Building a Community of Practice in a Teacher Preparation Initiative

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of faculty as they engaged in professional development under a Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI). This initiative engaged faculty in a community of practice that included activities such as aligning curricula, professional development, and examining teaching practices. This study was developed using an ethnographic approach, including autobiographic narratives as a method of data collection. Faculty narrative responses illustrate Wenger's (1998) concept of identity transformation in their acknowledgement of their professional experience and their willingness to critique, then move beyond the limitations of a professional development program.

Keywords: Professional development, Higher education, Teacher Preparation initiative

Introduction

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Continuous professional development in higher education is imperative to keep faculty abreast of best practices and to ensure the quality of teacher education programs. Professional development in academia often consists of presenting at conferences, attending seminars, and reading scholarly literature. These activities may occur in isolation with little opportunity for professional collaboration (Hosssain, 2010; Ness, George, Turner, & Bolgatz, 2010). In addition, within institutions, the practices of full-time faculty (who develop research, teach, and participate in committees) are often separated from lecturers (who may only teach full or part-time) or adjunct faculty (who may be contracted for specific courses), resulting in student learning that lacks consistency (Tait, 2002). Awareness of needs for the diverse student, along with advancement in the knowledge of learning styles has led professors to consider how the college experience affects student development.

Aside from the aforementioned issues, professors, lecturers, and adjunct faculty do not uniformly collaborate with external stakeholders in the local community. Collaboration involves communication and intent to build a community focused on improving learning and practice (Jeffrey & Polleck, 2010). For colleges of education, for example, this goal translates into developing partnerships with local school districts. Collaboration at the institutional level is a skill that involves effective communication and practice between partners and among professors within universities (Jeffrey & Polleck, 2010). For universities, this goal translates into partnership with local school districts as well as with professionals at the university itself. Building a "third" culture between K-12 and higher education stakeholders may be necessary to build effective partnerships (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Martin et al., 2011), especially with the goal of improving education.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of faculty as they engaged in professional development within an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) higher education Teacher Preparation initiative (TPI). This study of the experiences of faculty participating in professional development under a Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI) was conducted in one university's college of education, where a group of faculty, along with school district and college officials piloted and collaboratively redesigned a teacher preparation program to include Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies known to help students learn skills to be successful in schools and colleges. The team of College of Education faculty was asked: What are the perceptions of participants as they adopted TPI aligned AVID strategies with courses and programs? More specifically: (a) How did COE faculty integrate the information gathered? and (b) How did they perceive courses and students as improving based on the professional development?

Significant in this study is the observation of professional development in higher education environments. Research on professional development in higher education, especially research on how the AVID program works in teacher education is limited. Results from this study may also speak to the possible benefits of communities of practice for professors in colleges of education who are not often afforded the opportunity to develop cohesive curricula and planning. The processes involved in developing curricula, assignments and assessments through AVID TPI allowed professors in the College of Education opportunities to develop communities of practice to explore best practices for their pre-professional students for work with diverse populations in public schools.

AVID: A Description of the Program

AVID (Advancement via individual determination) is a whole-school "untracking" program designed to place middle and high school students within a regular tracked class into college preparation classes (Lee & Smith, 1999). The AVID program was originally designed as a structure of community support in which teachers and students helped each other prepare for college as students completed high school (Freedman, 2000; Lee & Smith, 1999).

AVID for higher education (AHE), an extension of the high school AVID program, is in existence to prepare for and support a successful transition for high school students who enter college. AHE includes the Student Success Initiative, which builds on AVID pre –college

experiences and serves as a bridge for college readiness and eventually translates into college success. Another related program, the AVID Teacher Preparation Initiative, is designed for college students who want to become teachers. Colleges of education team with AVID in continuing professional development that involves philosophies and motivational strategies focused on building academic rigor and comprehension so that teacher candidates are prepared to teach in a manner that focuses students on being college ready. Faculty attends in-services and conferences throughout the year to enrich their teaching and to provide advice about teacher education to the AVID organization.

The implementation of AVID in our university's program has been ongoing for approximately five years. In the early stages of the AVID TPI implementation at our university, our faculty participated in selected professional development workshops presented by AVID trainers in the areas of math, language arts, critical reading, social studies, student success, and English-language learning. The workshops were open to teachers from local and surrounding districts, as well as teacher candidates attending our university. COE faculty attended workshops with local middle and high school teachers and university teacher candidates. COE faculty met to discuss how they planned to include AVID strategies into their teacher education courses. By spring 2012, COE faculty offered twenty-four AVID-embedded courses (Salgado, Carter, Hurst & Smith, 2014).

Literature Review: Professional Development in Higher Education

The literature for professional development in higher education is spread among a plethora of cultures and disciplines. Changes in student demographics and professors' enhanced awareness of culturally responsive teaching have heightened the need for additional professional development for educators in higher education. In response to such needs, professional development in higher education is exhibiting trends that reflect broader educational and social policies (Gardiner, 2013). This trend in professional development in higher education includes expanding the role of professor participation and clarifying government policies in hopes of resulting in more informed and improved implementation of policies in schools. (Collinson, Kozina, Lin, Lang. Matheson, Newcombe & Zolga, 2009). In this sense, professional development is an ongoing and systematic process that embraces discussion and discovery through inquiry that lead to new skills and approaches in teaching (Shagrir, 2012; Wood et al., 2011).

Professional development at the university level is multidimensional including mentoring or being mentored by a veteran faculty member, scholarship and service. Shagrir (2012) found that as the participants' seniority increased, "so did their confidence vis-à-vis job preservation and their understanding that professional development must include research and service" (p32). As seniority increases it is understood that professional activities become a permanent portion of their careers. For example in Shagir's study of five faculty members, one veteran commented that she continues her research activity because it is her responsibility as a teacher in higher education to be "constantly included in research, writing and publishing" (p33).

Blanton and Stylianou (2009) explored professional development in a mid-sized state university with the purpose of studying discipline specific professional development in higher education. Both new faculty and veteran faculty participated in the study of changing culture, developing and recruiting faculty and the need for coordinating professional development combining professional development with practice in action. Using tools and materials available in the teaching of lessons as artifacts allowed faculty to investigate and focus on teacher education. The goal was to view professional development through the lens of community and to reflect on issues that were discipline specific. Ongoing discussion was paramount as veteran faculty explored how to induct new faculty into a culture without a shared language of practice.

Professional development in higher education can involve a system of collaborative partnerships with local school districts as with Penn State-State College Elementary Professional School, nationally recognized for exemplary achievement for professional development. Professional development in this setting is ongoing and occurs in activities that invite participation

by all school personnel. The development structure includes teams that include Pre K-12 partnered with university faculty and graduate students that plan, teach and evaluate the professional development experiences in science, mathematics, teacher inquiry, technology and mentoring (Nolan, Badiali, Zembal-Saul, Burns, Edmindson, Bauer, Queeny, & Wheland, 2009).

For this study, Southwest State University (pseudonym) has adopted an ongoing program for professional development. Similar to Blanton and Stylianou's (2009) study, continuous discussion about changes and how to best support faculty in these changes have been important to the development of the AVID Teaching Preparation Initiative. By sharing information on college and university practices with AVID personnel and how it may or may not reflect AVID theories of practice, both entities are involved in a professional development learning process.

Conceptual Framework: Communities of Practice

The framework for this study follows Wenger's (1991) communities of practice. Wenger (1991) applies a social theory of learning to communities or groups of individuals working and learning together in which "participation is recognized as competence" (p.5). Lave and Wegner (1991) define this phenomenon as a social learning process occurring when a community of people who share a common interest on a topic and collaborate over a lengthy period of time. Learning as the system progresses is not bound by intentional effort and often results from "incidental outcomes" within the social process. The "communities of practice" framework is akin to the current study in that it fits Lave and Wenger's (1991) three required components: (a) the domain, (b) the community, and (c) the practice. The current study is embedded in the communities of practice framework in the following manner:

Domain: The domain of shared interest was that the community members had all expressed interest in AVID in the area school districts and how to make a seamless transition from high school participation to the university setting. All members were focused on the assignment of developing a higher education handbook for AVID strategies that could be employed in the rigorous training of pre-service teachers and graduate candidates in leadership.

Community: The members of the research team were all university faculty members who were selected by administration in the College of Education to participate in the project at its inception as Fellows on a site team. University faculty members were also committed to working with local school teachers and administrators, who were invited to AVID workshops.

Practice: As the professors taught courses, they worked to implement AVID strategies into their curriculum. At monthly site team meetings they discussed progress, demonstrated strategies that had proven successful in class sessions, and mapped curriculum for pre-service teachers. Leadership professors studied how to use the information learned in meetings into the field of service to innovate changes in the area districts. Professors outside the College of Education discussed how to make changes in course delivery in selected Arts and Science classrooms at the university. In addition faculty members attended AVID training at National AVID Summer Institutes and AVID trainers held trainings on the university campus on topics such as Reaching English Language Learners, Social Studies, Critical Reading, Language Arts, and Cultural Relevance. At the end of each workshop AVID presenters and administrators met with faculty to debrief and guide the social process.

Wenger's (1998) more recent work delves into connections between community and identity. According to Wenger (1998), meaning-making within a community of practice is ultimately transformative in that it is "an experience of identity" and a "a process of becoming" (p. 215). Clayton and Cuddapah's (2011) study of a new teacher cohort illuminated Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of how new teachers developed professional identities while working within a community of other new teachers. Other researchers have found Wenger's (1998) community of practice helpful in guiding their work with pre-service teachers (Au, 2002; Grisham, Bergeron, Brink, Farnan, Lenski & Meyerson, 1999; Hoagland, Birkenfeld & Box,). In the process of

implementing AVID, professors in our study re-examined, and in some cases, transformed professional identities as professors prepared teacher candidates in education courses.

Methods

Narrative inquiry was used as a way to understand social, political, and cultural aspects of the TPI initiative. Narrative inquiry as a methodology allows for the observation of a phenomenon, from the participant's point of view – or the opportunity to "adopt a particular view of the phenomenon of study" (Connely & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). The study was guided by the question: What are the perceptions of professors in one College of Education as they adopted TPI professional development strategies in the coursework for their pre-service teachers and aligned these AVID strategies with courses and programs? The study explored the experiences of thirteen faculty members--professors, lecturers, and leaders across education disciplines developing a community of practice.

Procedures

Professors and lecturers in a college of education at a State university were invited to participate in this study. The participants were part of an initiative focused on training higher education professors, lecturers, and leaders, to apply AVID strategies in the preparation of student teachers. The 9 participants interviewed included the dean and associate dean at the College, the local school district's AVID director, as well as professors and lecturers from different academic focus, such as one Assistant Professor in Counseling, one assistant professor in Educational Leadership, and a total of six faculty members in Curriculum and Design (one full professor, one associate professor, three assistant professors, and two lecturers).

AVID training, which had been historically offered at the district level, was being proposed (by the AVID organization) to be delivered by professors as part of preparing new teachers. After receiving training of AVID strategies, the professors were embedding these strategies into the teacher preparation coursework for a period of three years. The participants were invited to reflect in written narrative form about the adoption of AVID strategies in their teaching and coursework content. The written narratives followed Chang's (2008) idea that, "through writing exercises of chronicling, inventorying, and visualizing self, you are encouraged to unravel your memory, write down fragments of your past, and build the database for your cultural analysis and interpretation" (p. 72).

The participants met monthly to discuss progress of the TPI implementation. In addition, intense onsite professional development trainings in AVID methods as well as attendance in AVID summer institutes constituted the continual professional development of this group between spring 2011 and summer 2014. At a debriefing meeting in the fall of 2013, AVID participants were invited to share about TPI as improving pedagogy and collaboration. Participants agreed to develop short written narratives focused on how AVID had affected their teaching of education students. Theses narratives formed the foundation of the current study.

Data Analysis

The professor narratives were analyzed through open coding (Creswell, 2006). The participants were analyzed for their efforts in designing and aligning courses, as a community of practice. Individual perceptions were respected. Codes were compared in order to develop categories or themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using constant comparison, sections of the narratives were interpreted for placement in three thematic categories that framed the perceptions of professors as they reflected on the following areas: (a) How did professors integrated the information gathered?; (b) How did they perceive courses and students as improving based on the professional development?: and (c) What are challenges as they move forward in the implementation process?

Findings

Findings reflect the process of the communities of practice model as professors worked together and with their students to integrate AVID strategies and learning models into their classrooms. Perceptions of professors as they adopted learning from AVID TPI professional development addressed in the research questions mentioned above.   In considering the research questions, the authors examined professors' reflections on their work with course preparation and teaching. A model of communities of practice based on Wenger (1998) was considered. Figure 1 illustrates the model of professional development supported by the authors, who viewed their professional development in AVID as a component of a larger community of content area professors, education professors and public school teachers. Local public school teachers, content professors, and student teachers were also invited to participate in AVID workshops. This community contributed to the authors' and participants' understanding of how to best prepare teacher and counselor candidates for future work.

Figure 1. *Professor integration of AVID Information*
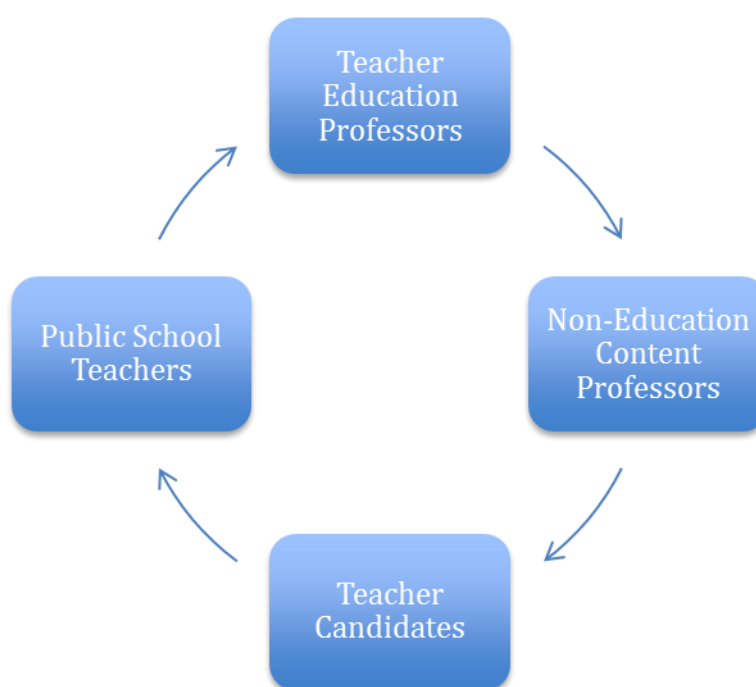
In response to the first research question, "How did professors integrate the information gathered?" the authors' analysis of the professors' reflections revolved around two themes: (1) Course planning with colleagues and (2) Changes in teaching strategies. In preparation for both an upcoming NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) review and for the purpose of incorporating AVID strategies into the education curriculum, the professors on the AVID site team worked together to design course planning matrices. These matrices helped professors to decide which AVID strategies and content would work best in each course. Professors' understandings of the process for planning and designing the matrices are discussed next.

Course planning with colleagues. Professors who were AVID site team members reflected on the strengths of the course planning matrices for their own understanding of how to implement AVID. For example, Professor. J., a counseling professor, viewed this work as a positive contribution to her own planning:

> As my exposure to AVID increased and deepened, I gained two primary tools that enhanced my   teaching—exposure to course planning matrices and strategies to move my teaching style away from a predominantly lecture format to one that heavily focused on student

engagement. The planning matrices provided a vehicle for week-by-week planning that allowed me to review course content, identify key concepts, consider appropriate student engagement strategies that foster learning and build in assessment strategies.

Professors are not always exposed to curriculum alignment, goals and matrices unless they have spent time in public schools, so this experience allowed the professors to communicate across disciplines toward the goal of incorporating AVID into the College of Education curriculum.

Professor G, who teaches math and science education methods courses, commented on the importance of instructional mapping in helping to assess the gaps in his methods courses:

> Developing the instructional maps and course planning maps for my courses, and collaborating with colleagues to create the broader maps for our programs, provided me with a picture of where the strengths and gaps were in my own courses and within the overall program. In response, the use of AVID strategies in the math and science methods courses was adjusted and revised to not only progress more intentionally within each course, but to better fit within a scaffold of support and growth across courses.

The AVID site team and workshops provided opportunities for the authors of this study and other professors to discuss the structure of their courses in relationship to the college of education curriculum as a whole. Overall, these planning and discussion sessions contributed to advance the preparation for an NCATE accreditation visit as well as self-evaluations of individual courses.

Changes in teaching strategies. Although some AVID participants believed the AVID strategies presented in workshops were simply re-packaged best practices, most agreed that the strategies were indeed useful for helping future educators work with students. The second theme, *changes in teaching strategies,* describes a couple of the professors' experiences with the AVID workshops. For example, Professor J, who explained that she had limited college pedagogical training, believed that AVID allowed her to revise her instructional methods. Professor J described her experiences in this way:

> Prior to AVID training, I typically covered the basic tenants of psychodynamic, humanistic, and cognitive-behavioral theories by reiterating main points from the text. With AVID's focus on student engagement and active information processing, I incorporated classroom activities that allowed students to write, question, collaborate, reflect, and review material from the chapters. I provided additional opportunities for processing through reflective journal prompts that allowed the student to process how a particular theoretical paradigm fit with his/her personal belief system.

The purpose of Professor J's implementation of journals and class activities was to promote higher levels of self-reflection and participation in discussion with their peers. As part of a community of teacher-educators, Professor J observed the higher level teaching methods her colleagues implemented while designing methods appropriate for counseling education. Of all of the professors in this study, Professor J seemed to experience the most transformation in the ways that she thought about teaching her students to reflect and participate actively in classes. Professor J's identity as "professor" within the university community seemed to take on a new teaching identity, one that allowed her to provide more opportunities for students to take control of their own learning. Wenger (1998) describes individuals within communities sustain growth through participation in a "repertoire of that practice" (p. 153). Professor J's participation in the new AVID TPI community allowed her to reinvent her identity as professor and teacher.

Teacher Educators at Southwest State University are most concerned about how their teacher candidates will understand and apply AVID strategies with their future students. The second research question addressed these concerns: "How did the College of Education professors perceive courses and students as improving, based on the AVID professional development?" The theme of

improved teacher candidate self-efficacy and pedagogical knowledge best described the university professors about their teacher candidates.

Teacher Candidate Self-Efficacy and Pedagogical Knowledge

Professors who incorporated AVID strategies discussed their beliefs about the strengths and weaknesses of AVID for preparing teacher candidates for their work in public schools. According to their narratives, the college of education professors believed that their teacher candidates demonstrated improved self-efficacy for preparing their future students for academic success. Further, the professors believed their own strategy instructional methods had improved with the implementation of AVID. Professor L, who teaches early literacy classes, commented:

> The AVID Professional Development has caused me to think more systematically about the strategies I teach and to directly teach more pedagogy. For example, I directly teach the "WICOR" acronym and methodically model how each letter is used within a strategy during class. Then in EDUC 4373, I turn the job of making the "WICOR" connections over to the candidates. The candidates have learned enough strategies that they have the ability to make the connections.

In AVID, WICOR is a learning model that stands for Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization and Reading to Learn (AVID.org). These are the components that tie the strategies together and provide a purpose for teachers to help their students learn and communicate effectively.

Professor L and other professors believed the consistent use of terminology for the strategies contributed to teacher candidates' understanding of the ways AVID strategies could be used with their future students. Professor H, Associate Professor of Reading and Department Coordinator, commented: "I learned that AVID had workshops and books that could only enrich my pre-service and graduate teachers. I could help my students see the connection between theory and practice and affirm my own teaching by blending my philosophy with AVID." Most professors agreed that the AVID materials and workshop content was beneficial for preparing their teacher candidates to help their future students improve academic skills. The strategies and repeated focus on critical reading and writing-to-learn were already supported in the education course curricula. As they applied the learning strategies that AVID offered into their own coursework, the professors participating in AVID TPI learned from each other's interpretation of how AVID worked within their own courses. Through discussions in monthly meetings and AVID workshops, the professors demonstrated what Wenger (1998) refers to as "mutuality of engagement" (p. 152). As members of the AVID TPI community, individual professors were respected as knowledgeable and experienced, and all were actively involved in processes of learning the best ways to apply AVID strategies and philosophies in their own classes. Not knowing how to apply the strategies effectively was not viewed as a deficit (Wenger, 1998). Instead, professors asked each other questions, and shared instructional examples throughout the workshops and meetings.

Most helpful to the faculty was the opportunity to observe these strategies modeled by experienced public school teachers who taught the AVID workshops. Professor H explained, "The AVID professional development led me to consider more systematically the strategies that were used and taught, and not only to model their use but to directly teach the methodology." Professor H and other College of Education professors received positive feedback from their students about the AVID strategies and applications. Professor H believed the reason for this positive feedback was that the use of AVID strategies involved collaboration with peers and interactions at higher levels of critical reasoning.

Professor H also believed that the consistent use and application of AVID terminology and strategies across disciplines helped teacher candidates to plan and participate actively. Professor H explained, "Conversations include planning for lessons that include AVID strategies that are introduced in one class focused on teaching early elementary grades as "Cats and Fish" and reformatted to the next pedagogical level for the upper elementary as "Philosophical Chairs," and

scaffold yet again to the high school level as the "Socratic Seminar." The professors believed that this consistency throughout the education courses helped their teacher candidates to think about how to adapt research-based strategies to a variety of content areas and grade levels.

The Implementation of AVID produced challenges along with benefits. Consistently mentioned across professor narratives was the need to prepare teacher candidates to apply AVID strategies to class content and instruction. Simply supplying teacher candidates with the strategies and activities was not enough preparation for teacher candidates to translate this into their own practices. Professors needed to think about how to model the strategies. Often education classes contained students with mixed content area majors, which meant that teacher candidates needed to be taught to think about how to apply these strategies to their content areas. Professor C, who teaches classroom management, explained, "My goal was to help them see that AVID strategies and ideas can be implemented no matter the content." Professor A agreed that it was necessary to provide time in class for students to practice teaching the strategies in small groups in content area reading classes beyond simply observing the strategies being modeled by professors. Professor Y also described challenges that occurred with adapting AVID to second language and instruction:

> In bilingual or ESL, the main focus does not begin with the subject or the strategy, but on *who* is receiving the knowledge (as background knowledge needs to be considered) before we teach or use a strategy and *how* is it being delivered? Is it comprehensible to the receiving end?

Professor Y and other Southwest State University professors re-interpreted AVID strategies and created assignments and class activities that they believed best prepare their teacher candidates to teach in their content areas. Much of this work occurred privately; however, professors were able to share course revisions and experiences during monthly AVID site team meetings and department meetings.

College of Education professors must consider their teacher candidates' future students and how they can best help their students learn. In a city with high levels of poverty and a large number of Second Language English speakers, teacher candidates' need preparation for working with students of varied backgrounds and academic skills. Teacher-educators participate in what Wenger (1999) refers to as "boundary trajectories" (p. 154). Participants in boundary trajectories find value in connecting across various communities of practice. Professors of reading, for example, must keep in mind the needs of their teacher candidates who will teach English Language Learners (ELL). ELL professors must prepare their teacher-candidates to consider their students' learning in a variety of content areas. Teacher educators also work with communities of public teachers and professors who teach in other disciplines. The College of Education professors believed that AVID provided them with some tools to help their teacher candidates become successful in working with their future students while considering the possibility that their students may have poor language and academic skills.

The final research question invited professors to voice critiques and shortcomings of AVID as well as plans for future implementation and research: "What are challenges as they move forward in the implementation process?" The theme, *Suggestions for Future AVID Development,* best described professors' reflections about the strengths and weaknesses of AVID and their goals for future work with AVID, and is detailed in the following section.

Discussion

This study explored the experiences of faculty as they engaged in professional development under AVID's Teacher Preparation Initiative (TPI). The grant-funded initiative, and the invitation to

contribute to a new initiative that could be replicated at a national and international level propelled this group of faculty at Southwest State University to engage in a community of practice.

As a college-wide effort, there seems to be little resistance to initiate activities in a community of practice. Incentives provided for leading initiatives in different programs, and the idea of piloting a program that could be replicated were significant motivators in capitalizing efforts for this initiative. At a college of education, where pedagogies are the center of all programs, providing a domain of shared interest where professors engaged with school districts and aligned the curriculum to prepare future teachers resulted in a successful model.

Nevertheless, although some professors fully embraced AVID philosophies, academic strategies and workshop content, other Southwest State University professors critiqued AVID and explained their plans to work within and outside the boundaries of AVID. Professor S, for example, requested that AVID design program specific component. Professor S critiqued her experiences with AVID in the following narrative:

> I couldn't find any connection between AVID, the goals of the site team, and what I did in
> my program. After my first year, I   figured there was some merit in this, but I needed to
> push for a leadership component. They (AVID) are in the process of developing a leadership
> component. I also wish there was better online training for AVID. I still struggle to find
> application for AVID in my   program, but feel the professional development I have
> gained has been useful.

Like most programs, AVID is not designed to address all issues and solve all problems with student learning. The professors met weekly as a team to discuss how AVID's program fit into their own class content. As a result of the conversations and her own thinking, Professor S experienced an "outbound trajectory," which Wenger (1998) defines as those that "lead out of the community" (p. 155). Although Professor S believed learning about the AVID program was important, she decided it was not directly relevant to her field of leadership. Professor S. teaches graduate students, and the TPI focused on developing pre-service teachers. Professor S continues to be an active member of the College of Education community, yet remains on the periphery of AVID involvement by participating as an instructor in the Freshman seminar class where she implements AVID strategies that support the College Ready guidelines defined by the state.

Professor S's involvement may take a turn inward as AVID incorporates the leadership component which is currently under development.   In relation to building communities of practice, it seems that the Teacher Preparation Initiative at the college level inspired professors to connect to the student practice within content areas such as Reading. Professor A connected with students when some pre-service teachers in content area reading classes expressed concern about the relevance of these strategies for their content area. Professor A explained how she addressed these concerns:

> I began to occasionally remind the pre-service teachers that they needed to think about the
> appropriateness of the strategy to the content area, reading purpose, and grade level of   the
> students they teach. As I plan my teaching of the content literacy course, I think about how
> to teach pre-service teachers to critique each strategy and how it may or may not work with
> the kinds of texts they assign within their content areas.

As a site team, the professors examined their Reading related practices according to pre-service teacher critiques and their own analysis of what strategies were in place that were compatible with AVID and what additional AVID strategies might augment the pre service teacher training for the EC-12 classroom experience. Professors committed each education course syllabus to a scope and sequence crosswalk and its applicability to teaching. This action by faculty allowed faculty to plan for consecutive semesters and to refine which strategies most benefitted the content of each course. An added benefit of the crosswalk process occurred when the site team discovered that the pre-service teachers practice at least thirty nine AVID core strategies during their training.

This process of examination brought into focus the goal of the university's president that each teacher candidate would graduate with enough exposure to AVID to confidently function in the local districts that use AVID strategies. Evidence of supporting community partnership emerged from teacher candidates' Observation Field Packet charts that list the thirty nine strategies that pre-service teachers record if they see or teach each strategy. Checkmarks indicate that teachers are implementing multiple AVID strategies in their classrooms and that the university teacher candidates recognize their use.

For Professor A, informed by a social justice lens, the initiative did not seem to provide enough preparation for teacher candidates. Although AVID offered a culturally responsive teaching workshop to both district teachers and Southwest State University professor A's critiques focused on the lack of in-depth analysis that is necessary for exploring issues of social justice with students. Professor A wrote,

> I decided that AVID strategies alone did not sufficiently prepare pre-service teachers about culture, power and literacy. Further, the AVID workshop on culturally responsive teaching also did not explicitly address methods for teaching criticisms of social and cultural power. For example, the AVID culturally responsive teaching did not address *positionality*, an element of social justice thinking that I work on with my undergraduate and graduate students to teach them about cultural responsivity and critical literacy.

Culturally responsive teaching is a key component of the cultural and social characteristics of literacy taught by most of the professors at Southwest University. Although there are different conceptual positions that influence the teaching of critical literacy and cultural responsivity. Professor A and Professor L illustrate Wenger's (1998) concept of identity transformation in their acknowledgement of their professional experience and their willingness to critique, then move beyond the limitations of a professional development program.

As in many initiatives, those involved in the COE TPI, needed to understand the hoped-for outcome behind the initiative before implementing the strategies. Professors found a common intent in supporting their students in becoming successful teaching professionals, regardless of a subject or focus. In the end, the College of Education professors believed in the value of AVID to help teacher candidates and their future students improve academic skills. Through mutual respect and collaboration, coupled with feedback from students, faculty continues to evaluate the appropriateness of AVID content for their coursework.

Conclusion

This study explored the narratives of individual faculty in one college of education integrating AVID strategies in a Teacher Preparation Initiative. Even though the initiative was being piloted and designed while being implemented, they all agreed on the benefits of infusing AVID TPI innovations into their courses. The majority of professors recognized that the initiative was contributing to the preparation of new teachers. While developing a higher education handbook for TPI, the faculty had the chance to reflect on the connections between their own training and the preparation of teachers, who would, in turn, support students in schools. During the next phase of implementation, faculty members planned to research the outcomes of implementing AVID.

Wenger (1998) suggests that "Engagement, imagination, and alignment are all important ingredients of learning—they anchor it in practice yet make it broad, creative and effective in the wider world" (p. 217). This process of critique and adjustment will most likely continue as professors work together in communities of practice. This combination of engagement and distancing through research allows participants in this or other learning community to analyze and reflect on the relevance of new information.

Implications for further research in the development of communities of practice among higher education faculty relate to strengthening partnerships with local public schools. The requirement of participating in professional development with school teachers and district administrators generated visibility and interest. The participation of professors in the craft of teaching and learning with public school teachers and other community members generated authentic conversations about improving the practice of future teachers.

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