child is wearing the same clothes they wore for the past three days."

Gladys is an African American female in her thirties. She had been a principal of a priority school for three years at the time this study was conducted and had been in education for a total of eight years. She taught at a private school in a different state before coming to the urban district she as a principal at the time of this study. Gladys stated that a mentor shared that the OIP is your legacy and is what you leave behind. She stated that it lives on past you. However, another mentor shared with her that it is something of a compliance piece and you have to "jump through hoops" and it is something you have to do. While she stated that she appreciated both perspectives, due to the timing and mandates, "it does feel like something you just jumped through and it does feel like a hoop." Gladys believes that with the mandates and the pace of the school year, you do not have enough time to really talk to your team and talk to your parents about the status, requirements, and expectations. Gladys notes that her school is a priority school because it is a failing school. The school has earned an F on the state report card. She describes her school as a neighborhood school with a historical legacy due to the number of parents and grandparents who attended the school as a child. She notes that what happens in the neighborhood

directly impacts what happens in the school. Gladys states that the school is "literally a microcosm of the larger community." She stated that the most prolific differences between priority and non-priority schools are parents and teacher perspective. Gladys stated that parents in a non-priority school have more conversations about their child's education and are more engaged. Teachers in a priority school make comments like "they just can't do it" and that it is the student's fault they are not achieving. She stated that there is the "soft bigotry of low expectations" in a priority school because a child may be wearing the same clothes for three days or there is another non-academic barrier to which the teacher assumes they cannot learn. Gladys stated that "there are more gaps than what OIP could ever possibly capture on seven pages of paper." She noted that her largest concern about OIP is that it is not getting to the "heart of what's wrong."

Valerie

> "It would be far more beneficial to have a professional development day where
>
> the entire school weighs in on how to improve."

Valerie is a white female principal in her fifties. At the time of this study, she has been an educator for twenty-two years, seven of them teaching and the remaining as an administrator. She had been a principal in a priority school for five years. Valerie stated that her school was a priority school because of the data, however, she stated other factors that made her school a priority school such as older facilities with no upgrades, dangerous neighborhood, parents in crisis and their inability to support the school. Valerie stated that the students have the ability to learn but there are so many barriers in their way that OIP does not address to where it was necessary to prioritize the needs of the students first. She

described how she brought resources to the school but had to remove them at the request of the district. Despite the barriers and danger of the neighborhood, Valerie called her priority school a "diamond in the rough." Although it has taken time, she was hiring staff members that were there for the right reasons and not hiding. She noted that the culture was changing to where the staff and partners were utilizing the same language along with the same types of priorities outlined. She stated that although there is a lot of support even though there was a revolving door of administrators and staff. Valerie noted that there were many partners willing to collaborate to improve the school. However, Valerie noted that the mandates of the OIP are excessive that "aren't about the business of teaching kids." The structure of what is required to be reported is not "organic" and it takes away from what needs to be done.

Irma

"It's a different mindset when you come to school and someone gives you a bookbag full

of supplies versus coming to school with your own."

Irma is an African American female in her fifties. At the time of this study, she had taught for five years and had been a principal for twenty-five years. All of her experience had been in an urban school district and she had been principal of a priority school for six years. She stated that her school was a priority school based on data of how children perform academically on the state assessment and they were significantly below expectations. She described her school as a wonderful school with a lot of challenges. Her school instituted the turnaround model to where the principal and all of the teachers were new to the school. Irma was tasked with hiring the teachers. Her first year, she had twenty

different substitute secretaries. Although she was able to have an assistant principal her first year, the person had some challenges beforehand that carried over to their performance and her school. She stated that her goal was to get the very best out of people she could hire. Irma stated that her focus was to get the right people for the positions in the school and build relationships. She noted that there is a mindset for some people to take the job of teaching in a priority school just to get into the district then leave for another school within. There is a lack of consistency among the staff and children have to build relationships with teachers over and over again. She noted that priority schools are challenging and the staff hired should have the desire to meet student needs in a different and deep way. Irma stated that many teachers believe they have the desire until they have to put in the work. She noted that since the challenges of priority schools are more demanding, some teachers leave searching for a better environment to teach. Irma stated that she was very committed to being the principal of a priority school and would not request to move despite the challenges within the community, the school and, and the district. During member checking, Irma wanted to highlight that children in priority schools live in two different worlds. She says they have to "master neighborhood home life" and what we teach at school. She stated that the difference between priority schools and non-priority schools is economic, however, noted that there is a different mindset between coming to school with a bookbag of school supplies versus coming to school and someone giving you a bookbag full of supplies and food. She also stated that children from a non-priority school may come home to people there who can listen to them read and practice along with encouraging them to do it. Whereas, she noted, children from priority schools may come home and it is empty,

"not because they don't love me, but because they've gotta work three jobs and one of the is at night, and I've gotta do everything myself as a child." Lastly, Irma stated that the difference between priority and non-priority is that the demands of priority school a greater to the point of not being able to fully focus on learning due to the social and emotional needs of student while fulfilling the demands of OIP.

Bruce

"We need consistent programming. It seems as though every year I am

trying something new because policies change. You just need

time to get into a groove and see if it really works."

Bruce is an African American male in his thirties. At the time of this study, he had been teaching for fourteen years and had taught special education in a priority school for eight years. All of his experience has been in an urban school district. Bruce stated that his school was a priority school because of test scores being low for a certain amount of years. He described his school as a tough school because it was not a neighborhood school and that it drew students from around the city. As a result, there was no "neighborhood vibe" so when there were school events, family participation lacked primarily due to transportation. He noted that the difference between priority and non-priority schools was student and family engagement. Bruce stated that parents were more involved in their child's education and reach out to teachers at non-priority school. As a special education teacher, Bruce appreciates the mandates of the OIP because it allows him to communicate more with general education teachers about what they are doing in their classroom, instructional strategies, and how to better assist his special needs students. He noted that

he liked the idea of having the opportunity to influence improvement and growth. He mentioned his excitement about the potential but his excitement diminished because of too many meetings and a lot of paperwork that didn't make a difference. Bruce noted that if the mandates were implemented correctly with complete buy-in on the mandates really helping the schools to improve, there would be a sense of harmony in how all parts would work together. He suggested that everyone would have the same goals in mind as students, teachers, and administrators working within the school and those goals would align with the school district mission, vision, and goals.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory as the Theoretical Framework

The findings from this study were analyzed through the lens of cognitive dissonance. Again, cognitive dissonance theory highlights the notion that the discrepancies among cognitions creates a sense of discomfort which is called the state of dissonance (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Dissonance is established when someone is exposed to information or engages in tasks that are inconsistent with their beliefs. "If the dissonance is not reduced by changing one's belief, the dissonance can lead to misperception or misinterpretation of the information, rejection or refutation of the information, seeking support from those who agree with one's belief, and attempting to persuade others to accept one's belief" (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019, p. 6). The outcomes of this study were analyzed and coded in an In Vivo manner to highlight the experience of educational policy implementation mandates impacting the participants' beliefs along with extrapolating barriers and/or supports to implementing educational policy mandates.

Emergence of Themes

Upon reviewing the transcripts of the participant interviews, there were 172 initial coded expressions and terms utilizing In Vivo coding. After the second cycle of coding, the emerging themes were categorized into three groups based on the patterns formed from participant responses that were separated, then clustered together by similarity in context or repeated by different participants. The repeated or similar terms and statements clustered together such as: challenging/rough, hidden gem/diamond in the rough, social emotional support, low socio-economic/poor, unsafe environment/rough neighborhood to inform the theme of priority school nexus. The next cluster of similar terms and expressions led to inform policy impact on work environment, such as: strategic compliance, high stress, demoralization, conflict, collegiality, communication, and leadership. The third cluster of similar terms and expressions informed what the policy mandates miss, such as: non-academic barriers, disconnect, lack of knowledge about the school community, lack of time, and varying needs of school community. The terms and expressions listed for each theme is a sample from the code book.

At the time of this study, five of the participants were from different priority schools and two taught in the same priority school. There was a common perception among the participants about priority schools to where there is a lack of parent engagement and low student performance on state assessments. All of the participants discussed the most notable difference between priority schools and non-priority schools is economic status. The participants in this study worked in schools that are high poverty

and are 100% free and reduced status. Food insecurities are prevalent to where families rely on students having breakfast and lunch for free at school.

In the context of the dynamic of a priority school, participants discussed prominent issues or concerns that may be common within the school, that impacts achievement, and is not addressed with policy mandates. Irma stated, "It means something when you are given a bookbag with supplies versus coming to school with your own." She noted that there is a certain mindset of students and parents who are able to provide for their children versus relying on support or financial assistance. She notes that the struggle is different in priority schools. Teachers have the mindset of getting a job then leave for another school when the opportunity presents itself. Students from priority schools have to deal with different challenges. "How do you make a teacher teach me when you all they see is what I don't have?" In looking at what the student doesn't have: money, clean clothes, food, parental support (because of working multiple jobs or longer shifts), students of priority schools live in two worlds and the challenge is getting the students to believe that they can master the component of school expectations while surviving at home and in the neighborhood. What OIP doesn't address is teaching children who are living in the dichotomy of school and home. Irma noted that the demands of policy mandates do not account for the life skills students are taught, however, do account for higher levels of stress when trying to do what is required by way of mandates versus what is wanted to do to meet the social-emotional needs of students while teaching state standards.

Gladys stated that because a child may wear the same clothes for three days straight and adults think that they cannot learn because of their neighborhood or home environment, it is this belief that it is the students' fault they are not achieving and that there is "a soft bigotry of low expectations" in priority schools. Gladys states that there are assumptions that parents of students in priority school do not care about their child's education even though there is a lack of parental support in the school.

Cross case analysis was conducted of participants and yielded the emergence of three essential themes to address my research questions: Priority School Nexus, Policy Impact on the Work Environment, and What Policy Mandates Miss.

Priority School Nexus

All participants shared what made their school a priority school by way of being among the lowest five percent of schools in performance using the state report card grading method. Descriptions of the school being located in a dangerous neighborhood or being labeled as a hard school to teach because of challenges outside of the classroom was consistent among the participants. Through the interview, participants responded candidly and thoroughly. However, there were similar terms and expressions that described their school aside from what made their school a priority school based on educational policy along with the uniqueness of the school itself.

Commonalities Among Priority Schools. When describing their experience in a priority school, all seven participants used expressions or terms that indicated experiencing difficulty or the school itself being challenging. For instance, Gladys stated the following,

Being a priority school wasn't something surprising to me, given the challenges

we have and given the fact that we're a neighborhood school. So, a lot of what

happens in our buildings is directly impacted by the neighborhood. So, if there

was a shootout at the corner store, somebody knew somebody who knew the

person that got shot, it's making its way back into the school building one way or

another. We are literally a microcosm of the larger community (Gladys,

Interview, June 10, 2022).

Similarly, Valerie described an issue that began with two male students on social media that grew into an ongoing conflict through the end of the school year. She then stated the following,

Our neighborhood is dangerous. We've got parents in crisis so their inability to

support us makes our students a priority. So there's a whole bunch of other things

outside of our kids but they all have the ability to learn, every one of them, but

there's so many barriers in their way that, you know, we have to prioritize those

things first. (Valerie, Interview, June 10, 2022)

Despite the challenges of the neighborhood, Valerie states that her school is "a diamond in the rough." She attempted to address non-academic barriers by establishing services to support student needs but was halted due to protocol or other extenuating circumstances.

Irma highlighted her school as a challenging school and as a result has difficulty retaining staff members. Because of the neighborhood and the location of the school, teachers accept the job but as soon as the opportunity arises, they will attempt to leave for a non-priority school. For instance, Irma stated the following:

I think that every school opportunity is a gift and had some challenges that taught

me a systemic in our society. It is a long battle for priority schools and a lot of

schools struggle. They may have money, but it's not the same. They are missing a

critical piece in the environment for their success in school. There is a mindset for

some people to go to work in a priority school, just to get in, but leave when they

can. That's unfortunate because those children then have to build those

relationships over and over and the families too. So, children in a priority school

learn to keep people at a distance. Trying to find the right people to work with our

babies who are in it at a deep level can be a challenge in a priority school. You

have to want it differently in a priority school (Irma, Interview, July 19, 2022).

Irma noted that she had staff who really loved children and could handle the challenges

of her priority school. She also noted that there were some who could handle it for a short

period of time and could not deal with the stressors of a priority school and thought there

was a better school to teach, not realizing their work was essential and they were needed

there. As a result, Irma made a commitment to remain at her school despite the

challenges. She shared that she plans to retire from her school and that the only way she

would switch schools is if district leadership decided to move her to another school.

Vivian described her priority school as a challenging school that caused her to

learn a lot about herself, her abilities, and what she could handle. She stated that the

school was rough and through the leadership of the principal, they worked diligently on

changing the culture and climate of the building. Despite the challenges of her school the

staff was able to work together. For instance, Vivian stated,

The school is rough and challenging. Under the leadership of the principal, it was

something we all could work through together. Like, we really made it work. We

really tried to change the culture and climate. It wasn't easy, but we had

leadership that we knew and we were working towards a goal to try to change

things (Vivian, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Vivian stated that the principal was able to hire the staff as the result of instituting the

Turnaround Model from the Ohio Improvement Process. She knew three of the eleven

teachers hired and because all of the teachers knew and trusted the principal, they were

able to quickly trust one another. Vivian also noted the following:

Under the leadership of the principal, it was something we could all work through

together. We really tried to change the culture and climate of the building. It

wasn't easy, but I mean, we had leadership that knew that we were working

towards a goal to try to change those things. I think it was really starting to work.

We were making changes but it was rough (Vivian, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Lavern described her priority school as a rough school with many challenges.

However, she chose to highlight policy mandates when describing her school. Lavern

stated the following:

There are things that the state mandates that we are supposed to do as educators.

And then there are things that educators do that's in the best interest of the

children and having a principal that is understanding of both aspects of that kind

of balances out as an educator in the right direction. The state says one thing and

as an educator, you know what you're supposed to do. You have to have a middle

ground, unfortunately, in order to be able to do both of those things.

Unfortunately, the people that make the decisions have not been in a school

setting. And if they have, it's been they are so far removed from what education is

like currently in today's world, that the things they say or suggest or demand are

not feasible (Lavern, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Lavern also highlighted the notion that policy makers are not looking at the needs of

students or educators, rather look at what they think needs to be done instead of

examining the steps to get actual student achievement. As a result, she indicated, it adds

to the challenges of an already challenging environment. Lavern spoke to the principal

being able to hire the staff as a result of implementing the Turnaround Model and the

team's impact on changing the school culture. She stated the following:

We came in knowing what we were getting into. We came in with a goal, and not

just a goal but a plan to achieve that goal. All of us except two were handpicked.

The two who were not handpicked knew coming into it. This is the route we're

gonna take. These are the expectations, get on board or get out. And luckily, they

got on board. And I think that as a whole, and I think we always joked we're a

team of alphas. Outsiders looking in would be like there is no way that's ever

going to work. But we made it work in that environment. We needed each other

and the relationship with our administrator supporting us, that is why it worked

(Lavern, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Bruce described his priority school as tough not only because of socioeconomic and discipline issue but because the school drew students from across the city. He stated the following:

My school is mostly African American. I would describe it as I think it was a little tough because in fact it is not a neighborhood school, so you were getting kids from all over the city. So there wasn't a neighborhood vibe when it came to the school. If we wanted to do certain events or anything, the kids had to get transportation. They couldn't walk to school events and stuff like that. So we couldn't get a neighborhood vibe and build community but we did have hard working teachers there (Bruce, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Shirley indicated her school as a good school but overwhelming because of the introduction of the implementation of policy mandates. She stated the following:

The research and theories behind the OIP does actually work when it is rolled out and done correctly. Now, when you're already overwhelmed and you already have kids that are reading below grade level, you're trying to make two years' worth of growth, the mandates become another thing to do. It just overwhelms teachers more and it gets lost in the process (Shirley, Interview, June 14, 2022).

Through the cross-case analysis from the first cycle of In Vivo coding and the second cycle of pattern coding, all participants described their priority school as a challenging workplace or environment despite the mandates of educational policy. Whether it is the neighborhood, socioeconomic status, or the culture/climate of the

school, the commonality despite uniqueness (Priority School Nexus) is priority schools are difficult spaces to work while trying to implement the mandates of educational policy.

Policy Impact on the Work Environment.

Through analyzing the interview transcripts, the negative impact of policy implementation mandates on the work environment was apparent. Four of the seven participants stated that they were overwhelmed due to implementing policy mandates. They shared that it was overwhelming due to the amount of time it takes to follow through with implementation and interference with building relationships with students. It was also noted that it was overwhelming due to the stressful environment that is created due to the mandates taking away autonomy. Two stated that they followed the policy mandates out of compliance and that it was a waste of time. In short, the participants described the impact of policy mandates on the work environment as disruptive to meeting the needs of students and taking away time from the actual work of teaching and learning.

Shirley noted the difference between a priority school and non-priority school is attitude and accountability. She stated the following:

> Like it's a culture and attitude of I can teach what I want in a non-priority school and there is less accountability and less stress too. In a priority school there's higher anxiety among staff when you have someone looking over your shoulder it is looked at as a gotcha system. And so that makes for higher stress (Shirley, Interview, June 14, 2022).

Lavern highlighted policy impact on the work place but also stated that the mandates of the OIP conflicted with her beliefs. She stated the following:

My experience with the OIP has 100% conflicted with my beliefs. We're told you have to do all these things to improve students' test scores, to improve their learning, and to raise your status as a school. And that's not what it's about. It's about figuring out what the students' needs are and meeting them where they are to get them where they need to be. And unfortunately, when you have a class of 23 kids, that's 23 different levels. So if I do the same thing with all of my students, which is, you know what the OIP has us do, I'm not going to grow those students. And so it goes back to looking at what I'm told to do and what I know I am supposed to do and finding that middle ground to find a balance to get it all done. Which is part of what is causing teacher burnout (Lavern, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Lavern spoke to the teacher-based team process of the OIP by stating the following:

This is a waste of my time. You are literally wasting my time when I can be doing something that is going to benefit my students tenfold than sitting here and discussing what we've already discussed 15 times and it's made no difference whatsoever. What we did in TBT did not drive my instruction (Lavern, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Vivian spoke about the team dynamic of her priority school along with the implementing the mandates of the OIP. She stated the following:

The principal was able to build a team because the school was reconstituted. The

principal was able to handpick the team. The principal knew all of us and so we

felt very comfortable together. We trusted each other, we relied on each other,

whereas in the non-priority school, the parents were wonderful and the kids were

great, there wasn't the trust we had in the priority school. I think that makes a big,

big difference. When it comes to the OIP, it's something we have to do. It's

supposed to improve our school, but it's like why are we doing this now? It comes

from above, like saying this is what you need to do now and it's kind of

frustrating. We as teachers know what our kids can do and just taking all this data,

we need more time to work with these kids. Just taking assessment after

assessment and assessment after assessment and bringing it back to the table isn't

changing anything. We need more time to work with the kids, reflection with our

teachers, our other colleagues on how we can improve is what we need more of

(Vivian, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Bruce highlighted the what he liked about the OIP mandates by stating that the TBT and

BLT meetings brought the staff together outside of the regularly scheduled staff

meetings. He stated that how the OIP influenced his beliefs in a positive way by stating

the following:

I think it has influenced my beliefs in the positive way we're working together.

As a special ed. teacher, I get to be in a lot of different TBT's so I get to see a lot

of different personalities and strategies. It's kind of forced me to interact and kind

of delve into different teaching styles that people have. We have different

programs and all that stuff, and you know, some things work and some things

don't but it's good to have at least something out there that's kind of pushing us

and making us think (Bruce, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Gladys focused more on policy impact from the student perspective. She noted that the

OIP didn't influence her beliefs on what was needed to facilitate academic success. She

stated:

> I've always believed that our kids literally can do the impossible. We're talking
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> about resilient kids. We're talking about strong kids, downright funny kids, kids
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> with intellectual capacity that most people will never have in their lifetime. My
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> kids need coping skills. My kids need individuals who are patient but stern, but do
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> have high expectations. I've always known that my kids struggle more in math
>
> than reading. These are things that have never changed. I think if anything, I've
>
> just tried to make sure that the things that we're doing also fit into the OIP box.
>
> I'm not doing stuff in my building to check the OIP box. What we are doing just
>
> happens to check the OIP box. There are more gaps than what OIP could ever
>
> possibly capture on seven pages of paper (Gladys, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Valerie highlighted the notion that mandates have to be in alignment to make sense. If

they are not aligned, there is confusion and a lack of understanding of what to do.

Without the proper guidance, there is the tendency to "make stuff up" (Valerie, Interview,

June 10, 2022). She stated that the mandates are excessive and creates a non-organic

environment which may add to the stress of working in the school.

Irma noted that building relationships are difficult in priority schools due to turnover. She spoke to teachers having to teach more than subjects and that more time is needed to implement the mandates to the fullest. Due to the pressure and/or stress of working in a priority school, she highlighted that there is not enough time to do all that is required. Irma suggested that there should be a focus on the social emotional needs of staff and that the "OIP causes staff to feel not valued" (Irma, Interview, July 19, 2022).

Shirley noted that the OIP causes a sense of being overwhelmed and end up being compliant by "checking boxes." She spoke to how there needed to be buy-in that the OIP does not work if it is done out of compliance and if not done correctly, it "diminishes autonomy" and creates a "gotcha system" to which the culture of the school is not safe to make a mistake or take ownership of the mistake. As a result, it becomes a stressor and minimizes collaboration (Shirley, Interview, June 14, 2022).

Bruce, however, noted that the mandates did not contradict with his beliefs because he thought that he still had the ability to meet the needs of special education students he taught and the process gave him an opportunity to express what was going on in his classroom along with getting information on what other teachers were doing in their classrooms. As a result, he has been able to apply and modify some of the strategies discussed with teachers in their TBT within his classroom. He highlights the being able to see what works from his teacher colleagues and going along with it if it fits his style of teaching.

What the Policy Mandates Miss

All seven of the participants of this study addressed what they thought policy mandates miss or do not address. Shirley noted a key barrier to some of her students not being academically successful by stated the following:

Many kids aren't being successful not because they can't do the work, it's because they are homeless. They couldn't get to school, or we couldn't find them because they were couch surfing. They had to work through mental health issues or drug issues (Shirley, Interview, June 14, 2022).

Shirley also stated that the OIP does not address the non-academic barriers that interferes with the success of students academically by stating the following:

The OIP doesn't address those issues. It's not a fix all. The difference between what I am told to do and what I want to do is a dichotomy. What needs to happen for our kids doesn't always match what's in the OIP. It doesn't cover everything that needs to happen for our kids. Nothing breaks your heart faster. You see the baby come into school and who doesn't have much but has the same outfit on 3 days in a row. You know, there is nothing in the OIP for that (Shirley, Interview, June 14, 2022).

Gladys stated specifically what the mandates of the OIP does not address or account for by noting the following:

I don't think the OIP gets to the heart of what's wrong. It doesn't account for COVID, it doesn't account for generational distrust in education. It doesn't account for homelessness. It doesn't account for, I saw my cousin get shot last

night. It doesn't account for there's a generational history of sexual assault in my

family. It doesn't account for the parent who dropped out of school when they

were in eighth grade and now has a child they have to be responsible for. I just

think there's so many other factors that go into our work that I don't think the OIP

could ever truly capture (Gladys, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Gladys also noted that policy makers may not understand the challenges priority schools

face by stating, "We say all the time, the people making these mandates have never

walked in our shoes. They don't know what we go through every day" (Gladys,

Interview, June 10, 2022). She also stated that there is a gap with the policymakers

knowing that the real work of improving schools happens at the building level. She

expressed that there is a need for policymakers to come into the priority schools to see

what is happening in the schools and note the strategies, connections, and processes

happening in real time. Gladys says the mandates leave out the voices of the parents and

do not allow for teacher or administrator input. Gladys also stated:

I think another gap for me with the OIP and the people who created it is this is

where the work happens. It doesn't happen where they are, it happens in these

school buildings. So come to the building, come see what's happening. Come see

the strategy in real time, come talk to the parents in real time, and attend a parent

event in real time. I think that might be more of an effective method than me just

sitting, looking at seven pages of colored boxes and come up with smart goals and

stuff. Every school is different. Every school has unique barriers. Every school

has successes and opportunities for growth. I just feel like if the state really wants

to get to the heart of what makes a school a failing school, come to the school

(Gladys, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Irma noted what the mandates miss from the teacher perspective by stating:

A part that is not in the Ohio improvement plan is that social emotional piece with

staff. I am really big on that with children. I have always been. I love them in a

different place. With staff, you gotta find a way that they will feel strongly

appreciated or valued. For me, that's my own personal growth. I have to think

about how do I do that because it is not in the OIP, however, it must be part of it

or you cannot get somebody to fully be thinking about their work, look at their

data in the way that it should be (Irma, Interview, July 19, 2022).

Bruce noted that the mandates of the OIP interferes with autonomy and what that

interference creates. He shared that when teachers enter the profession of teaching, they

have their own ideas of how to teach. He shared his concern of when policy mandates

require teachers to do certain things that may not align with their own ideas about how to

teach, resistance to the mandates surface. He noted that there may be some negative

consequences if the teacher does not fully comply with the mandate or if it is evident that

the teacher is partially implementing the mandate. Bruce shared that as a result of

mandates interfering with autonomy, teachers get frustrated. He shared insightful

perspective on what happens when teachers get frustrated with implementing policy

mandates by stating the following:

> And when you get frustrated, your desire to care isn't there. I think to be a
>
> teacher, you gotta have that desire to care because if you are not going to care,
>
> who will? (Bruce, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Vivian stated that her concerns about the requirements of the OIP. She noted that policy

makers are not necessarily educators and they are telling educators what to do without

knowing what actually goes on in the classroom. She believes that policy makers are not

willing to visit priority schools to see first-hand what they are doing and having to

contend with on a daily basis. By not visiting priority schools, their lack of knowing

along with not asking teachers in priority schools what they really think, makes matters

worse and working in the teaching profession is getting harder. However, Vivian shared

an interesting perspective on her youngest child taking an interest in teaching when she

stated:

> My youngest loves coming in, helping. I can see the spark in her eye. I'm like oh
>
> my God, she's twelve, but I can see where she's going. I'm like I don't want her
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> necessarily at this point to become a teacher, it's just gotten so much harder and
>
> not as much freedom, which I miss (Vivian, Interview, June 9, 2022).

Valerie highlights the mandates of the OIP do not address the aesthetics of the building,

being in a dangerous neighborhood. She gave examples of addressing student needs that

have nothing to do with the mandates of the OIP. She provided examples of establishing

a food pantry, a garden, and services to support students outside of the school.

Lavern spoke freely about her perspective on the OIP mandates. She notes that the

mandates of the OIP are not successful because they are not realistic. She shares the

notion that in theory, they may sound good but when put into practice they do not work. Lavern highlights complying with the reporting but what is required to be reported does not reveal what priority schools have to contend with daily. Lavern shared her concern that the mandates take away precious time that is necessary to fulfill everything teachers need to do to educate children in a priority school. She stated:

> It takes time away and our time is very vital because of everything that is required of us right now, that has been added to our plates, that we are supposed to expose kids to, and spend that extra time with them. OIP needs a reality check and they should be inside our schools, specifically inner-city schools. They need to take a look, interview or talk to different teacher and different administrators. Every building is different depending on the type of students you have, like your clientele of students. The clientele of students is completely different and may vary from school to school (Lavern, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Lavern added the following:

> I remember my first year as a teacher. Someone came into my room and said, I don't think you should do this, to whatever I was doing. My principal overheard it and said to me, don't ever let anybody tell you how to run your classroom. It is your classroom. And I was like ok and I took that and ran with it. So, they could tell me what I'm going to do, but I'm going to close my door and do what I need to do to help my students learn and get the best out of them (Lavern, Interview, June 10, 2022).

Similar Perspectives

All of the participants complied with the implementation mandates of the OIP because it is a requirement. Each participant noted that their school was a high need school along with not enough time to do everything that is required for the OIP in a priority school, which in turn creates a feeling of being overwhelmed. Five of the seven participants noted that the mandates of the OIP are not helpful with improving student achievement. However, Shirley noted that the mandates could work with proper administrative support, training, and complete buy-in from all staff members. Bruce noted that the OIP forces general education and special education teachers to come together to discuss/share student data and instructional strategies and practices to which they may not do on a regular basis if the mandates were not present.

Summary

A qualitative case study analysis of the data collected from interviews and utilizing In Vivo coding yielded three overarching themes. First, there was the commonality of all participants describing their priority school as a challenging or rough place to work. Second, policy implementation mandates cause strategic compliance to complete the task while providing support to students and families that is outside of the parameters of the mandate. Third, the policy mandates do not identify with the needs of priority schools and thereby received as out of touch and do not address all student populations while leaving out parental input.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

This qualitative case study examined the experiences of four teachers and three principals implementing the mandates of the Ohio Improvement Process in different priority elementary schools within the same urban school district. To give insight on their experiences, the interviews that they participated with were semi-structured. In short, the case study interviews were conducted in a manner that gave participants an opportunity to share their experience of implementing educational policy mandates in a priority school.

The seven participants of this study had been teaching or a principal of their priority school more than three years. To best represent the study, all seven of the participants were in priority elementary schools within the same school district and were at their school as the result of the district implementing the Turnaround Model of the OIP to where the school was reconstituted with a new principal and the principal was able to hire their teaching staff.

The process of purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. This approach, as discussed in Chapter 3 was best suited for this study because "they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). After the participants were identified, qualitative data is collected by way of semi-structured interviews. The participant responses provided insight on their experience implementing educational policy mandates while teaching or leading in an urban priority school.

An analysis of the of the participant responses yielded the three following themes:

- Priority School Nexus – A common description of the priority schools

- The impact policy implementation mandates have on the work environment

- What the policy mandates miss in priority schools

A discussion of the themes will be held in the sections following.

Research Question One

How does the experience of policy implementation mandates for elementary teachers and administrators impact their beliefs?

Conclusion

All of the participants described their priority school as a challenging environment. What makes their schools challenging are the non-academic barriers that have an impact on student learning, such as crime, violence, abuse, or homelessness. This leads to having overwhelming and high stress work environments. This aligns with the reporting of daily challenges in urban schools by Bridwell (2012) and the high stress of working in high poverty and low-performing school reported by Shernoff (2011). Participants shared the belief in the capacity and capability of the students to achieve success. However, participants shared that the policy mandates are out of touch with the needs of the school, do not support special education or English language learner sub groups. To reconcile the conflict of what is required to do versus what is believed that should be done, the duality of work surfaces to where the mandates are upheld by way of

strategic compliance to meet and document the requirements while addressing the non-academic barriers that impact student achievement by satiating the physical and emotional needs of students. Not implementing the policy mandates with fidelity but implementing by way of strategic compliance coincides with Spillane (2000) when policy implementers are less likely to implement reforms if their beliefs and practices are not aligned. The building principal is essential in setting a tone and providing support to where teachers have trust among each other to take ownership of mandated collaboration by way of the TBT and BLT to work together for understanding of expectations. Backstrom (2019) highlights strong principal leadership that is effective with communication and collaboration that builds partnerships is essential. A reciprocity of for trust is to be established between the building principal and teachers in order to establish common goals that are focused on implementing the mandates while meeting the mental, social-emotional, and physical needs of students. Herman et al. (2008) also notes that strong principal leadership that is focused and committed to building a dedicated staff that is goal oriented. Additionally, there is the belief that policy mandates are ineffective, a waste of time, or out of touch with what is necessary to improve urban priority schools thereby creating strategic compliance to where the mandates are fulfilled because it is a requirement. This aligns with the assertion by Hinnant-Crawford (2016), that policy makers should view educator beliefs as a valuable resource in the creation and implementation of educational policy as opposed to the perception of managing educator practices through reforms and policy. If educator beliefs are considered from the creation of to the implementation process, buy-in is almost assured. This is because of minimizing

the frustration noted by Asbury and Kim (2020) when policy makers create policy with little regard for educator perspective. Strong leadership is essential to creating an environment of trust and positive relationships that is focused on improvement through collaboration to minimize cognitive dissonance. This aligns with Backstrom (2019) who noted that strong principal leadership, communication, and collaboration are essential to creating sustainable success. Therefore, if educator beliefs are considered at the onset of policy creation and implementation, there is less likely a scenario noted by Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005) where school leadership is feeling a sense of powerlessness and anger while trying to support and implement policy in their school community and they know will not be effective.

In short, the experience of implementing policy mandates on educator beliefs as the result of this study aligns with the study conducted by Wilkins (2008). The conclusion of the study conducted by Wilkins (2008) was that when educator beliefs are evident in their practices, their beliefs influence their implementation practices. Based on this current study, because educators believe policies are ineffective, their beliefs are evident in their practices of focusing on what they believe is in the best interest of their students. That is, satiating the basic needs of students by way of focusing on their social emotional well-being, physical well-being, and individual academic needs that they believe are not addressed by the policy implementation mandates. Therefore, by strategically complying with the policy mandates, the beliefs of the participants of this study influence the implementation of the policy as opposed to the policy implementation mandates influencing their beliefs.

Research Question Two

What do elementary teachers and administrators identify as barriers and supports to implement educational policy mandates?

Conclusion

The participants of this study expressed the disconnect with the policy mandates of the OIP. Participants stated that the mandates are unreal, out of touch, and a waste of time. It was stated that the mandates do not get to the root of what students need and interfere with what needs to happen with teaching students. Ultimately, aspects of the mandates take time away from building relationships and focusing on individual student needs by learning where students are individually and taking each student to where they need to be. As a result, special education and English language learners are not supported. The needs of students who are homeless, food insecure, abused, live in high crime and violent neighborhoods are not met by way of the mandates of the OIP. Not recognizing the roles of surviving and fighting in the neighborhood interferes with the students' ability of performing at a high level in school. As a result, strategic compliance is applied and the mandates are fulfilled on paper while teachers and administrators take the necessary steps to satiate physical, emotional, and mental health issues or deficits students face. Teachers close their classroom doors and do what they consider to be the most appropriate path to bolstering the academic achievement of students. Principals are also put in the position to intentionally create an atmosphere to build trust to where teachers are made to feel valued while implementing the mandates of the OIP. This aligns with what Fives and Gill (2015) noted about educator beliefs being a filter of their

experiences and guides on how to address the problems or issues they face. Based on the responses of the principals participating with this study, retaining teachers in a challenging environment is challenging as well. This aligns with Bridwell (2012) who noted that policy mandates in urban school settings had a negative impact on perceptions of the teaching profession. The feelings of being overwhelmed and high levels of stress contributed to educators leaving the profession. Schools have to take extra steps to include parents to make them feel a part of the educational process and educate them not only on the OIP but other applicable life and family skills. The mandates are not clearly introduced with a purpose, training, and consistent follow-up/follow-through on where teachers and schools are with implementing the mandates. Lastly, the decision makers/creators of the OIP are not aware of how priority schools operate within the communities they are placed. They are absent from visiting priority schools and learning firsthand how they operate along with the challenges that they face. As a result, policy/decision makers are unaware of many priority schools are in neighborhoods and communities that are rich in history along with being unsafe and volatile. This finding coincides with Fisher-Ari et al. (2017) that concluded that policy makers should become more involved with the communities they serve.

In short, when examining barriers and supports to implementing policy mandates based on this study that was conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn but are not limited to:

- Educational policy makers lack knowledge of they urban school communities they serve is a barrier to implementing policy mandates

- High stress school environments that are overwhelming are a barrier

- Policies that allow for educators to focus on the basic needs of students will be supportive with implementation

- Policy mandates that have a clear purpose, quality training, and infused with consistent follow up will be supportive with implementation.

Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The previously discussed research questions correlate with the theoretical framework of cognitive dissonance. Identifying the situation of implementing educational policy mandates conflicting with beliefs that produce attitudes or actions to reduce the discomfort of the conflict and restore balance was studied. The findings were noted and are poignant enough for analysis and discussion.

In regards to the impact educational policy implementation mandates have on beliefs, Harmon-Jones and Mills (2008) stated, "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, motivates the person to reduce the dissonance and leads to avoidance of information likely to increase the dissonance" (p. 3). The findings from this study indicate that the teachers and principals in this study are not completely comfortable with the mandates of the OIP and instituted strategic compliance, to fulfill the requirements of the mandates to avoid information likely to increase dissonance. Additionally, the highlight that teachers and principals of this study worked on reducing the dissonance by focusing on addressing and meeting the social-emotional needs of students and school communities that are outside of the mandate requirements. The principals of this study note measures taken to meet the basic needs of students daily and

throughout the school year. Providing materials and supplies, food pantries, clothing pantries and overall creating a safe space for children and their staffs. Teachers of this study articulate their beliefs in a manner that aligns with Bridwell (2012) by way of policy mandates being counterintuitive to what is in the best interest of the students they teach.

Without intentionally including principals and teachers with the creation of educational policy and having voice with the steps of implementation, based on the findings of this study, it can be theorized that educators will believe that the educational policy may not identify or support the needs of the urban children of their school community. As a result, the educators will do what is mandated but not with fidelity and thereby continuing the cycle of policy created, policy mandated to implement, policy not succeeding, and starting all over with policy created, and etc.

Recommendations

In consideration of the findings of this study, recommendations have been made for policy makers, building principals, and teachers who are interested in improving the performance of priority schools in urban school districts. These recommendations are made in an attempt to help minimize cognitive dissonance and create more buy-in and acceptance of mandates that are aligned with individual student, school, and community needs.

For Policy Makers

When determining the pathways of success for low performing urban schools, conduct an in-depth, hands on study of urban priority schools. Fisher-Ari et al. (2017)

noted that policy makers should form partnerships with the communities in which they serve. This study recommends that policy makers adopt an urban priority school for at least one full academic school year. Fisher-Ari et al. (2017) contends that policy makers are to be listening and learning leaders. Based on the findings of this study, policy makers should be immersive and become active participants by way of spending time in urban priority schools for at least a week in the beginning of the school year, a week before Christmas/Winter Break, and a week during the throes of state testing to feel the culture and climate of the school during those key times of the school year while observing how the school functions. It also suggested that during that time, policy makers participate with staff meetings throughout the school year and participate with BLT meetings monthly. It is also recommended that policy makers participate with parent engagement activities that the school may offer throughout the school year. Policy makers are to interview students, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals to clear up any misconceptions of the priority school and its status. Policy makers are to highlight the non-academic challenges the school community faces that may be a barrier to the academic success of the school. During this time in the school, it must made clear that it is not punitive or evaluative in nature. These recommendations are made to give policy makers personal and insightful knowledge and understanding of how priority schools operate so that when policies are created, their experience in the school can account for creating applicable and relatable policy that minimizes cognitive dissonance and the policies are implemented fully with fidelity. If policy makers are active participants within an urban priority school community, they will see first hand the occupational

stress that is rampant. Shernoff et al. (2011) noted that the demands of teaching in high poverty and low performing urban schools are overwhelming. Policy makers that are active immersed participants with a priority school community can observe the behavioral and learning needs of students, discover the accountability pressures from policy mandates that are placed on teachers and administrators, and experience the tone of low morale when there is limited control and the loss of autonomy. This is a call for policy makers to be active participants with the priority school communities to understand and learn how the decisions that are made outside of the communities they are to serve, impact school climate, morale, and desire to teach. In being immersive and understanding what truly happens in and out of the classroom and school, policy makers should be able to welcome educator voice with the creation and implementation of policy, thereby creating a sense of buy-in that could potentially be a win for all involved. Buy-in will be established by giving voice to teachers and administrators who are champions of student needs academically, socially, and emotionally. When teachers and administrators are included with the creation of policy that will impact their workplace environments, the perception of policy makers lacking the knowledge of the communities they serve will be diminished. Creating a team that has policy makers and the educators who are committed to those communities they serve will now have given an inclusive voice to educators on what is needed to improve low performance on the platform of policy decisions.

For Principals of Priority Schools

Based on participant responses, building leadership is essential in setting a tone where the duality of implementing policy mandates and satiating student needs are balanced. This aligns with Herman et al. (2008) that highlights the notion of committed strong principal leadership being the foundation of setting the appropriate tone for policy implementation and improvement by having a clear vision and sense of urgency. It is recommended that principals are intentional with building, establishing, and sustaining a culture of trust to where teachers and staff feel as though they are valued and belong. Principals are to highlight the importance of building caring and supporting relationships with students and their families while maintaining high levels of expectations for students, teacher, and self. With holding on to high levels of expectations, principals should hold true to members of their school communities will rise or fall to their levels of expectations as noted by the Pygmalion effect. It is recommended that principals create a safe space for teachers to feel supported with taking necessary risks that will support student learning or social emotional needs. It is also noted that principals should make an effort to address the social-emotional needs of their staff to acknowledge the toll that is taken while working in a challenging environment. This may contribute to supporting staff members who may be experiencing hardship they do not speak of. In addition, to create a supportive and responsive culture, it is imperative that principals through their actions and interactions with staff members respond positively to the following four questions:

1. Can I trust you?

2. Do you value me?

3. How will you respond if/when I make a mistake?

4. How will you respond if/when I face a personal or family crisis?

By doing the aforementioned, the effects of occupational stress will be minimized and more educators may remain in the profession in high needs environments because they will feel supported and cared for. It is recommended that principals prioritize parental engagement to where the school offers parenting supports ranging from access to counseling services to life skills that may help with personal and familial growth. Based on participant responses in this study, principals are to create a safe space of support that is welcoming to families that may, while in their urban priority school, not have to focus on the pressures of the outside environment because they are in a place that cares and values them as parents and their children.

For Teachers in Priority Schools

Based on participant responses, teachers in priority schools should try to be knowledgeable of the spaces in which students live and come from. It is suggested that teachers adapt their perception of the lack of parental engagement is not the result of parent not caring. To put aside their bias just because a student is in the same clothes for the third day or the "soft bigotry of low expectation" (Gladys, Interview, June 10, 2022). Teachers in priority schools are to be intentional with reviewing and studying policy mandates in an effort to understand the purpose and applicability to the work necessary to improve student achievement. When faced with the opportunity to implement policy mandates, teachers can collaborate with the principal to determine the best method of

implementation without disrupting the culture or climate of their classroom and school. Also, in knowing that the environment of a priority school can have a variety of challenges, teachers need to focus on their own emotional and mental well-being to address occupational stress. As highlighted by Shernoff et al. (2011), there are many problems that impact the well-being of educators as the result of occupational stress. Teachers have the ability to address the three primary contributors of occupational stress to assist with minimizing the negative results. Based on responses from participants in this study, when teachers have a common vision or goal to focus on with their principal, building trust and being committed to the work is easier. When the teachers know they are supported and the principal trusts the teachers to implement the plan with fidelity, success is almost assured. The teachers from this study noted the synergy created when everyone is on the same page. Therefore, teachers are to be proactive and analyze school-wide data at the beginning of the school year to determine needs and strengths. The school-wide data is to consist of academic performance, attendance, and discipline. The teachers are to come together and discuss the school vision, individual classroom goals, grade level goals, and school-wide goals based on the data. They are to be intentional with focusing on the desired outcomes of academic achievement and overall school improvement when charting a clear path to attaining their goals. From there, collectively, the teachers then share their plan with the goals and pathway with the building administrator to highlight an alignment with the school vision. This is to signify that they are on one accord moving in the same direction to facilitate student achievement in their priority school. The pathway to achieving the goals that are aligned with the school

vision is to be monitored consistently throughout the school year and adjusted as needed. This approach is teacher initiated, giving teachers a valued voice in the process of improving overall school improvement. The teachers are able to diagnose the areas to improve, strengths, and create a plan to achieve individual and school-wide goals. This bottom up approach will align with the assertion made by Hinnant-Crawford (2016) that the teachers know what needs to happen within the system to improve. The teachers will be seen as a valued resource in the design and implementation of improvement practices within the school. This creates buy-in, trust, and the opportunity to lessen occupational stress. The teachers will then be able to create ways to automatically meet student needs that are physical, social, emotional while addressing mental and behavioral health. This will help teachers have a sense of reaping the moral rewards of teaching noted by Santoro (2011), while addressing school improvement from their perspective. The teachers are to establish ways of intentional supporting each other in ways that eases the stress and anxiety of teaching in a challenging school, by ways of wellness initiatives that support the mental and emotional well-being of the teachers. In short, teachers are to come together and galvanize in a manner focuses on the school community to where the vision and goals are ubiquitous to the point where it is seen and heard throughout by all that are connected to the school.

Suggestions for Future Research

When examining the participant responses, there are a few suggestions for additional research based on the scope of this research. First, this study looked into how the experience of teachers and principals implementing educational policy mandates

impacted their beliefs. However, a qualitative case study on the bias that may be created as a byproduct of schools that have a priority status for multiple years. A historical study can be conducted on a priority school that is rich historical legacy. This can provide an extensive examination of the school's past that may provide insight on the present and future conditions of the school and its community. A phenomenological study could be done to highlight the living experience of teachers and principals in a priority school. Additionally, a study should be conducted that expands on processes or methods school staffs can use that are best suited for creating and establishing a building vision and school-wide goals in challenging schools. Lastly, future studies can be done to highlight what challenging schools can use to adopt and implement policy with fidelity that may not disrupt school culture and climate.

Final Thoughts

When examining the research within this qualitative case study, the created educational policy can be surmised as a topographical map of a super highway that all priority schools must create and all leads to the same destination within the same amount of time. There is no consideration about each school being in different environments that also have different challenges. There is no consideration of students facing outside challenges that may impact their travel along the super highway. Lastly, there is no consideration of the toll it takes on teachers and principals to follow this map knowing the obstacles and deficits some schools deal with and face consistently. In short, there is a need for an individualized improvement plan for schools due to the uniqueness of school environments and challenges. There is also a need for policy makers to spend quality

time in schools with greater needs. There is a need for teachers and principals to

consistently be a part of the creation and implementation of educational policy. And

lastly, there is a need for time and forums for school teachers and principals to actively

express the current status of schools and specifically what they need to improve the

academic achievement of ALL of their students.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

Project Number	22-E-89
Project Status	APPROVED
Committee:	Office of Research Compliance
Compliance Contact:	Whitney Dutcher (dutcherw@ohio.edu)
Primary Investigator:	Andrew Smith
Project Title:	An examination of teacher beliefs and educational policy implementation mandates
Level of Review:	EXEMPT

The Ohio University Office of Research Compliance reviewed and approved by exempt review the above referenced research. The Office of Research Compliance was able to provide exempt approval under 45 CFR 46.104(d) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for exempt review, as indicated below.

IRB Approval:	03/29/2022 2:11:12 PM
Review Category:	2

Waivers: Approval is issued to allow PI to obtain a letter of support from Columbus City Schools. An amendment is required to upload the letter of support. At that time, final approval will be issued and the research may begin.

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. In addition, FERPA, PPRA, and other authorizations / agreements must be obtained, if needed. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Any changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the Office of Research Compliance / IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under the Ohio University OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00000095. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Compliance staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

The approval will no longer be in effect when the Primary Investigator is no longer under the auspices of Ohio University, e.g., graduation or departure from Ohio University.

The appendices include materials that interrupt the flow of the body of the document. The heading for each appendix is descriptive, formatted consistently with other main headings in the document, and appears in the Table of Contents. Each appendix must have a descriptive heading. Sub-headings within appendices should not appear in the Table of Contents. Margins and page numbers in appendices are formatted consistently with the rest of the document; however, text, tables, figures, and other

information may be in any format. Items and text contained in appendices must fall within the margins of the document.

Tables and figures that appear in the appendices are not required to have corresponding entries in the List of Tables/List of Figures. However, if a table/figure is formatted with a number designation in its title/caption, it must also appear in the appropriate list in the beginning of the document.

If an appendix consists of a table only or a figure only, then the appendix label takes the place of the table or figure number, and the appendix title takes the place of the table or figure title.

Appendix B: IRB Recruitment Letter

An Examination of Teacher Beliefs and Educational Policy Implementation Mandates in an Urban Ohio School District

Dear Teacher of (Name of elementary school):

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Andrew Smith and I am a doctoral candidate at Ohio University. I am conducting a study on the potential impact of educational policy implementation mandates on teacher beliefs. It is my hope to conduct an interview to ask questions regarding educator insights on the mandated implementation of educational policy and the potential impact on teacher beliefs. I am specifically looking to interview teachers and principals who work in priority schools. I am contacting you because your school is on the list of priority schools on the Ohio of Department of Education website.

If you decide this is a noteworthy opportunity to share educator insight on policy implementation mandates and the potential impact on teacher beliefs from the lens of your experience, then I respectfully ask that you participate with an interview. The interview for the study can take place at a neutral location that has no connection to your work location. The interview will last no more than 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. Once transcribed, you will be given a copy of the transcription to validate the accuracy of the interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. At any time should you wish to discontinue your participation in the study you may do so without penalty. Please also note that all information generated will be treated confidentially. All information from

your participation in the study will be stored in a secured file cabinet and scheduled to be destroyed December 2025.

If you are willing to participate with the study, please review the informed consent form and educator demographic form. If you do not have any reservations about participating in this research project, please sign the consent form. After you have signed the consent form, you may contact me at 614/323-2090 or via email at as204209@ohio.edu and can pick up the forms and schedule a time for the interview. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing back from you! Sincerely,

Andrew J. Smith, III

Appendix C: Ohio University Adult Consent Form With Signature

Title of Research: An Examination of Teacher Beliefs and Educational Policy

Implementation Mandates in an Urban Ohio School District

Researchers: Andrew J. Smith, III

IRB number: 22-E-89

You are being asked by an Ohio University researcher to participate in research. For you

to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand

what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an

informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the

purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks of the research project. It also explains

how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form

and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will

allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to

take with you.

Summary of Study

This study is to provide insight on educational policy implementation mandates

impacting teacher beliefs through the lens of cognitive dissonance that may be created if

an educator is mandated to implement policy that may conflict with their beliefs. This

study will give educators an opportunity to share their experience of working in a Priority

School with specific mandates and what it may take to bring about success from their

viewpoint.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to highlight teacher perspective as it relates to implementing

educational policy that may impact their beliefs. Through an interview protocol,

participants will be given an opportunity to share their perspective.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate with a one time interview

session that will not exceed 60 minutes.

- Participants are to have worked in a priority school for a minimum of 2 years.

- Participation of the study will only consist of participating with the interview.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

This study is important to science/society because it will share teacher perspective on the

impact of educational policy implementation mandates through the lens of cognitive

dissonance.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by using pseudonyms to replace

identifiers and saved on a USB flash drive stored in a locked cabinet until December

2025. The interview will be recorded and the recording will be kept in a locked cabinet

until December 2025. At that time, all recordings, transcripts, and information pertaining

to the study will be destroyed. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your

study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this

information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose

responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;

* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review

Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU; Dr. Dwan Robinson

<u>Future Use Statement</u>

Identifying information will be removed and pseudonyms will be used to conceal the

identity of the participants.

<u>Contact Information</u>

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the investigator Andrew J.

Smith, III at as204209@ohio.edu or 614-323-2090 or the advisor Dr. Robinson at

robinsd3@ohio.edu or 740-593-9453.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact

the Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or

compliance@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been

   given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;

- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to

   your satisfaction;

- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you

might receive as a result of participating in this study;

- you are 18 years of age or older;

- your participation in this research is completely voluntary;

- you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature_____Date_____

Printed Name_____

Version Date: 03/28/22

Appendix D: Teacher Demographic Questionnaire

Teacher Demographic Questionnaire

Directions: Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. Feel free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Pseudonym_____

Place of Birth: State _____ **City**_____

County_____

Do you live in the same or nearby community as your school? Y_____   **N**_____

Do you live and work in the same school district? Y_____   **N**_____

Race: _____ **Gender:** _____ **Age:** _____

Where did you attend college?

_____

What degree/s do you have?

_____

What educational certifications do you have?

_____

_____

Years in education: _____ **Years teaching:** _____

How long have you taught at your current school? _____

What grade do you teach? _____

Where is your teaching experience been? Urban _____ Suburban ____

Rural_____

How many years in each? _____

Have you had any professional educational experience outside of the elementary

level?

Y_____   N_____

Are you a member of a local, state, or national educator's association? Y_____

N_____

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

       The interview questions are arranged in a manner that highlights participant criteria, implementation mandate, theoretical framework, educator perspective, culture/climate and the impact of dissonance and beliefs on policy mandate. The time, date, and virtual setting will be noted.

Participant Criteria

1. Can you share what makes a school a priority school?

2. How long have you been an educator in a priority school?

3. How would you describe your school?

4. What were your initial thoughts pertaining to your school when you learned it was a priority school?

5. Describe your experience in a priority school.

6. If you have taught in a non-priority school, how would you compare your experience between a priority school and a non-priority school?

Implementation Mandate

7. Please share what you know about the Ohio Improvement Process.

8. When referencing a few of the requirements of the Ohio Improvement Process, what has been your experience with the following:

    a. The Building Leadership Team (BLT)

    b. Teacher Based Team (TBT)

    c. 5 Step Process of identifying critical needs; research/select evidenced-based strategies; plan for implementation; implement and monitor; examine/reflect/adjust?

Theoretical Framework

9. Has your experience with the Ohio Improvement Process conflicted with your beliefs about how to improve teaching and learning in a priority school? If so, how? If not, why?

10. How has the Ohio Improvement Process influenced your beliefs on what you need to do in order to facilitate academic success in a priority school setting?

Educator Perspective

11. What one word that would describe the difference between what you want to do to increase student achievement and what you are required to do?

12. Why did you select that one word?

13. What concerns you the most about what you are required to do with the Ohio Improvement Process?

Culture and Climate

14. Does the school climate support educator involvement in determining how policies are applied at your school?

15. How does what you are required to do from the Ohio Improvement Process impact the school climate and culture?

Impact of Dissonance and Beliefs

16. What makes the mandates of the Ohio Improvement Process successful or unsuccessful?

17. In what ways does the requirements of the Ohio Improvement Process interfere with classroom or administrative practices?

18. What is the role of the building administrator with the implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process?

19. How does the building administrator influence the implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process within your school?

20. What would you like to share regarding conflict between your beliefs and school mandates through the Ohio Improvement Process?

Appendix F: Cycle 1 Code Book

Vivian
Test Scores
Economics
Work together
Change Culture/Climate
Night and Day difference between priority and non
Rough in priority
Learned about self (reflective)
Challenged
Non priority has support from families (perception)
Trust each other (staff) b/c principal hand picked staff
Staff trusted principal therefore staff trusted each other
BLT/TBT - What we are suppose to do to improve
Not what we want to do shifts to what we have to do
trickle down to principal to us
we know what our kids can do
a lot of data
need time - mandates conflict with beliefs
Hard to stay true to who I am b/c of what I have to do
versus what I know I can and need to do for kids
Choice - I can do what is best if given autonomy
decision makers don't know school or community
is the biggest concern - take away freedom to teach
principal tries to create a culture that supports teacher

Autonomy when they can
what we have to do creates a stressful environment
Not sure mandates are successful
does lead to collaboration but not making much of an impact
keeps us from doing what we know we need to do
creates a climate of not much freedom
administrator facilitates based on directives
not much information or training
the conflict between beliefs and mandates makes it more
difficult to do what is needed to support children
not sure it works

Bruce
Test Scores over time
Tough environment
not a neighborhood school
difficult to create a community vibe
surprised the administrator picked a team that was up of the challenge
did not like the meetings
BLT/TBT paperwork not helpful
need to focus on working with the kids
teachers in priority schools are very hard working
priority schools lack community and family involvement
mandates are there to try to get schools to improve
pulls staff together to talk about data and the educational process

works based on the team and how long they have worked together
No conflict/"clash" helped to know what was going on in other classes
to help students they were working with
liked working together to see different strategies to support kids
if it works can be harmonious
causes programs to start then taken away - not enough time
Same goals in mind works well
Changing for compliance and moving on to new programs is frustrating
have input at building level
**personally focuses on positives (not everyone does)
parental involvement is not consistent
Research based makes the mandates successful
Mandates corner teachers on what they have to do leads to frustration
Desire to care drops
Mandates leads to lack of consistent programming implementation needs more time
Focused meetings are helpful makes us come together to discuss data
Administrator needs to be visible and involved

Valerie
Test scores - lack of resources curriculum not diverse
old building
old materials
do not have the same access to resources
community is not safe
school is a diamond in the rough

staff is there for the right reasons
Aligned with partnerships
priority schools have a revolving door of supports
mandates have to be in alignment and make sense
do it without guidance (people make stuff up)
OTES/OIP from ODE but nothing links them together
maintaining relationships is key
mandates are excessive
creates a non-organic environment
mandates lack cultural competency
does not address bias
trickle down - the person supervising the principal can be an issue
Micromanager
if done correctly has accountability
needs to focus on a few things and do the really well
creators of mandates are out of touch
with the school and communities with greatest needs
need time- to
allow schools to determine what they need to do make it successful
administrator monitors OIP
questions how is it really leading to success and will it get schools there

Gladys
Failing school based on test scores/state report card
historical school with beautiful legacy

Connected to the community
lack of parental support in priority school
assume parents don't care
Teacher expectations
blame kids
soft bigotry of low expectations (difference between priority and non)
Compliance b/c it is a mandate
what we are required to do is suppose to be best practice
Not doing the mandates right
had to understand the mandate first
needs to be fluid
intentional
no conflict with beliefs timeline was an issue and lost it meaning
What we do fits in with the OIP
need more parental input (created a parent university)
Mandates do not get at the heart of the issue
Mandates leave parents out
mandates do not allow for teacher/admin input
lack of resources
School improvement as a legacy
Communication
Process
Processes in place
Reflective
Expectations (real or out of touch)

Lavern
Test scores
State mandates
Principal that hired "alphas"
Trusted by principal
allowed freedom to do many things but had to do certain things
Wasting time with compliance
mandates did not drive instruction
100% conflict with beliefs
Influenced in a realistic way
Decision maker (answer to question 11)
Want to make decisions myself
Mandates are not what's best for kids
administrator is involved and reliable but needs to be in a priority school
choosing a team of alphas by the principal and all chose the same path
with us or get left behind
#16 mandates are unrealistic and unsuccessful
Takes away time needed to build relationships
Interferes with what needs to be done by giving pre/post test
only focusing on certain data points
the principal in the priority school was a buffer
delegated roles/responsibilities
felt trusted wasn't told no
positive influence due to experience
overhaul of the mandates for inner city schools

Shirley
OIP 20% of job responsibilities
Worked on TBT
Research works when done correctly
Overwhelmed
Not rolled out correctly
Checking boxes
Principal provided opportunity to learn the process
State makes changes without informing districts prior to change
State gains money
OIP leads to populations not being served
Attitude – culture
less accountability less stress
Gotcha system
Buy-in
Efficacy
Pedagogy
non-academic barriers
won't work if it is done to check a box
OIP says moving every kid but doesn't
Doesn't address SEL or non-academic barriers
homelessness (couch surfing)
Mandate w/o support no understanding
one word - dichotomy
what we need to do doesn't match what we have to do

time and support is needed
teacher buy-in
need culture to feel safe to make a mistake or say "it's me"
when the culture doesn't feel safe it becomes a stressor
need support from admin
mandates are the issue
not done correctly it diminishes autonomy
need a culture of collaboration

Irma
Based on data and state assessment student performance
wonderful school reconstituted (turnaround model)
was placed as principal and hired all teachers assistants remained
a lot of challenges and opportunities (viewed as a gift)
OIP misses with up and down data
when data is up then goes down for consecutive years go in priority
oip misses b/c you don't have to get back to the initial high point of data
issue that impact priority status are systemic
children in priority schools live in 2 different worlds
home/neighborhood
children are overcomers
They live in a space we won't see
bias in priority schools - kids wonder how do you make someone teach you?
different between priority and non priority is money
it means something when you are given a bookbag with supplies vs coming to school with your own

access education fully in non priority
building relationships are difficult in priority schools
a lot of turnover - teachers get the job then move on when they can
teach more than subjects
need more time for the mandates to do them to the fullest
need a real work period
difficult to get subs in priority schools
not enough time to do the work to the fullest
conversations need to take place about what really goes on
time to observe in priority schools
partner with parents
focus on social emotional needs of staff
oip causes staff to feel not valued
oip needs to address social emotional needs of staff
teaching everything all day and making decisions all day oip is minute in comparison
it takes more than you to do the work
determination
parental piece is more difficult in priority schools
overwhelmed
teachers may not seek parental support in priority schools due to bias
oip has nothing to do with meeting the needs of students
don't expect success in priority schools

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