Superintendents' perceptions of their instructional leadership in the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS)

Douglas Dean Wheeler

Iowa State University

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Superintendents’ perceptions of their instructional leadership in the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS)

by

Douglas Dean Wheeler

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
Douglas Wieczorek, Major Professor
Jan M. Westerman-Beatty
Constance C. Beecher
Joanne Marshall
Greg Robinson

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2018

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, George R. Wheeler (1952-2016).

While I am unable to celebrate this achievement with him, I will always be grateful for his love, support, presence, and encouragement.

I am the person he helped mold me to become by his example.

I am indebted to my dad for instilling in me the values of hard work and service to others.
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I am truly blessed to be surrounded by such supportive and talented individuals in my personal, professional, and educational life.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine superintendent instructional leadership in the context of the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS). The study included interviews of 15 Iowa superintendents who were involved in the application and initial implementation of the Iowa TLCS in their districts. Interviews were designed to collect superintendents’ perceptions related to three areas of their instructional leadership practice: (1) perceived opportunities of TLCS; (2) perceived challenges of TLCS; and (3) perceived influence of TLCS implementation on superintendents’ role as instructional leaders. The study utilized sensemaking as an analytical framework to examine how superintendents responded to events related to the TLCS implementation process.

The research findings identified superintendents’ perceived opportunities to build cohesive district systems, develop individual and collective capacity of staff, and enhance district climate and culture. Superintendents identified challenges to meet the teacher leader participation requirements, define teacher leaders’ roles, and concerns for program sustainability. In the context of TLCS implementation, superintendents expressed a desire to engage in instructional leadership, but noted other job demands that prohibited them from doing so. They attempted to prioritize communication, empowering others, and personal engagement, and facilitating a vision for teaching and learning as part of TLCS implementation. This study found that perceptions resulting from personal engagement in the TLCS application and implementation process influenced how participants thought about and conceptualized instructional leadership in the superintendency.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

As the pace of education reform continues to increase, school leaders are tasked both with implementing change and managing the reaction to that change. As the District CEO, the Superintendent is a facilitator of the change process (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Crowson, 1987). While evidence exists supporting the assertion that superintendents matter in large-scale educational reform (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008), the technical management functions inherent in the job often dominate their time and effort (Alsbury & Whitaker, 2007; Bjork, 1993; Candoli, 1995; Grogan, 2000; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986). When the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (hereafter also referred to as TLCS) was introduced in 2014, school superintendents assumed a key role in facilitating and implementing one of the largest and most expensive school reform efforts in Iowa history.

Dumas and Anyon (2006) asserted the importance of local context in educational policy implementation, placing the superintendent in a unique position when implementing such a sweeping reform. While participation in the TLCS requires subscribing to several guiding principles, there is a great deal of flexibility for local districts to utilize the system in a way that best fits their needs. Rorrer and Skrla (2005) suggested the superintendent plays a policy mediator role in which his or her perceptions, experiences and philosophies guide decision-making and ultimately variation in implementation for policies across local districts (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005; Rorrer et al., 2008; Seashore Louis, & Robinson, 2012).

While it is clear that Iowa superintendents play an important function in the rollout of this initiative, it is not clear what impact a large-scale reform can have on their thinking and conceptualization of leadership as he or she facilitates this new initiative and implements
these new leadership structures in their districts. The TLCS can be conceptualized as a model of distributed leadership in which strictly hierarchical systems are flattened for the purpose of growing capacity. Initial outcomes of the system rely mainly on qualitative data including yearly reports from TLCS districts and a study from the American Institutes of Research commissioned by the Iowa Department of Education. While these sources have initially yielded positive outcomes, they have focused mainly on impressions, opportunities and challenges of the primary impact group of the program, which is teachers within the new structure. Second to teachers is the examination of administrations, which includes building principals, central office staff and superintendents collectively rather than individually (Citkowicz, Brown-Sims, Williams, & Gerdeman, 2016a, 2016b; Iowa Department of Education, 2016a). Absent, or perhaps included in the general category of “administrator”, is the investigation of superintendent impressions and implementation dilemmas. Results of implementation on those tasked with facilitating the transition at the system level (systemization) in local districts are absent in the formal conversation and areas of study. Potential changes, challenges and opportunities to the role the superintendent individually plays in teaching and learning and his or her role in supporting TLCS structures before, during and after implementation remains unstudied.

**Overview of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System**

The Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) was approved by the Iowa State Legislature in 2013 under division XII of House File 215 (2013). Upon full implementation in 2017, the TLCS offers an additional $150 million in state funding to Iowa school districts. While the policy represents a major undertaking and commitment for both state and local school agencies, it was not implemented in isolation. The TLCS was launched
in tandem with state requirements of Iowa Core Curriculum implementation, a new statewide school report card, 3rd grade literacy initiatives, and examination of a new state assessment. These changes also occurred after a decade of statewide school funding reductions. Therefore, this reform represents the largest undertaking, both in cost and magnitude, in the current menu of approaches aimed at improving student achievement in Iowa.

Participation in the TLCS makes districts eligible to receive a Teacher Leader Supplement (TLS), which is a per-pupil allocation of an additional $308.82 per student for agreeing to implement a teacher leadership system in their district. At a median district enrollment in 2014 of 653 for Iowa, most districts in the state have access to approximately $201,659 of TLS funds per year to participate in the program (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2015). It is also important to note the inclusion of the TLS in the state foundation funding formula for schools, making it largely immune from legislative restructuring, short of changing the law. However, this guarantee comes with the restriction of this money being categorical, impacting the flexibility of use resources to address general fund needs in districts. In addition to the per pupil allocation for resident students, districts receive funding for students open enrolled from districts with approved plans (House File 215, 2013). This opportunity emerges in an environment in which per pupil education funding in Iowa is being outpaced by over half of other states and is under-funded by approximately $641 per student when accounting for inflation (School Administrators of Iowa, 2015). There is a great deal of money available to districts to implement this program, which is described as optional (Iowa Department of Education, 2013).

From its inception, the TLCS has garnered national attention. In 2015, one month into its first year of implementation, former secretary of education, Arne Duncan, called the
system “revolutionary”, noting that this type of program, unique to Iowa, “…should have happened 50 years ago” (Phillips, 2015). With FY2017 marking 100% participation from districts with annual budgeted cost of $150 million in categorical state funding, this program represents a significant amount of investment in physical and material resources (Branstad, 2015; Iowa Department of Education, 2013; Ryan, 2015). Governor Branstad, who was serving as governor when this system was developed, was steadfast in his support of the TLCS as a way to enhance what he called “lagging” academic performance, stating “…Iowa has a proud education tradition, but we became dangerously complacent.” … He emphasized the TLCS as a way to gain back Iowa’s status as a top education state, claiming “other states had passed us by, while Iowa was stuck with a local control system” (Ryan, 2015).

In April of 2014, 41 Iowa school districts were awarded program approval. Three years later, in fiscal year 2017, all Iowa districts had signed on to receive the funding stream and implement teacher leadership plans (Iowa Department of Education, 2016d). Appendix A provides an overview of the implementation timeline for TLCS. Since its state-wide implementation, support from top state politicians has persisted. Governor Reynolds, who served as Lieutenant Governor during the adoption of TLC, lauded the success of the program since state-wide adoption in a 2017 press release, exclaiming “…Iowa is leading the way in teacher leadership…our administration will continue to look for ways to ensure Iowa’s teacher leadership system is even more effective.” In this same release, Lieutenant Governor Gregg stated, “…although Iowa is still in the early stages of the teacher leadership system, we know the investment is paying off and will have a lasting return over time” (Office of the Governor, 2017).
Superintendent’s Role

The myriad of new or fresh initiatives coupled with state funding reductions strongly impacts how school leaders frame the TLCS, not only as a funding item but also as a vehicle for whole-system reform. How leaders frame the system in their own context and how this perception guides systemic implementation will ultimately influence the success of the TLCS at the local level where actors have a strong influence on the success of policy initiatives (Matland, 1995; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987; McLaughlin, 1987). Superintendents see both the expansion of their role in school reform efforts and the challenges and complexity of enacting policy at the local level (Kowalski, McCord, & Peterson, 2011). At the forefront of designing and supporting structures for teacher leadership is the superintendent of schools; however, a focus on the superintendent as an actor in the TLCS system remains unstudied prior to this project.

This lack of focus on the changing role of superintendent in the TLCS is mirrored in the greater context of research regarding system leaders within schools at any level (Boylan, 2013). Research that specifically examines the role of superintendents in implementing policy at the local level is incomplete as it often focuses on the principal-superintendent relationship as the vehicle through which superintendents implement policy (Cudeiro, 2005; Fink & Silverman, 2014; Knapp & Feldman, 2012; Mitgang, 2010; Roach, Smith, & Boutin, 2011; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012; Spanneut & Ford, 2008; Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park, 2008). The current body of research offers no consistent or clear methods by which the myriad of reform efforts unfold at the local level (Chatterji, 2002). Furthermore, discussion regarding the role of district leaders in responding to accountability measures and policy implementation is often absent from analysis when determining success of initiatives.
(Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). Therefore, studying the reciprocal relationship between policy implementation and leadership development is a fertile area of study in general and is non-existent in the conversation related to the TLCS.

**Policy Design Impact**

The complexity conceptualizing of the TLCS becomes apparent when examining the intended outcomes. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) posited: “Policies work by bringing the resources of government – money, rules, and authority – into the service of political objectives; and by using those resources to influence the action of individuals and institutions” (p. 133). Matland (1995) explained successful implementation as “…its ability to execute faithfully the goals and means present in the statutory mandate” (p. 155). Examining how the lead administrator/CEO in a school district implements policy is complex; however, that complexity expands when considering the TLCS as it does not fit neatly into existing policy instrument categories typically used by researchers.

McDonnell and Elmore (1987) described four policy instruments or levers with which policies are designed to encourage action:

… “mandates”, “inducements”, capacity-building”, and “system changing”.

“Mandates” introduce rules and operate under the assumption that change will not occur without new rules. “Inducements” are often voluntary and reward participants financially for adhering to policies. “Capacity-building” levers give money to agencies to invest in future benefits. And “system changing” policy levers attempt to re-distribute authority within the organization. (pp. 137-140)
These policies levers were expanded on by the consideration of a fifth policy lever, the “hortatory” policy instrument (McDonnell, 1994). Since hortatory policy instruments suggest governmental priorities, agencies can leverage this type of policy to bundle prior initiatives (Prestine, 2005).

The TLCS does not fit neatly into one of these recognized policy levers. Districts stood to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars for lack of participation; however, participation required adhering to a set of standards, suggesting both a mandate and an inducement. Furthermore, the choice of shifting leadership structures within schools by building the capacity of teachers to both lead and instruct suggests both capacity-building and system changing levers. Being implemented synchronously with a variety of other state-level school improvement measures enables the TLCS to be interpreted as a hortatory policy instrument, which is appealing to those most closely impacting student achievement on a daily basis. Having elements of all five policy levers opens it up to the interpretation of individual actors implementing the policy, their decisions and the roles they take in the implementation process.

Another policy consideration impacting implementation at the local level is ambiguity. The ability to select among three models fosters greater flexibility for the means with which school districts can meet the requirements of the system. Schools can select all or part of existing national frameworks or select homegrown solutions and systems (Iowa Department of Education, 2016). While this flexibility ultimately mitigates conflict in garnering support for the TLCS, thus addressing the tradition of local control, it also sets up a situation in which the system can play out very differently from district to district because the ambiguity of expectations it leaves local leaders. While a certain level of ambiguity is
positive, it can sometimes make it difficult for implementers to determine what tools to use or capacity to build for successful implementation (Matland, 1995).

The success of a policy is highly influenced by how individuals within the system interpret and act on the policy initiatives, making local capacity and will paramount in the implementation of new policies (McLaughlin, 1987). Understanding the policy instruments underlying the TLCS as well as the challenges of ambiguity contained in the legislation is important to understanding how stakeholders will react to the system. This understanding will also define how actors are influenced through participation and ultimately determine the fidelity with which the system will be implemented as sensemaking occurs. The TLCS, by design, will play out differently in each local context. The superintendent will play a key role to mediate the demands of the policy with the demands of the local context. He or she will ultimately frame the elements of implementation through his or her responsibility as district leader. The way superintendents make meaning of the TLCS as a policy instrument interacting with the ambiguity of requirements will suggest the role of the leader in the implementation of the policy and his or her subsequent thinking about their leadership. This thinking will influence the decisions regarding how he or she operates on a daily basis, including the decision of involvement in teaching and learning initiatives. This study examines the interaction between superintendent leadership conceptualizations and policy implementation by exploring the lived experiences of superintendents implementing the TLCS.
Intended Outcomes

The TLCS shifts focus from simple student achievement metrics to more qualitative school system design elements. The theory of action for the TLCS is summarized by the Iowa Department of Education as follows:

If we effectively compensate teachers; recruit and promote excellent teachers and provide support as they collaborate reflectively to refine their practice; create the political will and understanding necessary to remake the status of the teaching profession; give highly effective teachers opportunities to grow, refine and share their expertise; and develop a clear system with quality implementation, then … student learning will increase, student outcomes will improve, and students will be prepared to succeed in a globally competitive environment. (Iowa Department of Education, 2013, p. 2)

The intended outcomes of the legislation are to:

• Attract able and promising new teachers by offering competitive starting salaries and offering short-term and long-term professional development and leadership opportunities.
• Retain effective teachers by providing enhanced career opportunities.
• Promote collaboration by developing and supporting opportunities for teachers in schools and school districts statewide to learn from each other.
• Reward professional growth and effective teaching by providing pathways for career opportunities that come with increased leadership responsibilities and involve increased compensation.
- Improve student achievement by strengthening instruction.

(Iowa Department of Education, 2013, p. 2)

Districts choosing to participate were allowed participation over a three-year period based on application. Part of this application is the choice to adopt one of the models. Appendix B illustrates the requirements of each model and the increasing flexibility afforded by model three. Table 1.1 demonstrates the preference by applicants to apply for model three, meaning there is a great deal of flexibility afforded to these districts in implementing their systems.

Moving from model one to model three, the flexibility for implementation increases. Additionally, the measures of success for their programs are designed by districts in section eight of the application and even though the evaluation goes through an approval process, they vary greatly from district to district (Iowa Department of Education, 2015, 2016b). This flexibility of implementation requirements, coupled with district choice of goals and success criteria within a policy system too early in development to assess in terms of student achievement, lends itself to a great amount of variability in implementation. This flexibility in local control is of particular interest in this study.

**Table 1.1. Teacher leadership models by cohort**

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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohort 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>189</td>
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As the superintendent surveys his or her local context and interprets the plans based on personal leadership philosophies and district goals, he or she determines needed courses
of action. The resulting model choice and local intended outcomes will be impacted through this policy mediating role (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005; Weick, 1995). Therefore, a strong case exists to understand how the superintendent perceives his or her role in the policy implementation and the resulting impact on involvement and implantation decisions.

**Statement of the Problem**

The measure of success in previous reforms was the test scores Iowa children achieved. The immaturity of the TLCS makes it difficult to fully assess in these narrow achievement metrics and the aforementioned intended outcomes only partially suggest student test scores as an outcome. The TLCS requires system-wide changes in structure and the role of staff at all levels within the district. Opportunities for teacher leadership, retention of “effective” teachers, and attraction of high quality teachers demands system change within districts and true second-order change.

The TLCS was introduced and implemented in a time of major educational reform initiatives, including, but not limited to the following major requirements for schools and the Iowa Department of Education:

- Full alignment to Iowa Core Curriculum by every district K-12
- Transition from Iowa Tests to Iowa Assessments and the impending transition to a yet to be named new state assessment.
- State-wide reduction in funding levels to school district general program funds
- Implementation of a state-wide report card and school ranking system
- Early Literacy Initiative, a program requiring proficiency by the end of 3rd grade. This system required a statewide progress monitoring system to be learned and
implemented in every school as well as required summer programming for non-proficient students.

- Transition from No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds

With the dynamics and number of school reform mechanisms at work in Iowa, districts set to work funneling resources to district priorities. During this prioritization process, districts are eligible for the sizable per pupil funding bump by participating in the TLCS. The reform environment coupled with the flexibility in design and outcome afforded through the TLCS application process can lead to a variability of implementation from district to district. At the center of the decision-making and prioritization is the superintendent of schools who works with stakeholders to discover and set priorities. Therefore, the dynamics of the policy allow for a great change in role for the superintendent as he or she works to successfully implement a program requiring adaptability and knowledge of instructional leadership practices.

Specific to the TLCS, there has been no study to determine how superintendents perceive the TLCS as a tool for local school improvement and how those perceptions are translated into decisions aimed at local systemic reform. Significant attention has not been paid to the role of the superintendent as a leader of instruction regarding what Rorrer and Skrla (2008), and Seashore Louis and Robinson (2012) referred to as the policy mediating role of the superintendent. The perceptions of the superintendent will guide actions and impact the implementation and monitoring of TLCS at the local level, which foreshadows the overall success of the system in the district context. Of paramount importance is how the leader interprets the goals, outcomes and philosophy of the TLCS and how this interpretation shapes decision-making and the role the leader chooses to play in implementing the program. As an antecedent to decision-making this study focused on how superintendents made sense
of the TLCS and how these sensemaking processes influenced their thinking and reflection of the leadership approach necessary for successful implementation. With an intended outcome of the TLCS to re-structure organizations for the distribution of instructional leadership, this study focused on understanding superintendent instructional leadership conceptualizations in the context of their implementation role. While the study did not seek to verify the translation of these leader conceptualizations into actions, the study does seek to understand how superintendents perceive the system and think about the leadership approaches needed for their perception of successful implementation.

**Purpose of the Study**

Despite a variety of research on the topic of instructional leadership in schools and a long-standing depiction of the various roles of the superintendent, the instructional leadership role bears further need for examination (Lezotte, 1994). Critical to the understanding of how and why superintendents assume the role of instructional leader is understanding how these leaders approach leadership practice and how this approach supports systems of teaching and learning (Morgan, Petersen, Cooper, & Fusarelli, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). In addition, TLCS is a state policy, but can be viewed as a strategy to meet the ever-changing demands of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). With significant federal dollars attached to it, ESEA drives a complicated web of decision making at the state and local levels, making education policy challenging to examine (Gamson, McDermott, & Reed, 2015). Research has indicated that the role of the superintendent in the leadership process is a significant factor in a district’s response to accountability for academic achievement (Fuhrman, 2003; Goertz & Massell, 2005). Furthermore, Rorrer and Skrla (2005) noted, “…the mediating role of the district and school leaders’ responses to
accountability is often overlooked in the debates about policy success” (p. 54). However, the role of the superintendent in the implementation of the TLCS is yet to be studied as is the subsequent influence of the implementation process on the individual’s leadership behavior, instructional or otherwise.

There is considerable agreement that the role of the superintendent is varied and changing (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005; Schechter, 2011). To this end, this changing role plays out differently based in local context (Kowalski et al., 2011; Matland, 1995; McLaughlin, 1987; O'Day, 2002). Kowalski (2005, 2001, 2011) proposed the superintendency as evolving by adapting to various role conceptualizations over time including teacher-scholar, business manager, educational statesman, social scientist and communicator. The current call for greater involvement of building administrators, community and teachers as a result of the TLCS tasks the superintendent as a facilitator of these processes (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Crowson, 1987).

Research specifically examining the role of the superintendent in implementing instructional policy at the local level is incomplete and has often focused on the role of the principal (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Demir, 2015; Spanneut & Ford, 2008; Wohlstetter et al., 2008). The presence of an investigation of the superintendent as an instructional leader in the research has been limited, dominated by a small number of researchers whose work has largely been absent in contemporary journal publications (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson & Johansson, 1997; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Herman, 1990; Hord, 1993; Morgan et al., 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Petersen, 1999, 2002; K. D. Peterson, 1984; Wirt, 1990).
There is a gap in research related specifically to the superintendent as an instructional leader in his/her own right not related to his/her role in working with principals. In addition, there is little available research related to the role of policy in leveraging leadership behaviors or roles such as instructional leadership. Furthermore, the study of how the superintendent makes meaning of their role in implementing the TLCS specifically is non-existent. The current research sought to fill in the gap in superintendent role conceptualization and thinking about instructional leadership during policy implementation/mediation. This study was conducted to examine how superintendents conceptualized their leadership in the context of the Iowa TLCS in an effort to develop understanding how the TLCS is perceived to influence superintendent instructional leadership. The focus of this study was how superintendents made meaning from their experiences in implementing the TLCS policy and how the meaning attached affects their role on a daily basis.

Research Questions

To understand the lived experience of superintendents implementing the TLCS and how this lived experience translated into instructional leadership thinking and conceptualizations, the inquiry was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do superintendents perceive as the major opportunities of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?

2. What do superintendents perceive as the major challenges of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?
3. How do Iowa public school district superintendents perceive and express changes to their instructional leadership activities in support of district level Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) development and implementation?

**Significance of the Study**

With the program in its relative infancy, the TLCS is a fertile topic for study by education and policy researchers alike. The bulk of education reforms thus far can be described as standards, assessment and accountability systems (SAAS) (Levinson, 2011). Furthermore, the economic theory underpinning many educational reforms includes neoliberal ideology centered by individualism, competition and privatization through standardized testing and teacher accountability (Baldridge, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Saltman, 2009; Spence, 2012).

The approach taken in this study did not examine the policy outcome; rather, it examined the perceptions of those making sense of policy implementation. This approach was built on the assumption of Honig and Coburn (2008) who called attention to the reliance on evidence-based decision-making, which includes research-based and data-driven decision-making in state and federal reform efforts. Evidence-based decision-making persists not only in the appraisal of current programs for ongoing reporting purposes, but also in the sphere of educational research. Honig and Coburn (2008) contended that outcome-based studies ignore the evidence actually used by central office administrators which complicates research efforts to discern if results are due to evidence or unsupported implementation. The TLCS is a system that underplays outcomes for structural changes and is; therefore, in need of a study that examines the reasons behind the implementation decisions made by local actors.
The TLCS is a very different type of policy that awards funds, not directly for student outcomes, but to foster collaboration with the purpose of increasing student achievement outcomes. As noted previously, published theory of action underpinning the TLCS efforts has posited:

If we effectively compensate teachers; recruit and promote excellent teachers and provide support as they collaborate reflectively to refine their practice; create the political will and understanding necessary to remake the status of the teaching profession; give highly effective teachers opportunities to grow, refine and share their expertise; and develop a clear system with quality implementation, then … student learning will increase, student outcomes will improve, and students will be prepared to succeed in a globally competitive environment. (Iowa Department of Education, 2013, p. 2)

With this theory of action, the dollars attached to this policy aim to develop teachers’ instructional capacity, which will positively impact student achievement. This shift of leadership potential to teachers away from administrators represents new organizational systems for operating Iowa schools. At the center of these evolving systems are the superintendents, who bring with them their own experiences in policy implementation. This study gives insight to policy makers about how policies can move beyond checklist requirements and cause long-term systemic change in school districts by studying how the system influences the way superintendents make meaning of their leadership as a result of TLCS requirements.

This study aimed to provide critical understanding about how superintendents make meaning of their leadership as policy mediating agents to ensure successful implementation
of a sweeping state educational reform. This understanding can impact policy development in both the design and implementation phases. The TLCS, by design, lends itself to interpretation in implementation, meaning local context will have a high level of influence. While the qualitative and quantitative data related to the TLCS has until this point focused largely on teacher and principal reactions (Iowa Department of Education, 2016), the opportunity to study the superintendent as evolving traditional roles such as those described by Kowalski (2001, 2005a) and/or the role of instructional leader as leveraged by policy implementation is ripe for study. Such inquiry to the impact of this policy on superintendent behavior and role has the potential to impact the shaping of future polices at the state and local level, the conceptualization of local school boards’ understanding of the superintendent’s role, as well as preparation and licensure programs.

**Research Design**

The research problem of this study relates to the perceived changes that came about through the process of leading the TLCS initiative. The goal of this study was to examine this research problem through investigating how the superintendents construct the realities of their role and responsibilities within their given context with a given task (policy implementation). Therefore, this study assumed a social constructivist epistemology, whereby the participants, through their interactions with others and their context, construct knowledge related to their role. This study required an investigation of processes, inductive inquiry, and situational descriptions; therefore, qualitative methodology was applied to investigate the research questions and make meaning of the lived experience (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2015). Lived experience of the superintendent both
prior to and during policy implementation is important to understand how he or she perceives their role as a leader.

This research sought to understand the lived experiences of superintendents implementing the TLCS in their districts. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) called attention to the importance of understanding how implementing actors develop an understanding of their practice and how this understanding has the potential to influence their beliefs and attitudes. Seeking to understand the phenomenon of implementing the TLCS through investigating the experience of superintendents gives critical insight into superintendents’ conceptualization of their role resulting from the process. Studying the influence of the TLCS on the role of superintendents requires deep examination of how situational contexts, experience, and personal philosophies interact with their assigned duty to implement the system.

Phenomenological interviewing was used to understand the lived experience of participants from their point of view when leading TLCS implementation (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). This study used a modified version of Seidman’s (2013) three-interview series to build connections between prior experiences, perceptions of the TLCS and participants’ decision-making and role development. Creswell (2012) explained the need to get as close as possible to the subject of the study in a qualitative project. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for the interpretation of constructed realities of participants and contribute to understanding.

By applying phenomenological inquiry, this study aimed to bring meaning to the lived experiences of Iowa superintendents who share the phenomenon of leadership in the context of implementing a new policy instrument, the TLCS, for the purpose of further policy
development and role conceptualization of the position (Creswell, 2012). An analytical framework informed by sensemaking guided this study. Sensemaking assumes an active process whereby people continuously and actively construct meaning and interpretations when faced with disruption to their sense of normalcy in an attempt to address the disruption (Coburn, Touré, & Yamashita, 2009). Holt and Sandberg (2011) contended sensemaking perspective has played a key role in the advancement of social-constructionist, interpretive and phenomenological perspectives that guide this study. Significant statements were used to generate meaning from the data via the use of a specific coding structure, allowing for the identification of trends in perception and action (Creswell, 2013).

**Summary of Chapter One**

An overview of the role of the superintendent in implementing the TLCS was provided in this chapter to highlight the need for understanding the evolving role of the superintendent. The significance of the superintendent in the implementation process was established as well as a justification for phenomenological inquiry to address relevant research questions. To fully develop the research design for this study, investigation of available literature on teacher leadership, superintendent role, instructional leadership, and policy implementation will be explored in the literature review.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of research and literature related to superintendent leadership. The focus of this review is on actions associated with bringing about positive impacts on student achievement through the role superintendents play as instructional leaders and policy mediators. While there has been limited research on the direct relationship between the superintendent and leadership, there is ample study regarding the traditional role of the superintendent, policy impact on schools and instructional leadership behavior (Murphy, 2005; Wells, 2012).

The review begins with a review of research relevant to teacher leadership. This leadership gives further dimension to TLCS as the lens through which the examination of superintendent leadership can be investigated. Next, the traditional and contemporary roles of the superintendent are discussed to conceptualize the superintendency as a position that reacts to and interacts with the educational and political landscape. The discussion of the role of the superintendent is deepened by a closer examination of instructional leadership to develop a sense of approaches associated with leading teaching and learning at the district level in the contemporary environment. The review continues by examining how policy acts to drive the work of educators, specifically the superintendent, as a connecting factor between characteristics of effective teacher leadership and leadership behaviors that foster teacher leadership. In addition, research on how leaders make and influence decisions through co-construction and framing is addressed to underscore the complexity of examining individual decision-making. The chapter concludes with a discussion of sensemaking and the analytical framework that guides this project.
The information in this literature review is sourced from peer reviewed scholarly articles. With limited information related to the role of the superintendent, literature is a balance between traditional empirical studies and scholarly philosophical or theoretical contributions.

**Supporting Teacher Leadership Initiatives**

One constant in the relevant literature is that teacher leadership is difficult to define because it is ever changing and highly context-dependent. Until recently, the study of leadership mainly focused on individuals in formal leadership positions (Spillane et al., 2004). This study has assumed the success of teacher leadership at the lower organizational levels is influenced by the systems and structures put in place at the higher levels of leadership, specifically the behavior and choices of the superintendent. Given the newness of the TLCS, the influence of the superintendent on teacher leadership structures should be able to be identified. Implemented systems may be successful in cultivating teacher leadership or fail to do so based on the superintendent’s perceptions of the program, individual capacity to enhance teaching and learning and perception of the local context. At the same time, participation in the TLCS may leverage and allow for instructional leadership behavior for superintendents. In order to fully examine how superintendents cultivate systems and environments in which teacher leadership can grow and thrive, it is important to first understand what teacher leadership means.

**Distributed Leadership Approach**

Teacher leadership can be viewed as an extension of a distributed leadership approach. Distributed leadership assumes there are multiple leaders within an organization (Spillane et al., 2004). Harris (2007) expanded this concept by saying these leaders share
leadership within and between organizations. Spillane (2006) brought these concepts of distributed leadership together when studying how leadership gives rise to improvements in organizational capacity and instructional improvement. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) considered leadership to be an organizational quality in which positional leadership and teacher leadership are inseparable in an overall understanding of leadership practice.

Schools, as complex organizations, cannot function on the leadership action of the formal leader alone (Barth, 2001; Keedy & Finch, 1994; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The distributed approach enhances efficiency of change initiatives through the inherent ownership and commitment that is bred from employee involvement at the front-line levels of the organization (Barth, 2001; Cambone, Weiss, & Wyeth, 1992; Hart, 1995; Paulu & Winters, 1998). Miller and O’Shea (1991) utilized case study analysis of schools with teacher leadership structures, concluding that teaching and learning were complimentary functions when practiced together. Spillane et al. (2004) went as far as to claim the distribution of leadership within an organization can be an indicator of overall system health.

According to Hartley (2009), distributed leadership practice has wide appeal: it (distributed leadership) has considerable appeal: it resonates with a democratic notion of distributing power; it accords with a similar trend in the “new world order” of the knowledge economy; it has the endorsement of government who regard it as a pragmatic solution to easing job-overload of head teachers, or as a way of attracting teachers to management positions which are becoming increasingly shunned by them; it has an affinity with a general cultural trend towards the weakening of all classifications…even
though – in education – there exists virtually no evidence of a direct causal relationship between distributed leadership and pupil attainment. (p. 148)

Early progress reports on the TLCS are consistent with Hartley’s assertion. TLCS studies and reports have noted a high level of buy-in, even though they have also clearly indicated the actual impact is too early to determine (Citkowicz et al., 2016b; Iowa Department of Education, 2016c). However, there has been little evidence presented that TLCS is causing more effective teaching and learning, but it is viewed as effective by practitioners (Citkowicz et al., 2016b).

In an examination of superintendent behavior in a TLCS district, it is important to examine the superintendent’s perception of the program’s success and how he or she responds to that perception with decision-making and action. These decisions will be driven in part by the leader’s understanding of effective teacher leadership practices as well as their willingness to distribute leadership and challenge traditional hierarchical school structures. The leader’s understanding of successful teacher leadership structures will influence these perceptions and the ability to foster these structures.

**Defining teacher leadership.** Research establishing a direct relationship between the leadership of superintendents and teacher leadership is limited (Murphy, 2005; Wells, 2012). While the concept of distributed leadership has broad appeal (Hartley, 2009), definitions of teacher leadership in scholarly research vary widely (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Pounder, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Definitions of teacher leadership focus on the role of the teacher leader to inspire action for collective development of capacity and improvement of student achievement, which moves beyond formalized roles to a discussion of action. The creation of empowerment through
professional learning communities (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000), a focus on connecting entire learning communities (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002), focus on instructional leadership, sustainability of improvement (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995), teacher experimentation, use of powerful practices (Wasley, 1991), and commitment to continuous learning (Fullan, 1994) form the backbone of the modern conceptualization of teacher leadership. Ackerman and McKenzie (2006) proposed teachers do not fully harness their inherent power unless they go beyond their classrooms and impact other teachers. York-Barr & Duke (2004) suggest the difficulty in pinning down a concrete definition of teacher leadership could be influenced by the ways organizations utilize individuals titled as or perceived as teacher leaders.

**Developing teachers as leaders.** Relevant literature on the development of teacher leadership discusses its evolution as occurring in waves. Utilizing case-study analysis, Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) initially described three waves in the evolution of teacher leadership. This evolution grew from the need to expand the number of individuals involved in managing the complex organizational nature of American schools. With each wave, the role of the teacher leader became less utilitarian and focused more on processes, rather than function.

The first wave, described by Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) involved teacher leaders taking on formal roles, primarily for the purpose of assisting in the management of the school. The second wave involved capitalizing on the instructional expertise of teacher through roles including mentorship and curriculum development. The third role of the teacher leader places the individual at the center of creating a collaborative and continuously learning organization for their schools. Pounder (2006) suggested a fourth wave of teacher
leadership that builds on the traditionally accepted three waves and suggests the teacher takes on a transformational leadership role in the classroom which subsequently leads to a perception of effectiveness. Relevant literature on challenges faced by teacher leaders often points to a drawback to management responsibilities in waves one and two based on the local context. Often formal leaders utilize teacher leaders for managerial positions. Where teacher leadership is effective, there is a well-defined role supported by not using teacher leaders in supervisory or managerial positions so as not to confuse the purpose of teacher leadership and its line between teacher and formalized leadership or coaching vs. evaluation.

**What Teacher Leaders Need From School Administrators**

Involvement and shared decision-making through distributed leadership is not enough as it could limit teacher leadership if roles are too narrowly defined (Danielson, 2005; Neumerski, 2013b). Relevant literature on teacher leadership has focused heavily on the use and implied misuse of teacher leaders. If roles are too narrowly defined, teacher leaders sacrifice actions associated with teaching and learning for managerial and supervisory functions. This tendency to use teacher leaders as needed, rather than in line with intended purposes has been illustrated in several studies. Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997) conducted a study examining teacher leadership across all three levels in a system. This qualitative study used focus groups, interviews and observations of six teacher leaders and found that the roles of teacher leaders across levels varied greatly based on the perceived needs of the building.

Harris and Muijis (2003) conducted a review of literature and suggested the tendency for hierarchical leadership still persists. To avoid this tendency for management uses, Muijis and Harris (2003) suggested teacher leadership should be defined as roles and responsibilities as evidenced by collaboration and collegiality. Muijis and Harris suggested the three tasks of
leadership through coaching and facilitation, leading teacher development in teaching and learning and modeling development of effective teaching.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of available literature and studies on teacher leadership and also noted the importance of role and expectations focusing on impact rather than managerial tasks. They concluded that teacher leaders work to develop teaching and learning at the individual, group, and organizational level, meaning their role and influence on capacity development is not limited to the tasks they perform at the classroom level.

More recent individual studies have also identified this trend toward role intent and actual use of teacher leaders. Firestone and Martinez (2007) utilized case study analysis to examine the relationship between teacher leaders and their districts. While this study found professional development by district leadership was effective, they also noted principals made requests of teacher leaders such as supervisory responsibilities that limited time and focus on their primary function to develop teaching and learning.

This trend for teacher leaders to be used as convenient student management personnel is essential to the study of how superintendents set structures for teacher leadership in their districts. This examination would aim to answer the question of whether superintendents view teacher leadership in terms of its utilitarian nature or as a system-development tool. In the context of this study, to support teacher leadership, PK-12 superintendents must have an understanding not only of teacher leader roles, but how these roles play out in different levels and contexts to support teacher capacity development in order to maximize the potential of the TLCS.
The theory of action for the TLCS holds that if the plan is followed, teacher leadership will result. However, the realization of the intended outcomes of the TLCS is not so simple. It remains unclear if district and building leadership have a clear understanding of the essential functions of successful teacher leadership. This understanding guides structures to clearly define roles and protect from the aforementioned tendencies for utility uses such as supervision.

**Cultivating an Environment of Teacher Leadership**

As is the case with much of the available literature, very little study of direct superintendent leadership impact on teacher leadership exists; however, the study of the principal’s role in supporting teacher leadership offers a relevant perspective. Personal characteristics of the leaders and a willingness to address challenges faced by leaders can assist in the cultivation of a positive environment for teacher leadership.

Studies of effective teacher leadership often place principals into either a supportive or interfering role, suggesting the examination of leadership support as a central topic in examining teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005). Several studies support the notion that teacher leader effectiveness is significantly impacted, both positively and negatively, by the support of the principal (Bishop, Tinley, & Berman, 1997; Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Silva et al., 2000). This support requires a shift in the traditional hierarchical relationship that exist between the principal and the teacher (Hart, 1995). The research has suggested that it is the principal who sets the tone of this relationship as they are perceived as having the most power in the relationship (Barth, 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).
Empirical analysis of how principals can support teacher leaders through organizational structure has yielded actions that can be summarized into four broad categories. First, the leader can encourage teachers to act on the shared vision of the organization through distributed power (Barth, 2001; Conzemius, 1999; Crowther et al., 2009; Crowther et al., 2002). Second, the leader can ensure the provision of quality professional development targeting the needs of teacher leaders (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000; Firestone & Martinez, 2009). Third, he or she can also reinforce the power teacher leaders have while celebrating innovation and expertise of those leaders (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000; Hart, 1995). Finally, the leader can create structures to redesign the organization around teacher leadership. This structural redesign can include the development of structures to ensure a collaborative culture (Barth, 2001; Bishop et al., 1997; Childs-Bowen et al., 2000). In addition, the role of the principal can shift to developing community leaders within his or her building (Crowther et al., 2009).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) forwarded seven dimensions of teacher leadership in schools. These dimensions can serve as indicators of a healthy teacher leadership system:

1) **Developmental Focus** – Teachers are provided with guidance and coaching to gain new knowledge and skills.

2) **Recognition** – Teachers are recognized for contributions and leadership roles.

3) **Autonomy** – Barriers are removed and resources identified to encourage action.

4) **Collegiality** – Teachers collaborate on instructional matters.

5) **Participation** – Teachers are given input into school matters.
6) Open Communication – Teachers are informed and encouraged to voice opinions.

7) Positive Environment – In addition to having leadership roles themselves, they perceive administrative leadership as effective. (pp. 136-138)

These dimensions are indicative of an environment consisting of a positive teacher leader-administrator relationship and transcend simple distributed leadership and formal leadership roles.

The methods discussed for school administrators to address the challenges and needs of teacher leaders are indicative of professional learning community structures. Hord (2003) noted several attributes of professional learning communities that support teacher leadership. First, Hord suggested a sharing of power, authority and decision-making between teacher leaders and building administration. Second, identifying and clarifying a student-focused vision of learning and values can strengthen the purpose and work of teacher leaders. Hord also identified collective application of learning by staff, which necessitates supportive conditions through structure and arrangement. Finally, peer involvement both in learning and giving feedback is found to cultivate leadership and buy-in (Hord).

It requires effort and willingness to distribute and cultivate conditions for teacher leadership. Simply accepting a model and putting it in place will not change the system. The examination of superintendent instructional leadership should include a discussion of the methods they use to ensure supportive structures and administrator-teacher relationships in the TLCS. Studying the work of superintendents with principals to create these conditions for support as well as examining his or her involvement with the instructional conversations will
assist in determining the role the superintendent is playing in the day-to-day implementation of the TLCS.

**Summary of Teacher Leadership**

Examination of the relevant literature related to teacher leadership has suggested that a superintendent may take on additional roles and responsibilities as he or she navigates the TLCS. The focus of the current study was to identify how or if the work of superintendents has changed since the initiation of the TLCS. Like the empirical studies presented in this section, this study of superintendent role was also supported by qualitative research. However, unlike the aforementioned studies, the focus of the current study was on the perception that he or she is cultivating an environment through instructional leadership that supports quality teacher leadership. In order to understand this change and the subsequent results for their role as instructional leaders, an examination of the role superintendents have and do play in districts is necessary.

**Role of the Superintendent**

The study of the superintendency has been dominated with inquiry of the priorities and challenges of the position (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Bredeson & Klar, 2008; Bredeson, Kose, & Johansson, 2004; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001; Johnson, 1996; Orr, 2006; G. Peterson, Barnett, Bjork, & Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents are expected to provide leadership in state and federal reform efforts, promote community engagement, utilize data and promote professional development (Forner et al., 2012; Hentschke, Nayfack, & Wohlstetter, 2009). While the surface level of these responsibilities appear academic, they are undergirded with political, systemic and communication challenges that must be navigated. The priorities and challenges
of the superintendency bring focus to the role of the superintendent. Separating behaviors associated with instructional leadership without also considering the other expected roles of the position is not realistic given the complex nature of the position. There is considerable agreement that the role of the superintendent is varied and changing (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005; Schechter, 2011). To this end, this changing role plays out differently in local contexts (Kowalski et al., 2011; Matland, 1995; McLaughlin, 1987; O'Day, 2002). The shift from traditional management roles to behaviors more consistent with instructional leadership is complicated by staffing, available resources, political activity and their local school boards to name a few. O’Day (2002) characterized the work of the superintendent as being “subject to continual interruption” due to the complex nature of the position. Examining the role evolution of the superintendent is less an examination of a linear change from one role to another than it is a discussion of navigating the addition of responsibilities brought on by the political and economic conditions of the day. While management role conceptualizations are often discussed in the literature as “traditional,” these traditional roles are clearly incorporated in the modern role of the superintendent and have not been replaced.

**Evolution**

Kowalski (2001, 2005a, 2011) proposed the superintendency as evolving by adapting to various role conceptualizations over time including teacher-scholar, business manager, educational statesman, social scientist and most recently communicator. The origin of the superintendent position arose in the 1830s when consolidation and growth of districts combined, legal pressures of compulsory attendance and demands for increased accountability necessitated a top executive for schools. During the initial years of the position
until the early 20th century, superintendents were conceptualized as teacher-scholars. In this role, superintendents were responsible for staying current with effective methodology as well as ensuring consistency of experience and practices across schools (Kowalski, 2005a). This early role is not unlike the standards movement of today in which superintendents must be knowledgeable about best practice and requirements of the curriculum. As superintendents continue to address instructional programming and learner outcomes through evolving strategies, the role of the superintendent as teacher-scholar persists (Glass et al., 2001; Kowalski & Björk, 2005).

With the rise of industrialization and increased enrollment growth, superintendents took on the role of manager. The logic underpinning this shift was the reality that instructional quality does not exist in the absence of balanced budgets, safe learning environments and effective personnel management (Kowalski, 2005a). The idea of resource management as prerequisite to educational change persists with shrinking budgets. In addition, superintendents report primary expectations from boards as aligning more closely with management behaviors (Björk, Glass, & Brunner, 2005; Glass et al., 2001).

Since schools are supported through the levying of taxes, the superintendent role shifted in the 1930s to that of a democratic leadership role in which the superintendent became politically active to garner both financial support for district initiatives as well as the validity of the education system itself during a time of severe financial strain in the American economy (Kowalski, 2005a). Elements of this role are still prevalent as state budgets become tight and demands and expectations of schools increase. There also exists a rising tide of community interest groups leveraging influence over local boards (Glass et al., 2001). These dynamics require politically astute leaders to maintain momentum for reform initiatives.
As America exited World War II, there was a rapid increase in social sciences and a renewed interest in the quality of American schools as the baby boomers began to enter the school system. During this time, superintendents took on the role of applied social scientist. This role saw the superintendent shifting focus to the science of teaching and employing empirical methods to solve problems associated with educational practice. At this time, educator and educational leadership preparation programs integrated theoretical analysis and application (Kowalski, 2005a). The ability of the school superintendent to successfully navigate social issues such as poverty, race, violence and gender is still a requisite skill. While superintendents report their main mandate when hired as being a change agent or instructional leader, this function plays out in an environment of social challenges including but not limited to poverty, economic conditions, family dynamics, and crime making the social scientist role as relevant today as in post-war America (Glass et al., 2001).

A fifth role conceptualization described by Kowalski (2005) is the superintendent as a communicator. This role shift occurred as America transitioned away from being a manufacturing society and to a service or knowledge-centered society (Kowalski, 2001). Communication has traditionally been viewed as a skill, Kowalski (2005) contended that it must be viewed as a role because virtually every modern school reform effort involves the superintendent working directly with teachers and principals. As a communicator, superintendents should play a key role at the local level in school improvement efforts (Henkin, 1993; Murphy, 1994). However, discussion of school improvement issues can create conflict that administrators must have comfort in managing (Carlson, 1996; Kowalski, 2005b). This conflict avoidance combined with a long history of false starts in education reform can cause superintendents to retreat from fully realizing this role (Streitmatter, 1994).
Glass et al. (2001) reported that 95% of superintendents said they were the board’s primary instrument of communication. Kowalski (1998) notes the draw for superintendents to function as communicators results from the necessity to provide leadership in teaching and learning, address school culture elements in the reform process, and the need to access relevant information to apply to the improvement process.

**Conflict**

The aforementioned roles are responses to the social and political climates of the times. Little research has been done in the area of how superintendents balance competing roles when working with stakeholders. The TLCS demands in part the need to secure funding, while reforming systems of power within schools, working with the local association on structures, and communicating the need for reform to the public. These demands, not unlike other reform efforts, place the superintendent in the middle of various interrelated, but separated functions, which provide conflicting role demands.

Role conflict occurs when an individual is faced with expectations requiring behaviors that are opposing or competing (Olk & Friedlander, 1992). Nir and Eyal (2003) utilized qualitative interviews to examine the coping methods used by superintendents while implementing school-based management. Nir and Eyal identified two types of coping employed by superintendents when experiencing role conflict. While this is an international study, it provides insight into initiatives that require a decentralization of power on a system level, much like TLCS. Superintendents who used problem-focused coping tended to identify areas of congruence between their beliefs and the new initiative causing them to focus on the need for centralization (Nir & Eyal, 2003). Investigating the perceptions toward the TLCS will be important in indicating how much their role will be influenced. Like the TLCS, the
school-based management systems in Nir and Eyal’s study also did not define roles for superintendents at the outset.

**Summary of Superintendent Role**

The current call for greater involvement of building administrators, community and teachers is the very basis of the TLCS and is moving the superintendent to the role of facilitator of this initiative (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Crowson, 1987). As facilitator of the change process with stakeholders, understanding the “traditional” roles of the superintendent is important. It is important to note when these roles previously transitioned, the result was a disenfranchisement of superintendents, resulting in many leaving the profession and being replaced by those that were more comfortable in the new role (Kowalski, 2005a). The findings from this early research on roles are consistent with the previous discussion on role conflict during change. The current reform environment demands changes to existing leadership paradigms. Furthermore, the literature frames leadership roles as emerging from the social, educational and political contexts in which leadership work. New policies like the TLCS will task leaders with continuing traditional management roles while at the same time re-envisioning their role in a fully functioning TLCS district, part of which is examining a closer relationship between their work and classroom-level instruction.

**Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership as a concept arose in the 1980s and focused mainly on principal impact within school systems (Hallinger, 2003, 2005, 2010; Jenkins, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003; Neumerski, 2013a). Prior to a focus on instructional leadership, school leaders were viewed as managers with duties that can primarily be described as managerial, clerical and practical (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). While there is a recognition that the
superintendent be knowledgeable and skilled in the areas of curriculum and instruction (Kowalski, 2005), momentum for conceptualizing the superintendent as an instructional leader has ebbed and flowed due to the various political, board and community expectations (G. Peterson et al., 2005). Despite a variety of research projects on the topic of instructional leadership in schools and a long-standing depiction of the various roles of the superintendent, the study of the instructional leadership leans heavily toward principals and bears further need for examination (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 1994; Thomas, 2001). Critical to the understanding of how and why superintendents assume the role of instructional leader is an understanding of how these leaders approach leadership practice and how this approach supports systems of teaching and learning (Morgan et al., 2002; Spillane et al., 2004). Central to developing an understanding of instructional leadership behavior of superintendents implementing the TLCS is a discussion of the literature related to behaviors associated with instructional leadership.

Principals

It is widely known and well supported in literature that teachers matter in improving student achievement (Mendro, Jordan, Gomez, Anderson, & Bembry, 1998; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007). Furthermore, decades of research has yielded a consistent belief that effective schools are led by dynamic, focused and knowledgeable leaders; however this leadership impact of the principal on student achievement is shown to be indirect (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Bridges, 1982; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Erickson, 1967; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004b; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008;
Scheerens, Hendriks, & Steen, 2012; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003) Bringing these two lines of investigation together is research on individual teacher effects in structures where teachers take on leadership roles. Teacher leadership has been heavily studied in its impact on student learning (Andrews & Lewis, 2002; Hipp et al., 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002; Stoll, McMahon, & Thomas, 2007). However, investigating effective structures and practices that maximize the teacher and school leader as it relates to the role of the superintendent in facilitating effective teacher leadership structures is limited (Hipp et al., 2003). In available literature related to superintendent instructional leadership behavior, scholars often draw upon principal instructional leadership as a framework for discussing instructional leadership of superintendents (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). This study attempts to contribute to the limited body of research on superintendent instructional leadership, but for the purposes of this review, principal instructional leadership provides the background.

Identification of a clear definition of instructional leadership is difficult. In the early literature on instructional leadership, there was a strong preference for describing instructional leadership in conceptual and empirical leadership along three dimensions. Hallinger (2003) summarizes instructional leadership as “defining the school mission,” “management of the instructional program,” and “promoting a positive learning climate.” Conger and Kanugo (1998) described the three elements as “visioning strategies,” “efficacy-building strategies” and “context-changing strategies,” Hallinger and Heck (1996) used the categories of “purposes,” “people,” and “structure and social systems.” Leithwood (1996) described “setting directions,” “developing people,” and “redesigning the organization.” Smith and Andrews (1989) described four roles of instructional leadership as “resource
provider,” “instructional resource,” “communicator,” and “visual presence.” Klar and Brewer (2013) mirrored this system-level influence of school leaders citing the following leadership practices across three case study schools: (a) “setting direction,” (b) “developing people,” (c) “redesigning the organization,” (d) “managing the instructional program” (pp. 794-795).

Hattie (2008) assigned an effect size of \(d = .42\), or just above the desired results range to instructional leadership. Hattie called attention to the following behaviors associated with instructional leadership: (a) promoting and participating in teacher learning and development \(d = .91\), (b) planning, coordinating and evaluating teacher learning and development \(d = .74\), (c) strategically aligning resources to priority goals \(d = .60\), (d) establishing goals and expectations \(d = .54\), and (e) ensuring an internal and externally supportive learning environment \(d = .49\) (pp. 83-84). Hattie’s conclusions resulted from study of 11 meta-analyses and 491 individual studies with 1,257 effects involving 1,133,657 participants. While Hattie’s work is widely accepted in the practitioner community, additional analysis is needed in context due to limitations in reliance on effect sizes. Specifically, the variance in methodological reliability, population heterogeneity, levels of variables studied and the strength and range of treatments across studies make it difficult to make a simple application to local process such as TLCS due to the difficulty in identifying a common standard (Olejnik & Algina, 2000).

Although the aforementioned researchers used different definitions, all definitions are connected through the concept of engaging people in the development of a vision for learning, being a steward of that vision learning through human and materials resource allocation, and championing that vision through action. Furthermore, these characteristics are consistent as the body of research grows.
The aforementioned concepts of instructional leadership are changing as the number of initiatives pile up on school leaders (Finkel, 2012; Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013). Instructional leadership behaviors become indirect impacts based on their ability to support collegial interactions in which teachers learn from each other, which is an underlying assumption of the TLCS. For example, current conceptual definitions suggest the three characteristics as collaborative goal setting, distributed leadership and facilitation (Elmore, 2000; Harris & Gronn, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008). The connection between contemporary definitions of instructional leadership has the central theme that instructional leadership requires a focus of the leader on the practices of teaching and learning (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). However, investigating how leaders harness the momentum of policies such as TLCS to conceptualize their role in supporting this distribution of responsibility and focus on teaching and learning is absent from the literature. Furthermore in this discussion research of principal instructional leadership, it is important to note that most principal preparation programs struggle to move toward an integrated concept of instructional leadership across all leadership demands (Brazer & Bauer, 2013).

**Superintendents**

A central theme of the prominent role of teachers and principals in design, development and delivery of the instructional program persists in the literature (Murphy, 1988, 2005; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986) The parallels between instructional leadership behaviors of superintendents and principals play out in the environment the superintendent creates to foster instructional leadership at the building level. It is clear that the traditional roles of the superintendent, while still relevant are being synthesized as part of a shift toward instructional leadership. Kowalski’s (2005) emphasis on the importance of communication as
a role not a skill is underscored in this shift toward instructional leadership. Bredeson and Kose (2007) utilized questionnaires and structured interviews of superintendents in a large Midwestern state and found substantial changes to the time superintendents spent on instructional leadership from 1994 to 2003. This shift included a focus on curriculum and instruction as a result of new accountability measures under No Child Left Behind. While there was a significant shift in focus, other demands still interfered with their ability to spend more time on instruction (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). However, Bredeson and Kose also noted to bolster urgency for internal initiatives superintendents utilized external policies, in this instance No Child Left Behind. A part of this study is to discuss how TLCS influenced district priorities.

When studying instructional leadership, the interdependence of all actors resulting from distributed leadership in the school setting is important to note. Leadership is not linear, it develops from interactions between the leader and those he or she serves; it is interactive and iterative (Northouse, 2010). In a comprehensive review of literature Leithwood et al. (2014) found 12 district-level actions focused on improving student learning. These actions are as follows:

1) Strong belief in the capacity of school personnel to achieve high standards of learning;
2) District wide focus on student achievement and the quality of instruction;
3) Adoption and commitment to district wide performance standards;”
4) District wide approaches to instruction;
5) Alignment of curriculum, assessment and standards;
6) System wide use of data to inform practice and monitor progress;
7) Targeted focuses of improvement;
8) Investment in instructional leadership development;
9) Job embedded professional development for teachers;
10) Emphasis on professional community;
11) Board and district relations; and
12) Strategic engagement with state reform policies and resources (pp. 41-46)

The superintendent as an indirect factor on an instructionally focused environment, influences the above system level factors.

The Wallace Foundation conducted a six-year mixed methods study across nine states. The findings revealed that better performing districts have central office staff who:

(a) communicate the capacity of teachers and principals to improve the quality of teaching and learning, (b) build consensus around expectations for professional practice, (c) differentiate support for principals, (d) set clear expectations for school leadership practices, (e) provide opportunities for teachers and principals to engage in school-to-school communication, (f) develop and model strategies and norms for local inquiry related to student learning and program implementation, and (g) coordinate district support for school improvement across organizational units. (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 197)

The Wallace Foundation findings can be utilized in the description of superintendent instructional leaders in that they suggest superintendent actions and actions the superintendent should look for when leading his or her central office staff.
While limited, some scholars have attempted to identify specific superintendent behaviors. Boone (1998) identified the following priority behaviors for instructional leadership: (a) “placing a high priority on instruction,” (b) “involving others in instructional planning,” (c) “maintaining visibility,” (d) “supporting principals” and (e) “holding principals accountable” (pp. 17-19). By specifically utilizing meta analysis of studies that involved 2,817 school districts and 3.4 million students, Waters and Marzano (2006) identified five superintendent behaviors that are associated with districts experiencing growth in student achievement: (a) “collaborative goals setting,” (b) “creating non-negotiable goals,” (c) “aligning board goals and actions to support student achievement,” (d) “frequent monitoring of student achievement,” and (e) “using resources to support goals for instruction” (p. 6). Also important to this investigation was the concept of defined autonomy where school leaders have input and choice in how to achieve and carry out the goals of the district in their school setting.

Hoyle et al. (2005) claimed superintendents can bring coherence for system change through twelve indicators present in empirical study of system change. These indicators are listed as follows:

1) Develop, implement and monitor change processes to improve student learning, adult development and climates for learning.

2) Demonstrate and understanding of motivation in the instructional process.

3) Describe classroom management theories and techniques.

4) Demonstrate and understanding of the development of the total student, including his or her physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic needs.
5) Formulate a plan to assess teachers.

6) Analyze available instructional resources, and assign them in the most
cost-effective and equitable manner to enhance student learning.

7) Describe instructional strategies that are multicultural sensitive and
learning style oriented.

8) Apply computer technology to instructional programs.

9) Describe alternative methods of monitoring and evaluating student
achievement on the basis of objectives.

10) Describe how to interpret and use testing/assessment results to improve
education.

11) Demonstrate knowledge of research findings on the use of a variety of
instructional strategies.

12) Describe a student achievement monitoring and reporting system.

(pp. 138-156)

The actions discussed in this review of superintendent role in reform, do not provide
the full picture. These individual actions suggest, but do not fully describe, characteristics of
superintendents in their context. A leader’s context is important in the decisions made and
the actions taken during reform and implementation of initiatives.

Responsiveness to Leaders’ Context

When studying the above characteristics of instructional leadership at the building,
district and executive level, it is important to consider that these behaviors play out
differently in different contexts. Dumas and Anyon (2006) claimed, “To understand
education policy implementation, it is crucial to examine the contexts within which it is
‘done’.” That is, education policy implementation must be conceptualized as a social practice that takes place upon a social terrain” (p. 151). There is ample research to suggest the relevance of a leader’s context including location, type of district (urban, rural, suburban), school size, district size, level of schooling (primary or secondary), and poverty (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004a; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). McLaughlin (1987) stated, “…to assess the activities and outcomes of a special program in isolation from its institutional context ignores the fundamental character of the implementation … ‘why’ and ‘how’ are as critical as ‘what’ and ‘how much’ ” (p. 176). However, how local context influences superintendent leadership is not prevalent in the literature (Bredeson et al., 2011).

Bredeson, Klar and Johansson (2011) asserted, “…leadership absent of context is meaningless” (p. 18). Superintendents must respond to local contexts, which can provide opportunities and limitations to their leadership impact. In successfully navigating these opportunities and limitations, they personally can impact the local context through their work (Bredeson et al.).

Findings of a study of 12 respected superintendents in the United States and Sweden, by Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011) revealed three dominant themes in interacting with the local context: keeping students at the center of the work, (clarifying, communicating and protecting) a shared vision and mission, and establishing trusting relationships with others regardless of context. Through their work, these superintendents found opportunities to express their values and shape their local context. The authors developed an emerging theory of “context-responsive leadership.” Context responsive leadership, is described as “wisdom in action,” where the focus is on effectively utilizing leadership attributes in the right context.
at the right time (Brederson et al., p. 20). In understanding this “wisdom in action” as it relates to the implementation of TLCS, the individual perception of the local context will be key to an inclusive examination of leadership behaviors.

**Summary of Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership is a concept that grew out of the reform efforts of the 1980s. While there is ample literature to define instructional leadership for administrators, this literature has been drawn mainly upon the study of principal instructional leadership. This study attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge related to superintendent instructional leadership. As defining instructional leadership is key to the third research question of this study, this researcher utilized available research to frame instructional leadership related to this study as having six characteristics which are supported in the relevant literature reviewed previously (see Table 2.1).

**Function of the Superintendent in Policy Implementation**

The premise underlying an examination of the superintendent assumes that he or she can impact the fidelity of policy implementation. In other words, the analysis itself works under the assumption that there will be variation in implementation and behavior. Research has suggested this variation could result from the mediating role of the superintendent in policy implementation (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005; Rorrer et al., 2008; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). The core problem with variation is that traditional analysis of policy sees this as a problem rather than an expected outcome of policy implementation (Datnow, 2006; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Banathy (1996) echoed this when explaining that policies are often designed to break complex problems into parts rather than recognizing the interrelation of many elements.
Table 2.1. Six characteristics of instructional leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Establishing and Communicating a Vision</td>
<td>Hallinger, 2003; Conger &amp; Kanugo, 1998; Hallinger &amp; Heck, 1996; Leithwood,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996; Klar &amp; Brewer, 2013; Elmore, 2000; Harris &amp; Gronn, 2008; Leithwood &amp;</td>
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<td>Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Kowalski, 2005;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leithwood et al., 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Waters &amp; Marzano, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Collaborative Processes / Involving Others</td>
<td>Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger &amp; Heck, 1996; Leithwood, 1996; Smith &amp; Andrews,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989; Klar &amp; Brewer, 2013; Elmore, 2000; Harris &amp; Gronn, 2008; Leithwood</td>
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<td>&amp; Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Louis et al.,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2010; Boone, 1998; Waters &amp; Marzano, 2006; Hoyle et al., 2005; Hattie, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coordination and Personal Involvement in Developing/Redesigning Systems</td>
<td>Hallinger, 2003; Conger &amp; Kanugo, 1998; Leithwood, 1996; Smith &amp; Andrews,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989; Klar &amp; Brewer, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2014; Louis et al., 2010;</td>
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<td>Hoyle et al., 2005; Hattie, 2008</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Brewer, 2013; Elmore, 2000; Harris &amp; Gronn, 2008; Leithwood &amp; Jantzi, 2008;</td>
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<td>Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2014; Louis et al., 2010; Boone,</td>
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<td>1998; Hoyle et al., 2005; Hattie, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Align Resources to Instructional Outcomes and teaching and learning</td>
<td>Smith &amp; Andrews, 1989; Brazer &amp; Bauer, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2014; Louis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>et al., 2010; Boone, 1998; Waters &amp; Marzano, 2006; Hoyle et al., 2005;</td>
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<td>Robinson et al., 2008</td>
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Working under the assumption of variability assumes there is a disconnect between what is written and what is done. However, the literature has pointed to the responsibility of district leaders to mediate policy to their context through “…integrating and aligning purposes, goals, policies, and practices” to the policy instrument (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005, p. 58). Ball (1994) viewed policy as both “text” and “discourse.” On one hand, text is the physical policy document whose words are used to influence but cannot ultimately control interpretation. Discourse, on the other hand, involves how people construct meaning and intent from the policy (Ball, 1994). The focus of this phenomenological study involved uncovering the internal discourse leading to the actions of superintendents; variation is expected. Certainly, an argument could be made to suggest that Iowa Superintendents will
make different choices in the TLCS implementation process based on their context and that this variability in implementation may result in leaders taking on different roles in the process.

**Large-scale Educational Reform**

Murphy and Hallinger (1986) claimed superintendents can exert a “substantial influence” over curriculum (p. 226). However, the challenges to an instructional leadership agenda for a superintendent are palatable given the roles associated with the superintendency. Organizational management, policy development, and political negotiation often dominate the workflow and personal agenda of superintendents (Alsbury & Whitaker, 2007; Bjork, 1993; Candoli, 1995; Grogan, 2000). Prior to No Child Left Behind, little evidence exists that addressing achievement disparities was a focus of superintendents (Sherman, 2008). However, the superintendent has been key in successful districts to provide coherence between policy and the function of the organization (Rorrer et al., 2008).

To understand the unique nature of the TLCS as a policy instrument impacting superintendent behavior, a brief review of the policy and reform environment from which it developed is necessary. For the purpose of this study, this brief examination begins with the landmark “A Nation at Risk,” which infamously introduced the concept of a “rising tide of mediocrity” in American public education (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). With the release of this report, urgency and interest in school reform increased, but success with such reforms did not follow (Fullan, 2009). This failure of reform to stick was compounded by globalization, which changed the nature of learning from more of a static concept to an ability to learn continuously (Drucker, 1999).
There was an environment of attention and experimentation, but not an environment of accountability in the interim period between “A Nation at Risk” and No Child Left Behind. In a comprehensive study of 24 models for whole-school reform, the American Institutes for Research (1999) found only three that demonstrated strong evidence for positively impacting student achievement (American Institutes for Research, 1999). Even when programs are found to be successful, these programs largely lack longevity (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). During the latter half of the 20th century, while urgency for reform was not producing results in the U.S., other countries including Finland and Canada were reforming their education system for the betterment of student achievement (Fullan, 2009).

This lull in large-scale reform was interrupted with the introduction of No Child Left behind in 2002, which spurred the standards-based accountability movement and took the process of reform out of the hands of states.

We tend to view highly impactful and inspired teaching as an individual trait not attributed to the system in which these individuals work (Elmore, 1996). The impact of the aforementioned individual actors on the experience of individual students is relevant, but the scaling up of this impact into system-wide reform has been moderately effective at best. Elmore (1996) described the incentives used as a possible barrier to scaling up the success experienced in classrooms with inspired and pedagogically adept teachers. The institution in which these inspired teachers work as well as the political context of those institutions set the rewards and values to which its educators respond (Elmore). If the values of the institution are incongruent with the educators working within these structures, the likelihood of a broad scale up of effective practice to the system level is limited.
Educators often take on reform efforts, but lack the capacity to systematize the reform and therefore trivialize the core elements of the reform, changing the language and modifying only superficial structures leaving the current practices that were the focus of the reform largely unchanged (Fullan, 1982, 2009; Fullan & Miles, 1992). To avoid this reform pitfall and capitalize on appropriate incentives for change, Elmore (1996) suggested changing the internal incentives of school systems, including:

(a) “developing strong external normative structures” such as identifying best practices and performance standards, (b) “developing organizational structures that intensify and focus rather than dissipate and scatter intrinsic motivation to engage in challenging practice” through the identification of structures that do not allow for the separation of the believers from the skeptical, (c) “creating intentional practices for reproduction of success” through experimentation within existing models of growth, and (d) “creating structures that promote the learning of new practices and incentive systems that support them” to explicitly connect new learning to student outcomes and the processes to utilize time and resources to make these connections. (pp. 18-25)

**Making Sense of Policy Reform**

Scholars have noted “…profound differences in how local schools make sense [and respond to] state initiated changes” (Rossman & Wilson, 1996, p. 416). The TLCS as an effective lever to change these incentives is still unclear due to its relative infancy; this study attempts to examine the influence of the policy on school superintendents. Research specifically examining the role of the superintendent in implementing policy at the local level is incomplete and often focuses on the role of the principal (Andrews & Soder, 1987;
Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Demir, 2015; Spanneut & Ford, 2008; Wohlstetter et al., 2008). The presence of an investigation of the superintendent as an instructional leader in the research is limited. (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson & Johansson, 1997; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Herman, 1990; Hord, 1993; Morgan et al., 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Petersen, 1999, 2002; K. D. Peterson, 1984; Wirt, 1990). There is a gap in research related specifically to the superintendent as an instructional leader in his/her own right and not related to his/her role in working with principals. Furthermore, the study of how the superintendent makes meaning of their role in implementing the TLCS specifically is non-existent. This study contributes to the gap in research on superintendent role development and instructional leadership as it relates to the role of policy implementer and mediator.

Werts et al. (2013) suggested the actors implementing policy are key to the success of policies aimed at changing practice. A gap between policy and practice exists in part because depending on the magnitude of change required, policy actors react either as skilled implementers or unskilled targets dependent on their capacity to un-learn and re-learn the necessary capabilities to implement the change (Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007). For TLCS, this means teacher’s perceptions of their abilities to give peers feedback, building leaders’ ability to re-conceptualize their work and superintendent’s perceived ability to distribute leadership on key factors impacting achievement metrics.

Weick (1995) forwarded the idea that the sense-making process for leaders causes policies to look different in different school environments due to the leader’s ability to understand the intent of the policy and the underlying social environment in which it will be implemented. With these competing priorities, superintendents, as mediators of policy
implementation, become of particular interest in studying the implementation of the TLCS (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). Werts et al. (2013) suggested that the technical implementation skills of the organization and its leadership will drive successful implementation and if the policy message is too distant from those skills and understandings, the organization will retreat from the policy and disconnect with the implementation behaviors. This gap in understanding becomes important in the TLCS implementation process as over 350 schools implement in varying local context and with differences in staff capacity. The level of system capacity will impact the role of the superintendent in implementation and variation in local contexts. The framing of the policy implementation in context becomes important to any discussion of leader decision-making when approaching new initiatives.

**Local Context and Policy Analysis**

Early educational policy was based on a rational or linear model flowing from problem identification to research to solution generation to implementation (Datnow, 2006; Weaver-Hightower, 2008). This traditional model overlooked the complexity leading to the aforementioned disconnect between policy as written and policy as enacted. Weaver-Hightower (2008) utilized an ecology metaphor to describe policy analysis as “complex, interdependent, and intensely political” (p. 154). This ecology metaphor includes four categories of analysis. “Actors” are those impacted by the system. Understanding the perceptions of actors, especially those who exert the most influence is an important aspect of policy analysis (p. 156). The second characteristic is “relationships” which can be summarized as four basic types: (a) “competition,” (b) “cooperation,” (c) “predation,” and (d) “symbiosis” (p. 156). A third characteristic is “environments and structures,” which are an important factor in how relationships play out and the influence of actors based on the role
they play (p. 156). The fourth characteristic of the ecology metaphor is dynamic “processes” that occur within the system (pp. 156-157). The ecological metaphor underscores the complexity of change highlights the problematic nature of the linear model where policy development is disconnected from the local context. To add further depth to the discussion of the role of individual actors in policy context, co-construction theory and framing can be used to underscore the human element to the policy implementation practice.

**Co-construction.** Applying Weaver-Hightower’s (2008) aforementioned ecology metaphor to the context of this study, it is important to understand how leaders do not make decisions or live experiences in isolation, but how they conduct these actions as part of the ecology of their district. Therefore, understanding of policy implementation can be informed through the theory of co-construction. Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehen’s (2002) co-construction theory assumes a reciprocal relationship between policy and local context. The aforementioned literature suggests variation in policy implementation and the role of actors is expected and varied due to the role of context and the leader’s personal experiences and approach to leadership. However, the explanation of actions at the local level is not linear as the leaders are human and therefore the factors influencing the actual decisions are varied and not always logical or predictable.

Co-construction can be conceptualized as an extension of mutual adaptation or the reciprocal relationship between the policy and the local context (Datnow, 2006; McLaughlin, 1990). This concept is in contrast to the technical-rational perspective which employs the idea that successful policy implementation is a linear function of how effective the organizational hierarchy functions to transfer change from “thoughtful designers” to “passive, pragmatic implementers” (Datnow, 2006, p. 106). Mutual adaptation values
variation in implementation, where as technical-rational perspective sees variations as problematic and undesirable (Snyder et al., 1992).

Berman and McLaughlin (1978) initially forwarded the idea of mutual adaptation in the four-year two-phase study carried out by the Rand Corporation (McLaughlin, 1990). The Rand “Change Agent” Study revealed that adopting a policy project did not ensure successful implementation. Effective projects in the Rand Study demonstrated mutual adaptation over uniform implementation of programs (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). In addition, successful projects were highly dependent on local factors and how local actors interacted within their contexts to implement programs; therefore, “what the project was mattered less than how it was carried out” (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 12).

Co-construction builds on the concept of mutual adaptation and takes into account both the interactions between educators and their collective interaction with the larger political environment in shaping the policy implementation process (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002). The premise of co-construction is that there are multiple levels of educational system, each which have the power to promote or constrain the implementation process over time. With this premise “…actors negotiate with and adjust to one another within and across contexts” (Hall & McGinty, 1997, p. 4).

**Frame analysis.** While co-construction informs the study of the systems in which leaders function, it does not fully expand on the concept of decision-making and personal action within that context. Frame analysis can further contribute to the difficult discussion of the role of others in individual decision-making and further underscores the non-linear process of policy leadership in context.
As previously noted, policy creators often assume a linear trajectory also called an instrumental model of policy implementation. Supporting this assumption of an instrumental model of policy implementation in education over the last several decades is the demand for leaders to use evidence to guide decision-making. Building on this demand for evidence-based implementation is the assumption that the evidence will be the central determining factor in bringing policy into practice (Johnson Jr, 1999; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). However, examination of policy implementation in public settings finds that the intended vision for evidence or data-driven practices is often unrealized in actual implementation once local actors are involved (Coburn et al., 2009).

Several assumptions of the instrumental model to policy implementation are key to a visible disconnect between policy intent, development and implementation when local actors get involved. First, instrumental models assume there is a shared definition of the problem (Coburn et al., 2009), which is one reason this study is qualitative in nature. Education is dynamic, meaning that any definition of the “problem” with education is open to interpretation and any policy will highlight some aspects of the situation, and ignore others. Secondly, the instrumental model assumes that evidence is neutral; however, research has suggested evidence cannot independently inform decision-making because of the role of interpretation (Coburn et al., 2009; Kennedy, 1982).

Frame analysis is an approach to study how problem definitions emerge and change in social interaction and negotiation once the policy hits the local level. The frames create interpretive devices through which the researcher can understand the role policy plays in leadership behavior (Benford & Snow, 2000; Coburn, 2006). There are two types of framing activities discussed in frame analysis: diagnostic and prognostic (Benford & Snow, 2000;
Coburn, 2006). Diagnostic framing identifies the issue or problem and attributes blame or responsibility to identify the targets of change (Cress & Snow, 2000; Stone, 1988). From the frame, the way in which the problem can be discussed and addressed is narrowed by the way in which the frame creates meaning for the actor (Vermeir, Kelchtermans, & März, 2017). In the educational setting the frame could be student demographics, community factors or in the case of the TLCS, teacher capacity, thus suggesting the course of action to address the problem. Prognostic framing puts forth goals and strategies to address the problem by articulating a proposed solution (Benford & Snow, 2000; Cress & Snow, 2000). The goal of those who generate frames is to generate “congruency between the beliefs, interests and goals of others and the frame, this mobilizing people to action (Vermeir et al., 2017). Coburn (2006) contended this mobilization is a factor of frame alignment, or the ability of the frame to connect to people and resonance, the degree of connection between people and the frame causing them to act.

Co-construction and framing are influenced by the methods used to conform localities to the policy delivered and are key elements to understanding policy implementation. A discussion of the draw of local agencies to adopt policy informs reaction to policies. These methods are described by McDonnell and Elmore (1987) as “policy levers.”

**Policy Levers**

How policies are designed and received plays a profound impact on how they are implemented and effects implementation. “Policies work by bringing the resources of government – money, rules, and authority – into the service of political objectives; and by using those resources to influence the action of individuals and institutions” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 133). Matland (1995) explained successful implementation as “…its ability
to execute faithfully the goals and means present in the statutory mandate” (p. 155). The methods used to engage actors in the policy reform will ultimately impact success and fidelity of implementation. McDonnel & Elmore (1987) provided a framework of four policy instruments by which policy goals can be translated into action.

“Mandates” introduce rules with the purpose of compliance and assume change will not occur without the introduction of new rules. The TLCS could be framed as a mandate because of the inclusion of categorical funds into the state foundation formula for school funding. A second policy instrument is the “inducement.” Inducements transfer money to organizations in return for adhering to a set of regulations. Organizations often volunteer to become part of the inducement in exchange for following the regulations. The TLCS can be conceptualized as an inducement, especially in the three years leading to participation by all districts because districts voluntarily enter a proposal designed around a model that ensures compliance with regulations in exchange for additional per-pupil funding.

McDonnell and Elmore (1987) defined a third policy instrument as “capacity-building.” Capacity-building gives money to agencies to invest in future benefits. The TLCS utilizes the capacity-building instrument because it invests in teacher leadership for the purpose of strengthening capacity for all teachers within a system. Finally, the “system changing” policy instrument intends to re-distribute authority within an organization. The TLCS can be conceptualized as system changing because of its focus on empowering teachers through multiple career pathways and opportunities to influence the broader system without having to move into administration. (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987).

McDonnell (1994) expanded on this original list of levers with the concept of the “hortatory” policy lever. Hortatory policy relies on persuasion, rather than the
aforementioned policy instruments of mandates, incentives, capacity-building and system changing and can be envisioned as a fifth policy instrument. According to McDonnell, hortatory policies “…provide information, signal that particular goals and actions are considered high priorities by government officials, appeal to values and beliefs and rely on positive images” (as cited by Prestine, 2005).

The TLCS is a voluntary program. While there is no sanction for the districts that are not applying for participation, 100% of the districts now have approved plans. Thus, the TLC is a policy linked to other systems that do have accountability measures such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), State Report Cards, Early Literacy Intervention and Iowa Core Curriculum Implementation. Prestine (2005) posited the addition of the hortatory policy instrument to the previous instruments framed by McDonnell and Elmore (1987) creates the concept of a “policy bundle” (p. 197). The creation of this policy bundle could contribute to the variability with which the TLCS will be implemented to meet the needs of the local context in achieving existing accountability mechanisms. The likelihood of variability and interaction between teacher leadership and other elements of the school system is palpable when considering the ambiguity of the means by which the TLCS may be implemented.

**Summary of Function of Superintendent in Policy Implementation**

The review of literature on policy implementation places priority on the role of the superintendent at the local level in connecting policy intent with policy outcomes. The superintendent assumes the role of mediator of policy implementation. This mediating role is influenced by his or her perception of the context of the school community he or she serves. Others influence the implementation behavior of the superintendent in the context as they make meaning of policy intents and outcomes through co-construction. Based on this process
of co-construction and the leader’s individual background, beliefs and experiences, the policy takes on a method by which it can be framed for the generation of solutions to problems arising from implementation. This process of mediation can further be influenced by the type of leverage being used by policy makers to implement policy. The current study attempted to understand the perceptions of superintendents of the TLCS as a policy, its lever and intended outcomes in an attempt to understand how it drives leadership behavior of study participants. Mediation in this study is the process of leading the implementation, taking into account the factors discussed in all sections of this literature review.

**Analytical Framework**

This review of relevant literature has established several key themes that were applied to frame the analysis of the research questions for this study. The review given of relevant literature related to teacher leadership informs us of several key characteristics of teacher leadership, but still offers no clear definition. How actors choose to define this in their context will be of particular importance to the analysis process. In addition, also established through this review is the changing role of superintendent leadership. This review yielded an understanding that the role of the superintendent is responsive to the current social, educational and political context in which the superintendent leads. Literature also suggested several key characteristics of instructional leadership; however, the study of instructional leadership in the superintendency remains under-represented. The review concluded with a discussion of policy. Policy offers the context in which the phenomenon of leadership will be examined. In this review highlighted, the potential disconnect between policy intent and policy implementation in the shaping of behavior has been heavily discussed as well as the role of others in the organization in constructing reality. Policy theorists point to the
understanding of policy implementing agents as a key to determining success in implementation (Spillane et al., 2002).

This examination of instructional leadership in the context of the TLCS represents a disruption to the methods commonly employed in Iowa schools to bring about change. As leaders change behavior to adjust to the context of this new system, knowing that the definition of teacher leadership is not well-defined and requires knowledge of effective practice, inquiry into the decision-making process is appropriate, requiring an analytical framework that takes into account how leaders take in information in context to shape decision-making. Examining data collected in this study through the frame of underlying reasons based on perception offered an organization tool through which the researcher examined emergent themes in the data. This examination was built on the assumption that leaders are constantly making meaning of this new policy in an effort to move forward the work of the district and redefine the structures in which teachers and leaders engage in their work.

The analytical framework for this study was developed utilizing Weick’s (1969, 1979) theory of sensemaking perspective. Sensemaking offers a lens through which actions resulting from context can be examined at the individual and organizational level. Sensemaking forwards that meaning cannot be entirely clear and develops as an interactive process within contexts (Coburn, 2001; Coburn et al., 2009; Fullan, 1982; Seashore Louis, 2010; Spillane et al., 2002), making it a social process and an individual cognitive process (Weick, 1995). Furthermore, sensemaking assumes an active process whereby people continuously and actively construct meaning and interpretations (Coburn et al., 2009). This active process can be influenced by, among other context factors, “related values, past
practices, cognitive limitations, organizational culture and organizational inertia” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 33).

Sensemaking has greatly influenced organizational study since its introduction in the late 1960s (Colville, Brown, & Pye, 2012; Hodgkinson & Healey, 2008; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). The theory has expanded beyond its field of origin to education, social sciences and systems analysis to examine a variety of phenomenon and has continued to evolve through use in these varied settings (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Holt and Sandberg (2011) contended sensemaking perspective has played a key role in the advancement of social-constructionist, interpretive and phenomenological perspectives. Sensemaking has been used to examine similar initiatives in other contexts similar to the distribution of leadership or decentralization of decision-making the TLCS brings to the educational setting (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). These perspectives being the key drivers of the line of inquiry underpinning this study of school leaders supports its applicability to this study, which seeks to examine leadership conceptualizations in the context of policy. When confronted with a new policy, it is the interpretation of local actors that will determine the resulting level of personal or organizational change (Gold, 2002; Louis & Dentler, 1988; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Weick (1969, 1979) contended that organizing is a function of individuals taking action interactively to confront their environment. Then they seek to make meaning of this environment by chunking, labeling and connecting their lived experiences. These connections are the sense they make from their environment, what Weick called “cause maps,” which subsequently determines what is important for performing their function.
Through interaction with each other, behaviors converge causing the need for creating consensus about means and methods for task completion. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) summarized this process exclaiming “…sensemaking is homologous to organizing: the later is achieved to the extent that the former is accomplished” (p. S8). Since Weick’s original presentation of sensemaking perspective the cognitive process of sensemaking has been expanded to social constructivist perspectives.

**Cognitive Factors of Sensemaking**

Kennedy (1982), Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989), Vaughan (1996), and Weick (1995) discussed the role of existing cognitive frameworks, also called working knowledge, that people place new information into in an attempt to understand it. This use of working knowledge can be problematic as it offers a lens through which new information is processed, potentially changing it significantly (Coburn et al., 2009). For example, professionals may seek out situations and initiatives that are close to what they already know without challenging their beliefs and also could account for people interpreting the same evidence such as achievement data in very different ways (Coburn, 2001; Coburn et al., 2009; Kennedy, 1982; R. Spillane & Regnier, 1998).

Sensemaking occurs at the individual and collective level. Individual sensemaking is the process individuals use to interpret new information (Leithwood et al., 2004), in the case of this study, how superintendents interpret the externally mandated TLCS as an organizational structure to improve teacher capacity and thus student achievement. Kelchtermans (2005, 2009) forwarded the idea of a “personal interpretive framework” whereby educational practitioners over time develop “…a set of cognitions, of mental representations that operates as a lens through which teachers look at their job, give meaning
to it and act in it” (2009, p. 260). This inclusion of self-understanding as a professional, and beliefs about how one can perform their professional duties is important to understanding any change impact of the TLCS on superintendent leadership behavior. Weick’s early focus on cognitive processes has evolved beyond its early cognitive origins toward a more social constructivist perspective through the inclusion of more social-science-related concepts such as language in examining organizations (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015).

**Socially Constructed Factors in Sensemaking**

The culture of a school acts as a filter through which sense is made as a collective. This culture, including values, norms and beliefs, guide and explain actions by individuals within the school (Kelchtermans, 2006; Schein, 2010). In subsequent work, Weick (2001) expanded on the cognitive elements of sensemaking by discussing the role of concern for personal identity in the social context and how it interacts with the identity of others to create meaning. It is through a person’s concept of identity and the presence of others that an individual creates their narrative. This concept of social interaction related to identity is clarified by Weick et al. (2005):

Sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing. Viewed as a significant process of organizing, sensemaking unfolds as a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances. (p. 409)
This description underscores the role of an individual’s actions in the context of others to develop and continually refine their narrative through taking action and examining those actions in terms of their perceived identity and personal narrative. Central to this developing understanding is the language used in the social context (Weick et al., 2005).

Gold (2002) further underscored the role of others in the sensemaking process by pointing to the role of organizational learning as a method to prevent current beliefs from interfering with individual actors’ ability to interpret policy makers’ intent in the subsequent implementation process. Thus, Gold offered an argument for structure and systems within the organization being a factor in sensemaking. Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002) noted the role of collective learning opportunities in addition to individual cognitive capacities in schools as an important characteristic of sensemaking for individuals and organizations. Research has pointed to the role of these collective learning opportunities in allowing leaders to connect their interpretations with the interpretations of others as a factor influencing leaders’ work (Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998; Spillane, 2002). As previously noted, the superintendent plays a role in mediating policy at the local level (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). Relevant literature has also pointed to the presence of sensemaking opportunities being tied to local culture, leadership structures, resource availability, time and structures for collegial support. (Burch & Spillane, 2002; Dutro, Fisk, Koch, Roop, & Wixson, 2002; Gold, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marks et al., 2002). School district level administrators play a role in the above conditions through their role in shaping the conditions under which a policy is implemented (Burch & Spillane, 2002; Marks et al., 2002)
Applying the Framework to Analyze Superintendent Leadership

Sensemaking in the context of this study was defined in a method consistent with Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) conceptualization of sensemaking. Sandberg and Tsoukas reviewed and examined the range of applications and limitations of sensemaking perspective in relevant literature across disciplines in an attempt to understand the evolution of applying sensemaking to organizational study. This conceptualization is described in the following manner: “Sensemaking in organizations has been seen as consisting of specific episodes, is triggered by ambiguous events, occurs through specific processes, generates specific outcomes and is influenced by several situational factors,” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. S6).

Sandberg and Tsoukas’s definition underscores the evolution of sensemaking in which an organization is a socially constructed concept developed through both social and cognitive processes of the individuals within. In this line of thinking the organization does not exist separate from the beliefs of what the actors within the organization conceptualize it to be. The organization is not a set of documents or hierarchy, but a socially constructed concept vulnerable to the perceptions and the actions based on the perception of those within the organization. Sandberg and Tsoukas’s conceptualization of sensemaking is summarized in Figure 2.1.

The “episode” in this study is the implementation of the TLCS. Episodes are events that interrupt organizational activities until they are restored (Weick, 1979, 1995, 2005). In the case of this study the episode is the TLCS. Four additional specific constituents further refine understanding of the sensemaking process. Weick et al. (2005) posited that the genesis forces the sensemaking process to restore the disrupted activity. As illustrated in Figure 2.1,
Figure 2.1. Major constituents of the sensemaking perspective

these can be major, minor, planned, unplanned or hybrid events. The significant events in the TLCS process are planning, application and implementation. Such events can also be created by the individual actors in the situation through the result of their abilities or inabilities (Weick, 1995). This research sought to bring light to major and minor unplanned and planned events related to these milestone events through the perceptions of superintendents.

The second constituent states that sensemaking involves certain processes. Creation involves extracting cues related to the interrupted situation, interpretation involves organizing these cues into a meaningful narrative and enactment involves trying a course of action to see how it works and thus engaging in the process again in a cyclical manner (Weick, 1995). The methodology of this study attempted to develop a narrative around the cyclical processes of creation, interpretation and enactment through the examination of lived experiences.
The next constituent explains the outcomes of the sensemaking process in terms of the processes ability to restore or further interrupt the disrupted activity. The restored sense is the first step to resuming the interrupted activity, this sense does not need to be accurate only plausible to return to the activity (Weick, 1995). Coordinated efforts at sensemaking tend to have more positive results than fragmented sensemaking (Maitlis, 2005). This study examined the strategies chosen to implement the chosen plan and the perceived success of these strategies. In addition, this model notes the situational factors influencing the process. Factors such as the context, language, politics and emotion tied to the interrupted activity not only influence but can also be used to influence sensemaking in organizations (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Perceptions regarding local context and its role in shaping TLCS initiatives are examined.

The analytical framework for this study was also built on explicit efforts at sensemaking. Explicit sensemaking occurs when the current state of the world is different from the expected state of the world (Weick et al., 2005). In the context of this study the TLCS is a disruptive program. Disruptive in this case does not apply value only a significant change to practice. This disruption will cause individuals within the organization to make sense of the program. This sensemaking process may influence the behavior of actors within the organization as they engage in sensemaking.

Using sensemaking perspective as a lens, this study examined the subsequent influence of the TLCS implementation process on superintendent instructional leadership conceptualization. The analytical framework for this study as informed by the work of Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) is illustrated in Figure 2.2.
Through phenomenological interviewing, the researcher utilizes the lens of sensemaking to examine the influence of TLCS implementation on superintendent thinking and conceptualization of instructional leadership in the superintendency. In examining the perceptions of participants, sensemaking perspective was applied to frame the analysis of the research questions for this study in attempt to discover how leaders thought through the identification of challenges and opportunities of TLCS, how they interpreted the leadership demands of TLCS and what role instructional leadership played as an approach to meeting new demands. This analytical framework allowed an in-depth examination of how the
superintendent perceives his or her role through lived experiences and how this perception influences his or her thinking during TLCS implementation.

**Summary of Chapter Two**

This chapter provided a review of literature relevant to the topics of teacher leadership, superintendent role, instructional leadership and policy considerations. Using relevant literature as a basis to frame the research questions for this study, the literature review concluded with the analytical framework used to drive this research by focusing on the connection between superintendent perceptions and actions in implementation through the sensemaking perspective lens. Qualitative methods were appropriate to employ in this study to understand through lived experiences how superintendents construct knowledge of their role. The next chapter will explain the methodology utilized to conduct the study.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The literature review for this study outlined teacher leadership, effective actions associated with instructional leadership, positive district-level support for reform and identified gaps in understanding the role of the superintendent as an instructional leader in context. Traditional roles of the superintendent serve to draw individuals away from instructional leadership as superintendents navigate complex political landscapes and reform initiatives. In addition, while research suggests the superintendent is key in an overall program of school improvement, the study of his or her impact remains limited. As policy mediator, the superintendent can strongly influence the implementation of policy at the local level, but current inquiry into the TLCS remains focused on school-level factors such as principal and teacher actions. This current line of TLCS study excluded inquiry into understanding the superintendent as instructional leader as well as his or her role as a policy mediator, two factors which could influence variation of TLCS implementation and the personal development of the superintendent as a leader.

This study was conducted to bring meaning to the lived experiences of Iowa superintendents who share the phenomenon of leadership in the context of implementing a new policy instrument, the TLCS, for the purpose of better understanding policy consequences for instructional leadership and conceptualization of the position of superintendent of schools in the work of Iowa school reform. Using the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Two, I utilized qualitative methodology to identify empirical data in an attempt to understand the lived experiences of superintendents. The procedures applied were consistent with methodology utilized to capture the essence of experience for participants experiencing and given phenomenon as they create meaning from the experience
This qualitative design was constructed from the analytical framework of sensemaking perspective to enable the researcher to dig deeper into the reasoning behind decisions, how leaders make sense of the TLCS initiative and if the initiative has affected their role as instructional leaders in their districts.

**Rationale for Qualitative Methodology**

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Iowa superintendents implementing the TLCS in order to understand how implementation experiences shape leadership behavior in their context. Three research questions were utilized to understand the participants’ lived experiences:

1. What do superintendents perceive as the major opportunities of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?
2. What do superintendents perceive as the major challenges of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?
3. How do Iowa public school district superintendents perceive and express changes to their instructional leadership activities in support of district level Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) development and implementation?

This study was developed from the lens of a social constructionist epistemology. The social constructivist focus allows for investigating and understanding the way superintendents participate in the construction of their perceived social reality as leaders (Crotty, 1998). The analytical framework in this study is based on the premise that leaders actively develop meaning to guide their actions. Building on the idea that the meaning of participants’ work is socially constructed through the perception of their experience, this study was structured for the purpose of understanding the meaning superintendents attribute
to their experiences in implementation, particularly the roles, responsibilities and sense of purpose they assume will ensure a vision of success in their district (Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2002; Willig, 2013). Appropriate to a basic interpretive qualitative study is phenomenological inquiry utilizing individual interviews. The phenomenon under investigation is the leadership process in context as superintendents make leadership decisions. Detailed description of lived experiences and motivations were utilized to develop the experiential essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Through qualitative inquiry, insight is gained about what participants are thinking as they experience and carry out their current and future work (Maxwell, 2012). Creswell (2012) posited there is a need to get as close as possible to the subject of the study in a qualitative project; phenomenological inquiry will allow for a close examination of research participants. Phenomenological interviewing enables a deep understanding of how the participant experienced the phenomenon and describes what all participants have in common as they experience a shared phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The research design of this qualitative phenomenology enabled me to capture superintendents’ perceptions in order to understand the essence of their leadership thinking and conceptualizations in the context of TLCS.

**Data Collection and Methods**

Consistent with the goal of this study to understand the lived experiences of superintendents in the leadership process is the utilization of phenomenology. According to Yin (2015), phenomenology:

…takes as its main aim the analysis and description of everyday life – the life the world and its associated states of consciousness… and aims to identify and
describe the subjective experiences of respondents . . . a matter of studying
everyday experiences from the point of view of the subject . . .

Phenomenological descriptions [of ‘things’ as one experiences them] . . . are
possible only by turning from things to their meaning, from what is to the
nature of what is. (p. 70)

The purpose, research questions and goals of this study necessitate the type of research as
previously described by Yin. Appropriate to this phenomenological study is the use of
methodology consistent with the defining characteristics of phenomenology.

This study adhered to Creswell’s (2013 pp. 78-79) defining characteristics of
phenomenology, which Creswell based on the work of Moustakas (1994) and van Manen
(1990). The first defining characteristic noted by Creswell (2013) is the study of a
heterogeneous group of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and varying in
size from “…three to four individuals to ten to 15 individuals”. A second feature of
phenomenology is a philosophical discussion of the nature of phenomenology, specifically
the discussing the “…lived experiences of individuals and how they have both subjective
experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with
other people” (p. 78).

Creswell (2015) also noted the role of the researcher in bracketing himself or herself
apart from the study by clearly articulating their personal experiences with the phenomenon
through identifying personal knowledge of the phenomenon and potential sources of bias.
While other sources of information can be used, a typical feature of phenomenology is the
interviewing of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under study. Data for this
study were collected in the form of words of the superintendents from which the researcher
identifies themes to make meaning from these collections (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015). After the data are collected, Creswell (2015) advocated the use of systematic processes for analysis.

The final defining feature of phenomenology discussed by Creswell (2015) is descriptive discussion of the “…essence of the experience for individuals incorporating ‘what’ they have experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it…the ‘essence’ is the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study” (p. 79). The methodology described in the remainder of this chapter is designed to meet Creswell’s definitive phenomenological characteristics of studying groups of individuals, philosophical discussion, researcher bracketing, interview data collection procedures, systematic data analysis and describing the essence of the phenomenon. Therefore, methods used in this study were driven by the need to collect lived experiences, and extrapolate meaning from these experiences while accounting for bias and validity threats.

**Pilot Study**

Yin (2015) suggested pilot studies as a method to “…refine one or more aspects of a final study” (p. 39). With the purpose of refining participant selection, interview protocols and data analysis plans, a pilot project was conducted with six participants. The participant selection methods used in this pilot study yielded 30 qualified participants. Participants for the subsequent study were drawn from the same pool and selection criteria. The pilot study also informed a revision of interview protocol.

Overall changes to interview questions allowed for deeper reflection. For example, the question related to views on the TLCS was modified to specifically ask for personal and professional views of the system. These changes were made based on success of questions in
the pilot study to draw out information related to the research questions specifically, not to
general initiative leadership. Additional contextual questions such as years of service in
previous positions were added to gain a clearer picture of the participant’s background
experiences in instructional and policy leadership. Questions related to context were
modified to gain clearer insight into topics most relevant to the research questions. For
example, questions about the district’s leadership structure and climate and culture were
added to deepen the context related to the TLCS. Questions were also re-ordered to chunk
like ideas, such as community context and staff climate and culture, for ease of analysis after
coding. Aside from revision of the interview protocol changes as previously noted, the
remaining methodology discussed in this chapter remained unchanged. Changes to the
interview protocol were approved through the IRB modification process (see Appendix C).

Data from the pilot were utilized for this dissertation research and pilot participants
were contacted to answer the additional questions for this dissertation study. Follow-up
questioning of the six pilot participants occurred concurrently with the interview process for
this current study; however, coding of follow-up interviews was conducted after the coding
for this dissertation project. This allowed for separation of findings from the pilot so as not to
restrict the emergence of themes with the second set of participants in the coding and
analysis process.

Interview Process

According to Creswell (2013), one of the defining characteristics of phenomenology
is a philosophical discussion of the nature of the phenomenon as it relates to the participants.
Thus, data were collected as words which were used through a coding structure to identify
themes and provide discussion of the nature of the phenomenon. In addition, the analytical
framework for this study necessitated participant reflection on thoughts underpinning their actions. Appropriate to this phenomenological inquiry is the use of phenomenological interviewing to understand the lived experience of participants from their point of view (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). To facilitate data collection, this study applied a modified version of Seidman’s (2013) three-interview series. The interviews were comprised of two 60- to 90-minute sessions conducted at a place selected by each participant. Schuman (1982) and Patton (2015) called attention to the importance of context in phenomenological inquiry to explore the meaning of experience.

In the context of this study and the available resource of time for both the researcher and the participant, the three-interview sessions were modified to two interviews while maintaining the key elements of purpose as proposed by Seidman (2013). Seidman outlined the three interviews as: (a) interview one is a focused life history, in this study focusing on professional experiences; (b) interview two is an investigation of the participants current lived experience related to the phenomenon being studied; and (c) interview three focuses on reflection of the person’s experience and personal impact of the phenomenon (pp. 21-22). Through this series, the researcher interacts with the participant who is allowed to reflect on his or her experiences in context.

The aforementioned design also presented the advantage of a tight alignment to the three research questions of the current study in which step one aligned with research question one, step two with research question two etc. While each interview attempts to gather data on all three questions, following Siedman’s purposes each sequential interview enabled me as the researcher to build depth in understanding around each research question. The interview questions (see Appendix D-3) were sequenced to achieve Siedman’s sequential process
allowing individuals to reflect and report on general beliefs associated with the phenomenon first then move to leadership beliefs and approaches specific to TLCS (Seidman, 2013).

This study utilized two interviews conducted back-to-back in one session, with the first focusing on professional experiences and the second focusing on the participants work in relation to the TLCS. Both interviews were connected through the participant’s current lived experience related to instructional leadership, with the first interview focusing on the participants understanding of the instructional leadership and the second focused on applying this understanding to TLCS. Participants were asked to choose whether they preferred back-to-back interviews or interviews separated by several days or weeks, and all chose to complete the interviews in one session. Seidman (2013) recommended interviews to be scheduled from three days to a week apart to allow time for the participant to “mull over” the previous interview (p. 24). However, Seidman allowed for variation in the approach as long as the structure is maintained and enables participants to “…reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives” (p. 25).

Questions in interview two designed to cause reflection on the part of the participant, referred back to answers from interview one to create continuity and allow for the reflection intended in Seidman’s process. This study assimilated Seidman’s concept of the three-interview process in its attempt to move the participant through levels of self-perceptions beginning with broad opinions and carrying through to specific perceptions of the phenomenon under study. However, this study utilized interview one to accomplish the goal of Seidman’s interviews one and two, and the second interview to accomplish the depth of the third interview.
Therefore, my approach was a two-interview process with the same intended outcomes of the interview process to move the reflection from the general to the specific in an attempt to cause self-reflection of the participants’ thinking prior to, during and after TLCS implementation. This modification was made for the logistical needs of the participants and researcher due to the geography of Iowa, and the work hours and load of the superintendents and the researcher. I would rather modify the method of collection than limit potential participants in the study. For this reason, while face-to-face was preferred, all participants chose to communicate over the phone. The study conformed to ethical requirements and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) as described in Appendix C.

**Participant Screening and Selection**

To ensure information-rich sources and in-depth examination of meaning-making, I utilized purposeful sampling through the use of a questionnaire (Appendix D-1) as suggested by Yin (2015). A defining characteristic of phenomenology as described by Creswell (2013) is the study of a heterogeneous group of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon. The population for this phenomenological study was comprised of Iowa Superintendents. A pilot study for this dissertation research identified participants to be interviewed. In the pilot study for this dissertation research, all Iowa superintendents were sent an e-mail inviting them to consider participation (Appendix D-3). In this e-mail, they were asked to complete the screening questionnaire developed from the research questions as informed by the review of literature (Appendix D-1) from which interested participants were identified. In addition to gaining initial consent and contact information for interested participants, screening
questions were designed to identify participant characteristics consistent with the study in an attempt to determine a baseline experience with the phenomenon under study.

Questions 1-3 on the screening questionnaire (Appendix D-1) relates to qualifiers appropriate to the study of effect of TLCS implementation. The sample must have a high level of working knowledge in context with the TLCS; therefore, participants must be Iowa Superintendents, they must have been involved in the application process for the TLCS in their current district and led that district through at least one full academic year of TLCS implementation. Superintendents interested in the study were disqualified if they did not meet all three qualifying characteristics. In addition to identifying superintendents who have experience in TLCS, the screening tool attempted to identify willing participants who see themselves and their work in some way impacted by the TLCS. Therefore, questions seven and eight attempted to cause self-reflection on TLCS affects for their work.

Question seven asked participants to identify if the policy affected an individual’s daily work. A key aspect of this study was to examine, through lived experiences, how this policy affected working superintendents. Therefore, for inclusion in the study, the interested participant would have answered “Slight,” “Considerable,” or “Great” to question seven to be included in the study. The magnitude of the policy’s perceived effect was not important in the screening process; it was only important that TLCS presented some measure of leadership demands and challenges for participants to work through, to make meaning from and cause action.

Question 8 asked participants to identify if there was an influence on the superintendent’s direct involvement in teaching and learning. This study examined instructional leadership of the superintendent. The study did not assume a prototype for this
type of instructional leadership as prototypical behaviors are lacking in the literature. However, the study did assume instructional leadership affects teaching and learning in schools within the district. Therefore, for inclusion in the study, the interested participants would have answered “Slight,” “Considerable,” or “Great.” As was the case for screening question seven. The magnitude of the policy’s perceived effect was not important in the screening process; it was only important that TLCS presented some increase in their direct involvement in teaching and learning activities.

The introductory information on Iowa school districts and the TLCS indicated a wide-variety of context in Iowa schools. The money available, existing district structures, past experiences with instructional systems and a host of other factors vary from district to district. For the purpose of this study, I took steps to provide a research base that was representative of Iowa as a whole, the participant information section of this chapter will discuss in greater depth the claim of representation; however, participants selected represented a wide variety of district sizes, locations and demographics. This step also aimed to accomplish the goal as referenced by Creswell (2013) of a heterogeneous group of participants experiencing this phenomenon. In addition, the focus of this study was the superintendent. Therefore, question six was designed to sort potential participants into three groups based on the number of individuals in addition to themselves directly supporting TLCS at the district level. This proved to be a positive sorting method as the number of people involved did not always reflect district size, which gave greater diversity in context within the sample. Qualified, interested participants were sorted into categories of zero additional support, one to two additional support and three plus additional support.
When applied during the pilot study, the aforementioned screening questionnaire yielded 55 responses, with 30 meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study. In the initial stages of this study when considering feasibility, from publicly available documents, the researcher estimated 107 potential qualified candidates by looking at term of service and year of TLCS award. Most disqualifications involved not having both applied and implemented the TLCS in their current context. Interested participants fell into the following categories: zero additional support yielded nine qualified participants; one to two additional support yielded six qualified participants; and three plus additional support yielded 17 qualified participants. Once categorized, interested participants in each category were randomly sorted in Microsoft Excel in descending order by the random number assignment function and participants were contacted in order of assignment. Six participants, two from each category, were interviewed for the pilot study.

Creswell (2015) noted the need to identify a group of individuals varying in size from “three to four individuals to ten to 15 individuals” (p.78). Therefore, in addition to the data collected from the initial six pilot participants, this study aimed to collect interviews from an additional nine participants, three in each category sorted by self-described additional support, for the final study. Using the same protocols as the pilot study, participants in this study were contacted by phone and interviews set at a time, place and method of their choosing. Prior to the interviews, participants were asked to review and sign consent to participate in this study (Appendix D-4).

**Participant Characteristics**

The purpose of this study was to identify the influence of the TLCS on the role of the superintendent. The aforementioned review of literature highlights the role of context in both
the decisions leaders make as well as how policies are received and implemented on a system level. Context-related items will be discussed in the findings of this study, but the primary intent of this study was to identify what, if any, influence the greater context (TLCS) has on the phenomenon of leadership behavior in the superintendency. Therefore, with Iowa districts ranging from around 200 students to over 32,000, the participant selection for this study attempted to identify participants representing multiple and typical Iowa contexts with the intended goal of obtaining a participant group representing districts of differing sizes, geographic locations and demographics. Therefore, the indicator of context chosen to categorize participants was the number of additional supporting leaders to the superintendent in the implementation of the TLCS initiative. These additional leaders could be curriculum directors or other district office or other district administrators, excluding principals whose primary responsibility is the coordination of teaching and learning at the district level. This number did correspond largely to the size of the district, with the most variation in district size occurring in the one to two additional supports category.

In addition to generating broad categories of participants by additional assistance, information from the aforementioned screening protocol was used (see Appendix D-1). This protocol was utilized to gain initial consent, identify additional support members and to cause interested participants to reflect on the TLCS and their leadership. Questions seven and eight of the screening protocol were used to identify any initial perceived influence of the TLCS on interested participants’ daily work in the areas of leadership demand and direct involvement in teaching and learning. In addition to the requirements of involvement in the application and initial implementation of TLCS in their current district, participants in the study must have answered “slight,” “considerable” or “great” to both questions seven and
eight. Those answering “no or none” to one or both questions were eliminated. Selected participants were asked in the formal interview to explain why they gave their chosen answer (see Appendix D-2). Expanding on these initial survey-style questions was a benefit of qualitative methodology in this study.

Table 3.1 summarizes the category and screening question responses of the 30 qualifying individuals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: number of administrators in addition to the Superintendent assisting in district-wide implementation of TLCS</th>
<th>Qualifying Participants</th>
<th>Q7: To what extent as participation in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) presented new leadership demands and challenges for your work?</th>
<th>Q8: To what extent has your direct involvement in teaching and learning initiatives been influenced by participant in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Slight</td>
<td># Considerable</td>
<td># Great</td>
<td># Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the introductory e-mail (see Appendix D-3), 55 Iowa superintendents responded to the screening survey during one of three e-mails sent to all Iowa superintendents. 30 individuals met the participant criteria and were sorted into categories by additional administrative support in implementing TLCS.

Individuals in each category were randomized using Microsoft Excel and 15 (five from each category) were selected for participant in descending list order. The protocol for this study outlined the need for anonymity of participants. Pseudonyms were chosen for the participants using the most common names of the 1990 U.S. Census. Participant pseudonyms, their category and responses to the screening questions are shown in Table 3.2. In addition, for the purposes of this study, with the relatively small number of people holding this position in the state and the need for maintaining confidentiality, participant contexts and
Table 3.2. Participant category and screening responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Category: number of administrators in addition to the Superintendent assisting in district-wide implementation of TLCS</th>
<th>Q7: To what extent as participation in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) presented new leadership demands and challenges for your work?</th>
<th>Q8: To what extent has your direct involvement in teaching and learning initiatives been influenced by participant in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

experiences were described in ranges rather than as specified numbers assigned to individual participants. With the intended goal of investigating instructional leadership in the context of TLCS, I was pleased with the participant pool in terms of its representation of different types of Iowa district local contexts. Superintendents leading rural, urban and suburban districts were represented in the study. Schools ranged in size from a few hundred to over 10,000. Participants led in districts ranging from just over 10% free or reduced lunch participant to over 65%. Participants led in a variety of situations ranging from crumbling local economies and district enrollment to thriving communities with consistent and steady growth in student enrollment.

In addition to securing participants from various district contexts, the screening protocol yielded a participant pool with a wide range of professional experiences and personal characteristics. Participants were in various age groups and two of the 15 participants were female. Of the 15 superintendents interviewed, four were shared
superintendents; thus, data collected reflected experiences of 19 districts, rather than 15. Participants ranged in total professional experience in schools from 22 to 38 years and between 14 and 30 years of school administrator experience. All participants had served in the role of building principal at one point in their careers, several having served at multiple school levels. Other previous administrative positions included curriculum director, activities director, human resources and counseling. Three participants serve in dual roles as principals and one commented that they served as the superintendent, principal, activities director and even drives a bus. Three of the participants also taught a class.

Participants reported a supportive community context, regardless of community struggles and also referenced pockets of the community lacking understanding of contemporary educational needs of students, especially of students living in poverty and contemporary workforce skill needs. Additionally, several participants reported large swings in enrollment both up and down over the past decade, which influenced a number of community-wide conversations. While some participants referenced questions or concerns with the TLCS concept in their community, especially related to the concern over taking quality teachers out of the classroom, none noted a coordinated or widespread resistance to the program or continued concern after implementation. The context of student achievement also varied, while the majority of respondents noted concerns for student achievement. Superintendents interviewed were from schools with a wide range of success and even recognition for student achievement gains.

This variety of district context factors, professional experiences, and personal characteristics allowed for enhanced separation of TLCS context from the myriad of other factors that might influence leadership behavior and participant sensemaking. This separation
provided for deeper examination of the TLCS influence on the phenomenon of instructional leadership and more credible connections from emergent themes as being related to the TLCS context as opposed to other factors such as personal characteristics, prior experiences, district size, community demographics or location. Therefore, the emergent themes from this analysis reflect a close tie to the experience of the TLCS itself and how participants experience, make sense of and lead in the new context of teacher leadership in their districts.

**Interview Questions**

The interview questions used in this study are provided in Appendix D-2. Appropriate to the study of lived experiences and how these experiences shape the perceived reality of participants, “realist” questions were heavily utilized. In contrast to “instrumentalist” questions, which focus on observable and measurable data exclusively, “realist” questions probe the unobservable data including thoughts, feelings, intentions and beliefs to develop a clear picture of the perceived realities of participants (Maxwell, 2012, p. 80). The analytical framework of sensemaking employed in this study utilized realist inquiry by examining thoughts feelings, intentions and beliefs in context of the phenomenon under examination. Questions are framed in terms of episodes related to the implementation of the TLCS. Semi-structured questions and questions probing further into responses attempt to draw out decisions, actions, thoughts and feelings around specific actions related implementation (Weiss, 1994). For example, a question might ask about a decision made regarding a specific element of the district’s plan and ask what caused the inclusion of that element.

The use of semi-structured interviews allows for the interpretation of constructed realities of participants and contribute to the development of meaning across the two interviews. Semi-structured questions allow for freedom of emergent development of
understanding for both the participant and the researcher (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). Structured approaches assist in comparability across subjects and provide for closer examination of data across settings and participants, while less structured approaches assist in the establishment of internal validity and contextual understanding (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, semi-structured interviews will be conducted to ensure both a closer focus on the observed phenomenon, while at the same time protect generalizability across participant data.

Data Analysis and Coding

Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The online transcription service Rev.com was utilized as well as NVivo electronic coding software. The summary of sensemaking (see Figure 2.1) was in alignment to the analytical framework for this study, (Figure 2.2) as provided by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015, p. S12). The coding scheme utilized in this study is summarized in Figure 3.1, and definitions used within this framework are described in detail in this section.

Coding scheme. Building upon the analytical framework for this study, the coding scheme was designed to code data according to its relation to sensemaking constituents in an attempt to identify themes that emerge from lived experiences of participants. Data are first coded into general categories of major constituents. Step two involves further refining these codes into sub-categories in each constituent. This information is then coded by research question in step three. The data in each research question are analyzed further in step four to identify emergent themes. Finally, disconfirming evidence in the data are identified and analyzed.
Figure 3.1. Coding scheme
For this study, the first and overarching constituent of *episodes* was defined as the TLCS implementation process. The overarching constituent of sensemaking is that sensemaking is confined around specific episodes in which the activities of an organization are interrupted until satisfactorily restored (Weick 1969). This overarching constituent is represented in the nature of the study, as the TLCS interrupts in some way the methods by which districts organize as well as finance and support teacher capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, the TLCS introduced formal structures for additional leadership beyond traditional hierarchical structures and provided validation to teachers previously in teacher leadership positions prior to TLCS. This study was designed to investigate the perceptions of the superintendent working within this episode. These interruptions played out differently in each context, but the study identified commonalities of district leaders as they made sense of these interruptions in their context. The four additional constituents as described by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) are: Events, Processes, Outcomes, and Influencing Factors. These constituents and the elements within each are applied in the analytical framework for this study.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the coding scheme used in this study. To further understand the analytical framework and coding scheme, the scheme is discussed in greater detail, including definitions used during coding. The first step in the coding scheme involves identifying what constituent collected data represents. The definitions of each constituent and constituent elements were used to determine where items would be coded in rounds one and two of the framework.

**Events.** Events trigger the sensemaking episode. Collected data identified as events were coded as such in round one of the coding scheme. Weick et al. (2005) referred to
“disruptive ambiguity” whereby events “force” the individual to make sense of a disrupted activity in order to make sense of it (p. 413). Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015, pp. S12-S14) referred to four types of events. “Major planned events” is the first type which usually involve sensemaking that occurs as a result of organizational change initiatives. The second factor, “major unplanned events” was not as relevant in this study as they involve major disruptions as the result of crisis or disasters. The third type of event, “minor planned events” involve planned adjustments to larger initiatives and the fourth type of event “minor unplanned events” represent glitches or misunderstandings that interrupt regular functioning within the organization. Due to the context of TLCS being initiated within an environment of additional educational initiatives, “hybrid events” that contain a combination of the aforementioned types of events were also investigated through the conceptual framework and coding structure.

In order to organize events identified in round one for analysis, step two of the coding matrix further refined events by category. For this step, each category could contain all five event types in Sandberg and Tsoukas’s (2015) model, as summarized in Figure 2.1. The following definitions were developed for event categories in this study. Following are definitions for the four event categories:

1. **Planning & Application**: Events related to designing the district’s TLCS application and model. These events are largely major planned events.

2. **Implementation**: The process of taking the plan and implementing the structures within the district setting. These events include major planned events as well as minor planned and unplanned events.
3. Sustaining & Facilitating: Events after the initial program launch related to the day to day implementation or sustaining of the plan.

4. Board & Community Facilitation: Events or actions related to working with the board, community or other external stakeholders related to the TLCS implementation process.

**Processes.** Sensemaking assumes a specific process actors engage in when trying to restore interrupted activities (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Data collected meeting the criteria for identification as a process was coded in round one of the coding scheme. Weick (1995) posited we can only access our world through our lived experiences and that our actions are “always a little bit ahead of us,” which Weick refers to as a retrospective process (p. 26). Three interrelated processes guide sensemaking. In the context of this study, processes were defined in line with Sandberg and Tsoukas’s (2015) definitions as informed by Weick (1995 pp. 1-62):

1. **Creation** is “bracketing, noticing, and extracting cues from our lived experience of the interrupted situation – creating an initial sense of the interrupted situation, which begins interpretation” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. S14);

2. **Interpretation** involves making sense of the information taken in during creation to develop an organized “narrative” of the interruption (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. S14); and

3. **Enactment** is acting on the new sense made from the interpretation to restore the interrupted activity and measuring the extent the new meaning brings to restoring the interrupted activity (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015).
Outcomes. Outcomes refer to the results of the sensemaking process or the “specific sense (or non-sense) and the restored organizational activities (or further interrupted activities) that ensue” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. S15). Initial data meeting the definition of outcomes was coded as such in round one of the coding scheme. For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were applied to the coding matrix:

1. Organization and Systems: Methods or organizational structures related to how decisions are made and how decisions are acted upon at various organizational levels. Organization and systems may include committee structures, hierarchies, or initiatives related to teaching and learning.

2. Culture & Climate: Relates to addressing subsequent influences of the structures of TLCS on staff climate and culture can include willingness to engage in professional learning and coaching structures. Climate and culture can also relate to the working relationship between staff and students and/or management and staff.

3. Staff Capacity: The skills and abilities of staff to deliver effective instruction to meet student needs. Staff capacity could include the ability to develop and deliver quality lessons or assessments.

4. Student Achievement: Could include performance on interim and/or summative assessments as well as teacher-created assessments of learning.

5. Sustainability: The ability to enact the required elements of the TLCS given the current resources of the district. Such resources could be human, financial or material resources.

Influencing factors. “Sensemaking never takes place in isolation” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. S15). In a comprehensive review of sensemaking literature, Sandberg and...
Tsoukas found factors of language, identity, cognitive frameworks, emotion, politics, and technology as the most common influencing factors (p. S15). In round one, influencing factors were coded. These were further refined into several categories during round two of coding. Using these common factors, the following influencing factors were identified for this study:

1. **Student Demographics:** The socioeconomic and ethnic make-up of the district.

2. **Location:** Includes population factors (rural, urban, or suburban) as well as proximity and influence of population centers.

3. **Existing Structures & Initiatives:** The state and local initiatives already in place when the district was awarded the TLCS. These can include prior teacher leadership initiatives, professional development structures and/or curriculum initiatives.

4. **Politics:** Local, state or national influences such as legislation, funding, or attitudes of stakeholder groups toward education that can influence decision-making and implementation of educational initiatives.

5. **Climate & Culture:** These factors in the influencing factors constituent are different from culture climate factors in outcomes constituent. School climate and culture is dynamic. Climate and culture in this constituent refers to factors such as openness to change, feelings of teachers toward administrators, working conditions (time and resources), willingness to participate in TLCS initiatives, work with teaching and learning initiatives, or strength or prominence of collective bargaining entities prior to TLCS and/or during past initiatives. These overarching climate and culture items across settings will inform a broader picture of the climate and culture outcomes specific to TLCS.
6. Financial/Operational Stability of District: The ability of the district to function as an educational entity prior to the TLCS and subsequently. Factors such as enrollment, tax base and solvency as well as the viability of the school district moving forward are included.

7. Role Expectations of Superintendent: The expectations prior to and after the TLCS of the community, board or staff related to the workflow or role of the superintendent within the district system. This could include which role the community expects or needs the superintendent to function in, leader of instruction or manager of resources.

Coding to research questions. After coding rounds one and two, the information was coded to the research questions of the study in round three. In this round, I sorted information into three general themes of the research questions: opportunities, challenges and instructional leadership. Once all statements were coded into these categories, statements were analyzed and tagged by their coding in rounds one and two: events, processes, outcomes, and influencing factors. This additional step of tagging items was done to allow me to consider data in context of other data in subsequent steps of the coding process.

Round four further refined the collected data through sorting into emergent themes. To further refine data coded to research questions for identifying emergent themes, I first read through all responses in the research question and noted initial themes, which were set to code participant statement to. During this coding process, additional themes that did not fit my prior initial themes were added as analysis continued. For this process, I used a combination of NVivo and hand coding to ensure a thorough analysis of emergent themes. Part of this round involved a recursive process of considering coded information in context of how it was coded in rounds one and two by sensemaking constituents.
In round five, I examined significant themes shared by a majority of the respondents. I defined key themes as those codes that included supporting statements from at least 12 of the 15 participants. The threshold of 12 was selected for two reasons. First, it represented over two-thirds of participants. Second, there was a gap in collected data with only one code having more than four and fewer than 12 participants represented. Remaining coded information relevant to the research questions that did not represent the perceptions of at least 12 of the 15 participants was considered disconfirming evidence. Creswell and Miller (2000) described the process for identifying disconfirming evidence as examining preliminary themes for evidence that is consistent or inconsistent with those preliminary themes. They also suggest that the process for identifying disconfirming evidence come at the later stages of data analysis as it does in this study. Creswell and Miller suggested identifying disconfirming evidence as supporting the credibility of the narrative because researchers have a “proclivity” to find confirming evidence in the course of the coding and analysis process (p. 127). Disconfirming evidence is discussed in Chapter Four in context of each research question if the evidence added texture and additional understanding to the key findings. Utilization of this coding scheme assisted in curbing researcher bias by ensuring a process whereby all data is sorted and able to be examined in context of other steps through a recursive process.

Consistent with Creswell’s (2013) defining characteristics of phenomenology, the coding scheme for this phenomenological study allowed for a systematic process to analyze collected data. In summary, Figure 3.1 illustrates a multi-layer coding matrix. To apply the analytical framework of sensemaking in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of leadership in the context of TLCS implementation, the coding structure was developed from
the constituents of sensemaking as described by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) to allow for deep analysis of data in relation to its use in the sensemaking process. These coded data were then analyzed relative to the research questions to the study, then sorted into emergent themes. The analysis process was recursive in that as data continued to be refined, it was constantly checked against its prior coding to ensure consistency throughout the scheme as key findings were identified and checked. Finally, preliminary findings were examined for disconfirming evidence to ensure trustworthiness and additional protection against researcher bias. By using this framework, the themes of greatest representation in the data could be captured, placed in context. Additionally, adherence to the scheme and framework accounted for credibility and trustworthiness threats inherent in qualitative research designs.

**Ethical Considerations**

Investigating leadership behavior through the lens of a policy implementation (TLCS) in a specific state (Iowa) brought forth several ethical considerations related to anonymity of participants. Furthermore, my purposive sampling methods added to this concern in selecting from a small subset of Iowa districts and superintendent criteria. While this study focused on leadership behaviors, it built upon beliefs about local context, efficacy, concerns for staff capacity, etc. Studying a small group of people created risks of identification with potential impacts to privacy and employment creating potential feelings of uncertainly or anxiety.

To protect participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym of common last names, each preceded with the title “Superintendent.” For example, direct quotes underscoring key findings were cited as from “Superintendent Jones.” The selection criteria and sorting process through use of additional support structures rather than size of district allowed for a sense of homogeneity across respondents which allowed for greater anonymity.
As an added layer, district demographic data were presented as a summary item only and direct quotes were not attributed to identifying demographic characteristics.

**Trustworthiness and Rigor**

Conveying my trustworthiness as a researcher through rigorous investigation is important since I was using qualitative methodology. “Qualitative research is often evaluated against the positivist criteria of validity and reliability” (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 28). Therefore, to ensure I conducted a rigorous investigation in this study, I was challenged to employ methods to guard against positivist beliefs regarding the nature of scientific research. Further complicating this challenge is a lack of agreement among qualitative researchers in identifying standardized methods to communicate trustworthiness and rigor (Anfara et al., 2002). However, researchers such as Creswell (2012, 2013), Maxwell (2012) and Yin (2015) pointed to the use of multiple strategies to convey the rigor of the research. Yin called attention to the value of having a research design prior to the start of the study, which was tested during the pilot study and modified based on pilot study performance.

The research design for this study is presented in this chapter to outline a strong methodology with the purpose of conveying the validity of the data. Irwin (2008) posited that evidence is the strongest defense against validity threats, but the only way of achieving this evidence is through strong methodology. First and foremost, validation in this study relied on good craftsmanship with continuous checking, questioning and theorizing about the nature of the phenomenon examined utilizing the aforementioned coding scheme (Patton, 2015). The coding scheme provided a systemic method by which emergent codes were evaluated for their relevance to the guiding research questions of this study. While the process of
sensemaking is not linear, the steps in the coding scheme provided a set of steps to further refine the collected data for analysis against the study’s framework for the identification of key findings. Additionally, the last step of the coding process checked key findings in the context of disconfirming evidence. The examination of data for disconfirming evidence is accepted as a valuable strategy for strengthening credibility of a qualitative research claim (Booth et al., 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton 2015; Straus and Corbin, 1998; Antin et al., 2015).

In addition to good craftsmanship, steps were taken during the study to ensure rigorous inquiry by using strategies to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Addressing these four areas both independently and collectively allowed for the application of multiple strategies to ensure rigorous analysis as suggested by the aforementioned scholars. I also describe the application of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in this study.

Credibility in qualitative research is likened to internal validity in quantitative research (Anfara et al., 2002). Yin (2015) cautioned researches to provide assurances that they have properly collected and interpreted the data, so that the findings and conclusions accurately reflect and represent the world that was studied. Anfara et al. (2002) advocated the use of peer debriefing and member checks as a strategy to enhance credibility. I employed peer debriefing by using my major professor for this research as an expert in qualitative methodology. I also utilized peer review comments from two superintendents who had earned Philosophical doctorates. While not selected as participants, they did meet the qualifications to participate in this study. Peer debriefing took place during the interview process as well as in the data analysis process to discuss emergent themes. Member checking
was also used with project participants. Member checking was in the form summary research findings outlined by research question and describing findings. All participants were provided these summary findings and had the opportunity to provide feedback. I received eight responses to these findings; none suggested any changes or personal deviations from the findings presented in the summary.

The concept of transferability is similar to external validity in quantitative methodology in that it seeks to understand how the findings can be generalized to other situations (Anfara et al., 2002; Creswell, 2012). Anfara et al. (2002) suggested providing thick rich description and purposive sampling as strategies to support transferability. Consistent with the goal of uncovering lived experiences in phenomenological research, the data are presented in narrative form, using the participants’ own words to guide the narrative and subsequent claims. With 15 participants, it is challenging to fully use all comments provided; thus, claims most representative of each theme are presented. As guided by the words of participants and explanatory narrative, my report of the results and findings provided a thick, rich description of the phenomenon under examination. Additionally, the aforementioned process of selecting participants who represent differing types of Iowa Districts who also share the characteristics of application and implementation of TLCS will allow for emergent themes to better reflect the phenomenon under study by calling attention to themes across and between contexts.

Dependability is a term qualitative researchers apply to the positivist notion of reliability (Anfara et al., 2002). Creswell (2012) called attention to the use of recorded interviews and analysis of transcriptions. In addition to recording and transcription, Anfara et al. (2002) suggested the use of coding strategies and peer examination. In this study, I clearly
outlined the coding matrix that was used as well as the analytical framework underpinning
the matrix. This should communicate an understanding that data were analyzed through
consistent methods and emergent themes were not identified through cherry-picked data. I
utilized my major professor as a peer examiner of my collection and analysis process.

Finally, I have addressed confirmability, conceptualized as objectivity in quantitative
research through reflexivity. Creswell (2012) defined reflexivity as “…positioning one’s self
in a qualitative research study.” This is achieved by conveying throughout the study “their
background (e.g., work experiences, cultural experiences, history), how it informs their
interpretation of the information in the study and what they have to gain in the study”
(Creswell, 2012, p. 45). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) underscored the importance of
reflexivity by calling attention to the role of the researcher as the instrument of the data
collection. The researcher is part of the world he or she studies and, as such, will influence
both the methodology and the analysis of the qualitative study (Hammersley & Atkinson,
1995; Maxwell, 2012). I have clearly articulated my positionality as a researcher.
Understanding my positionality enables others to interpret my methodology and findings. My
positionality has also grounded me in reflecting on potential sources of bias in the analysis
process. Throughout the study and presentation of findings, I have attempted to clearly
identify my process in bracketing. Yin (2012) defined bracketing as “…trying to set aside the
researcher’s beliefs, values, predispositions and prior assumptions in designing, conducting
and analyzing a qualitative study” (p. 333).

While designing and conducting this qualitative study, I was aware of the perception
of qualitative research as un-scientific by positivist assertions. However, given the nature of
the research questions, the methodology applied in this study is appropriate for understanding
the lived experiences of superintendents. By clearly articulating my process for ensuring academic rigor, I hope the reader will have a clearer picture of the rigorous nature of this investigation. A systemic approach to collecting and analyzing data as well as applying the aforementioned strategies to address credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability should comfort readers’ concerns for rigorous inquiry and provide an aura of trustworthiness regarding this study (Anfara et al., 2002; Henning et al., 2004; Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 2012; Willig, 2013).

**Positionality**

Moustakas (1994) posited, “In phenomenological research, the question grows out of an intense interest in a particular problem or topic. The researcher’s excitement and curiosity inspire the search” (p. 104). Furthermore, the aforementioned strategy of reflexivity requires the clear articulation of beliefs, values and predispositions that the researcher, as the instrument of data collection, must communicate clearly to the reader to build a sense of trustworthiness (Anfara et al., 2002; Yin, 2015). Creswell (2013) pointed to the need for the researcher to bracket himself or herself out of the study through clear articulation of personal experiences with the phenomenon under examination as a defining characteristic of phenomenology. To this end, my positionality as a researcher is discussed in this section.

As a superintendent implementing the TLCS in Iowa, I bring with me assumptions grounded in my implementation experience and the curiosity that results from my work experiences. I was fully aware of how TLCS is a change that impacts every system within a school, some anticipated and some unanticipated. In my role I was also very concerned for the longevity of a policy with a $150 million annual price tag, given the amount of choice districts have in the implementation process. It was important for me as a researcher to
design open-ended questions with planned prompts that would allow for deep reflection and minimal unplanned or unrehearsed prompting to ensure I did not lead the participant (Creswell, 2012). Focusing on the behaviors and the perceived realities that drive those behaviors assisted in bracketing the data.

This study has been personally motivating to me for two reasons. First, I entered education because I perceived the classroom experiences I had in K-12 under-served me as a learner. While I did not grow up with any conventional disadvantages of poverty or institutional discrimination, I did not feel comfortable or supported in school and, therefore, did not take risks or push myself until my post-secondary experiences. My personal experiences motivated my resolve to be involved in the development and/or reform of teaching and learning as a teacher, principal, and now as a superintendent. I believe my role is to provide systemic support for an environment of teaching and learning that keeps pace with the needs of students and values their unique differences. To this end, I find it frustrating when management roles draw me away from teaching and learning initiatives. I am interested in the ability of policies to be lead rather than managed from the superintendent’s desk. I believe in the potential of the TLCS to necessitate an active and ongoing interest in teaching and learning in the superintendency. Second, there is a great deal of work in the state to support this initiative and I am concerned for the sustainability of this large investment by the state. While I have only been in education for fifteen years, I have seen many significant initiatives come and go, especially when tied to politics at the state level. Often with the passing of an initiative is the credibility of the leader who had no choice but to whole-heartedly support it.
My role as an insider could impact participants’ openness in diverging ways. Reflexivity became an important consideration as the study developed and these conversations led to a change in the nature of the researcher-participant relationship (Patton, 2015). Some superintendents may have chosen to be more open and honest about the process of implementation, while others may have been more closed. My advantage of being a relatively new superintendent formerly serving in a school system largely closed to state-wide networking was that I could retain a certain distance as I have not formed long-standing relationships with a majority of the participants. When possible, I selectively eliminated participants if I had long-standing relationships with them to ensure purity of results and integrity of the data collection and interpretation. Through this process, I developed familiarity with 11 superintendents with whom I had no prior interactions. The four superintendents with whom I had worked were not considered close working or personal relationships.

While I was not in my current position when the money was secured for my district, I was responsible for working this plan. Therefore, my experience with the system has been to learn, harness, or overcome system opportunities and challenges brought by participation in the TLCS. Not having been involved in the consensus building required to secure the grant gave me some distance and objectivity from the participants in the study. In addition, coming from a system implementing a national program to meet TLCS, I needed to suspend judgment of homegrown programs and my beliefs of potential pitfalls from variability in implementation.
Summary of Chapter Three

The methodology for the study was described in this chapter. This research was conducted utilizing a social constructivist epistemology, applying a basic interpretive qualitative study to construct meaning from the lived experiences of Iowa superintendents. A careful selection process was discussed to fit the needs of the research questions and the conceptual framework for the study. To construct this meaning, phenomenological interviewing focused on understanding the phenomenon of leading through policy implementation was utilized. A modified two-interview version of Seidman’s (2013) three-step interview system allowed for a tight focus on both the research questions and the development of deeper understanding of lived experience for both the researcher and the participant. Information on the participants chosen was described and participant representation of typical Iowa contexts was made. To address concerns for academic rigor, strategies were described to address the challenges of developing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative research. Thick rich description, peer review, peer debriefing, purposive sampling, coding strategies, reflexivity and member checking were discussed as tools to build trustworthiness. Finally, a discussion of my positionality as the researcher underscored my need to carefully bracket the study and account for researcher bias in data collection and analysis. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings related to this study of Superintendent Instructional Leadership in Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS). The chapter will begin with a review of the purpose and coding structure used. Participants’ perceptions of the TLCS are described to form a foundation of understanding. With this foundation built, findings for the three research questions are provided, capturing the essence of experience for these leaders in the context of the TLCS. Major findings and relevant disconfirming evidence are also discussed.

This chapter gives voice to the 15 participants through their own words and narrative description of themes that emerged through the coding process. The study yielded over 23 hours of data in the form of statements that captured participants’ perceptions. For the purpose of this analysis, it is not possible to present and provide deep analysis of each individual statement supporting the key findings and associated sub-categories; therefore, I attempted to use participants’ quotes that best highlight the essence of the conversations and are most closely aligned with the framework. Furthermore, findings presented for each research question represent consistency among at least 12 of the 15 participants and, unless otherwise noted, represent findings of all 15 participants. At the conclusion of each section of research findings, relevant disconfirming evidence is discussed to further deepen understanding and discussion.

Research Questions and Coding Structure Restated

The purpose of this interpretive, phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the voices of Iowa superintendents implementing the (TLCS) in order to understand how implementation experiences shaped their perceptions and thinking about their leadership.
Based on participant descriptions of lived experiences, the study attempted to answer three research questions:

1. What do superintendents perceive as the major opportunities of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?

2. What do superintendents perceive as the major challenges of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?

3. How do Iowa public school district superintendents perceive and express changes to their instructional leadership activities in support of district level Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) development and implementation?

The analytical framework for the examination of these research questions was a sensemaking perspective. Sensemaking assumes that individuals actively seek to make meaning through their experiences to plan personal actions around interrupted activities in an attempt to restore that activity. In the context of this study, the interruption was the TLCS and the activity being restored is the teaching and learning processes in their districts. To lead TLCS implementation in their local districts, participants called upon their individual beliefs regarding teacher leadership, TLCS as a system, and their interpretation of their local context needs, which represented cognitive factors of sensemaking. In addition, socially constructed factors of sensemaking included participants’ interpretation of their place within the culture, norms, values and beliefs of their local context. Therefore, the coding structure for this study (Figure 3.1) identified themes in the sensemaking of superintendents in the context of the TLCS through considering and separating common perceptions from varied district and community contexts of participants. The first step of the coding process involved sorting collected data into events, processes, outcomes, and influencing factors. Step two of the
coding structure involved coding these four constituents into sub categories for further refinement. After the constituents were refined, statements were sorted into three categories by research question in step three. Once sorted, statements were examined for emergent themes within the research questions by identifying common perceptions through statements. Once analyzed for themes, data falling outside of these themes was identified as disconfirming evidence.

Data were collected from 15 Iowa superintendents in response to 25 questions on a semi-structured interviews protocol. The participating superintendents served during the application and initial implementation of the TLCS in their current district. Interviews were recorded and the researcher collected notes during the interviews, conducted by phone. The conversation with each superintendent using the semi-structured interview protocol allowed for individuals to give their perceptions about the TLCS as a program as well as their role in the system.

Themes

Nine themes emerged from an analysis of the data gathered from 15 Iowa superintendents who participated in the study. Overall, participants discussed the TLCS in terms of its use in their system context, but findings yielded a great deal of consistency across participants, which will be reported in this chapter. For example, themes related to opportunities and challenges of TLCS were very consistent, regardless of participant setting, which yielded very few disconfirming themes. In general, opportunities related to the use of the TLCS as a structure for change rather than as a stand-alone program. This suggests TLCS can be implemented as a system rather than a program. Additionally, participants noted strong satisfaction with the increased staff climate and culture in their districts that resulted
from empowerment of teachers in the improvement processes for teaching and learning. Challenges presented relate less to the philosophical underpinnings of the program and more to the technical requirements and political nature of the initiative. Superintendents in this study presented an overall positive outlook for the system, but express great concern for the stability of the system. This stability concern is rooted in the political nature of the initiative, which manifested itself in concerns over what the ultimate metrics for program success will be as interpreted by the state legislature. Additionally, districts struggled with participation requirements in terms of filling spots available and roles for teacher leaders. The data from this study as analyzed through its research questions, analytical framework and coding scheme yielded the finding that the TLCS can be a lever for increased superintendent instructional leadership behavior.

In response to Research Question one, I identified three themes: (1) “cohesive systems;” (2) “capacity development;” and (3) “enhanced culture and climate.” The first of these themes, entitled “cohesive systems,” describes the belief on the part of participants that the TLCS has the potential to bring together disparate initiatives in their districts. Participants gave examples of how the TLCS, through its intended involvement and teacher empowerment structures has allowed for a unified message when rolling out initiatives by enhancing teacher input to and delivery of district-level teaching and learning initiatives.

Within the section “cohesive systems” there are two sub-sections describing the perceived methods that this system cohesion can be accomplished through the TLCS: (1) “empowering teacher voice;” and (2) “systemic lens for initiatives.” In these sub-sections section, I first discuss how having more teacher voices at the table has been perceived by participants to have enhanced implementation of teaching and learning initiatives as well as
how TLCS has been used as a system for the study, selection and delivery of teaching and learning initiatives. Then I discuss the second major theme of the perceived opportunity of “capacity development.” In this section I describe participant perceptions of the ability of TLCS to develop the individual and collective capacity of teachers to enhance teaching and learning activity. The theme of “capacity development” contains two sub-sections entitled “teaching and learning” and “building system resiliency.” In these sub-sections I discuss participant perceived growth in the teaching, learning, and leadership capacity of teacher leaders and principals as well as how this increased capacity is also perceived as a method to address student challenges related to community needs. Third, I discuss the major themes of “enhanced climate and culture,” in which I share perceived benefits of the TLCS structure to building better climate and culture among staff, specifically in the relationship between administrators and teachers. In conclusion I will discuss relevant disconfirming evidence for research question one.

Second, in response to research question two, I will describe three findings related to perceived challenges of TLCS “participation requirements,” “teacher leader turnover,” and “sustainability concerns.” In the first section of “participation requirements” I will discuss the participant concerns related to adequately filling the teacher leadership roles required of the system. The section “participation requirements,” has two sub-sections, “interest” and “teacher leader roles.” In these sub-sections I will discuss participant perceptions related to concern for identifying enough high quality individuals to fill teacher leader roles as well as the ongoing struggle to define teacher leader roles given the percent of required participants outlined by the TLCS. Second, I will discuss the second theme of “teacher leader turnover” or more precisely the lack of turnover and the concern for losing teacher leadership capacity
through turnover. Third, I will present findings related to “sustainability concerns” of the program, which describes participant concerns for the ongoing viability and support for the TLCS. Within the section “sustainability concerns” there are two sub-sections entitled “measurability” and “politics.” In these sub-sections I will overview the concern for identifying a shared metric for success as well as concerns related to political influence on the support for the programs continuation. In my conclusion, I discuss relevant disconfirming evidence for research question two.

Last, in response to research Question three, I overview findings related to participants’ perceptions of the TLCS’s influence on their instructional leadership role, which are presented in three themes entitled “the superintendent as instructional leader,” “perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership,” and “Influence of TLCS on instructional leadership.” In the first section, entitled “the superintendent as instructional leader,” I provide an overview of participant’ perceptions of the instructional leadership as a role of the superintendent. This overview includes themes identified through coding that capture perceptions toward the instructional leader role in the context of other responsibilities as well as attitudes toward the role.

Then I discuss findings related to “perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership,” which in I summarize four characteristics developed from participant definitions of superintendent instructional leadership: (1) “communication;” (2) “empowering others;” (3) “personal engagement;” and (4) “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.” In these sub-sections I describe how participants conceptualize these four summarized characteristics from their role as superintendent of schools. I also include in this
sub-section a presentation of findings related to these summary characteristics that represented disconfirming evidence.

In the final section, entitled “implications of TLCS on instructional leadership”, I discuss participant perceptions that the TLCS has enhanced or increased prominence of their instructional leader role. The section entitled “Implications of the TLCS on instructional leadership” contains five subsections: (1) “general perceptions of influence;” (2) “influence on communication;” (3) “influence on empowering others;” (4) “influence on personal engagement;” and (5) “influence on facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.” In these sub-sections, I utilize the summarized characteristics that emerged from participants’ concepts of superintendent instructional leadership to analyze the perceived influence of the TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership. Finally, to conclude I discuss relevant disconfirming evidence for research question three. Table 4.3 provides a summary outline of these findings.

The purpose of my study was to give voice to superintendents in the process of implementing the TLCS. Because their role has remained unstudied, their professional experience and capacity was not a target of improvement in the TLCS system. To achieve this focus, I designed the study based on relevant literature and theory related to leadership and developed methodology that would allow for the study of the phenomenon of leadership in the context of TLCS work. Therefore, collected data were in the form of participants’ statements. In addition to supporting the assertion of rigorous investigation, these data presented, as filtered through the coding scheme, lend credibility and trustworthiness to the findings presented in this chapter.
Table 4.1. Summary of the findings and themes by research question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Findings &amp; Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: What do superintendents perceive as the major opportunities of the Teacher</td>
<td>Cohesive Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?</td>
<td>• Empowering teacher voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Systemic lens for initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building system resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced Culture &amp; Climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2: What do superintendents perceive as the major challenges of the Teacher</td>
<td>Participation Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?</td>
<td>• Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher Leader Roles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Leader Turnover</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability Concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Measurability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ 3: How do Iowa public school district superintendents perceive and express</td>
<td>The Superintendent as instructional leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changes to their instructional leadership activities in support of district level</td>
<td>Perceived Characteristics of Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) development and implementation?</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Empowering others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilitating a vision for teaching and learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Influence of TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• General perceptions of influence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Influence on communication</td>
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<td>• Influence on empowering others</td>
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<td>• Influence on personal engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Influence on facilitating a vision for teaching and learning</td>
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</table>

As I present the findings related to the research questions, it becomes clear as a policy instrument, the TLCS creates the conditions for superintendents to leverage their instructional leadership role if they desire. As I present the findings related to the research questions, it becomes clear that the TLCS as a policy instrument creates the conditions for
superintendents to leverage their instructional leadership role if they desire. Participants noted the need to more fully engage in conversations with larger groups of individuals to ensure fidelity and success in the system. As a result, superintendents perceived themselves as stepping away from management functions more frequently to engage in work more consistent with instructional leadership in an attempt to leverage opportunities and work through challenges associated with the system. Furthermore, participants viewed TLCS as a systemic lens through which disparate initiatives can be brought together and student-centered district missions and visions can be enhanced. Therefore there is a vested interest on the part of participants to maintain close involvement with the TLCS, as it is perceived as a method to successfully implement needed changes in teaching and learning.

Research Question One: What do Superintendents Perceive as the Major Opportunities of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?

The coding scheme for this study allowed for the identification of four perceived opportunities of TLCS: (1) “general optimism;” (2) “cohesive systems;” (3) “capacity development;” and (4) “enhanced climate and culture.” I first present findings of “general optimism” toward the system and its potential to improve student learning. Then I further refine this general optimistic perception by presenting key findings of more specific areas of opportunity shared by participants that underpin their general optimism. These key findings are presented in sub-sections entitled “Cohesive systems;” “capacity development;” and “climate and culture.”

Overall, participants were pleased with the ability to leverage more staff work time toward improving teaching and learning. They saw the additional leadership positions as an opportunity to support current initiatives and engage in initiatives that previously either fell
short of success or were not possible without the additional human capital provided through the TLCS system. Participants also perceived the application process and subsequent required opportunities for interaction between teachers and administrators as a positive influence on climate and culture of their districts. The key findings and related sub-sections represent themes from at least 12 of the 15 participants, unless otherwise noted, findings represent themes across the entire participant group. Disconfirming evidence relevant to the discussion that add depth to or spark additional lines of inquiry in the understanding of this research question will be presented prior to the summary of this section.

**General optimism for TLCS.** A key cognitive component of sensemaking is the individual perceptions toward an interruption; therefore, for the purposes of this study it was important to capture participant opinions about the TLCS as a concept. The participants were very candid in their responses and justified perceptions with context demands related to their work. Each shared their overall optimism for the concept of the TLCS’s perceived success thus far. A comment made by superintendent Martin captured the essence of what participants felt toward the TLCS:

> I think that throughout the state, if it ends up being implemented well, and with fidelity, and have the possibility of being a game changer. Meaning, there is no single thing that any school can do, that will impact student learning more than to provide a fantastic teacher in every room.

Martin’s comments captured several feelings expressed by participants. First and foremost, there is a positive attitude toward the system. The statement also captured the belief among participants that a set of district strategies to impact the classroom level is a lever for system-wide improvement. While only three participants used the term “game changer” to describe
the TLCS, the sentiment was shared that the TLCS is a palatable shift in the way schools do business and this shift is seen as an opportunity to bring focus to efforts aimed at improving teaching and learning. Martin’s comment, “if it ends up being implemented well,” also captured a perception among participants that the TLCS can be as effective or ineffective as it wants, depending on how it is lead and the people charged with leading it. While descriptions of individual systems varied slightly, participants believed that their systems were working. In addition to an overall positive feeling, participants expressed how they believe the structures of the system brought urgency to pre-existing efforts to improve teaching and learning through collaborative structures.

Participants noted framing the system implementation and their desire to participate as a method to forward current initiatives or embark on new initiatives. A comment by Superintendent Johnson captured this perception of the participants:

I mean that we tried to do that [collaboration] before but this initiative really laid out the groundwork in some ways for how it needed to be. They [Teachers] truly needed to be placed in positions of leadership.

Like Johnson, participants discussed starts and stops which they described as inherent in implementing change; however, lack of success in previously failed or weakly implemented initiatives mentioned was described as being a result of lacking time and human capital. Participants discussed the ability of TLCS to provide this time and human capital through compensation for motivated individuals and collective expectations for their organization. While there was shared optimism, none of the participants noted their implementation efforts were over or were willing to express absolute success.
In addition to optimism for the program, each superintendent reported the amount of effort and continuous monitoring the program takes to be successful. Each discussed that they have not arrived at the final iteration of their teacher leadership system. For example, Superintendent Smith made the following statement:

The teachers have to be instructional leaders. The TLC program is probably, once it gets up and running, going to be great. Teachers leading teachers is better than administrators directing teachers by far.

This comment by Smith captured the perception among participants that, while they felt positive toward the program’s potential and the initial results, they were not willing to call it a win just yet.

Statements related toward feelings about the system and how those feelings have changed over time yielded a number of statements, which are reported in later in this chapter, that suggested districts were still feeling the effects of the second-order change brought by TLCS. By second-order change, participants meant the TLCS had introduced language about teaching and learning and collaborative structures that represent a completely new way of looking at teacher collaboration and growth. Consistent with the concept of second-order change, the participants noted new ways of teacher interactions, new ways of leading, and metrics for success. All but one superintendent in the study noted a feeling that they needed to be actively engaged in the process to ensure the momentum continues. Superintendent Davis captured the impact of the magnitude of change inherent in TLCS implementation:

Sure. I think that it was easier without coaching, right? ... We’ve got a much better idea of who’s doing well and who's not. We've got a much better idea of where we need to provide assistance for teachers who are struggling than we
did before. We have to hold ourselves and those teachers to higher expectations.

Davis’s statement captured the essence of what participants discussed in terms of the general difficulty of leading change and a perception that the superintendent needs to maintain involvement to ensure people work through the struggles. In terms of the TLCS, the active engagement needed to facilitate change brought new insights to superintendents about the health of their current teaching and learning systems. A new focus on data, priorities around at-risk populations and overall consistency quality of instruction were commonly shared by 12 participants, with the remaining three mentioning one or more of these items. With more knowledge comes more responsibility in identifying strategies to address these new priorities.

Based on the participants’ perceptions, it was clear that there is a general positive attitude toward the TLCS. This attitude was framed in terms of what the TLCS as a system could do to move forward student achievement. Specifically, superintendents perceived the TLCS as a second-order change that brings about new ways of thinking about how schools are structured and who is actively involved in school improvement efforts. While participants were not willing to call the system a win just yet, it was clear from their perceptions that this is a tool or framework they could use to both bring focus to district work in teaching and learning and provide resources to make large systemic shifts by bringing along those most closely associated with teaching and learning, classroom teachers. This generally positive outlook is refined in the following sub-sections. These sub-sections lend clarity to these general perceptions by describing participant trends in use and the perceived outcomes of their district’s use of the TLCS.
**Opportunity one: Cohesive systems.** In refining participant data coded as opportunities, the perceived ability for TLCS to draw together current and future work into a cohesive systems approach emerged as a shared opportunity across all participants in this study. The coding scheme for this study defined organizations and systems as “methods or organizational structures related to how decisions are made and acted upon at various organizational levels.” Organization and systems may include committee structures, hierarchies, or initiatives related to teaching and learning. Each superintendent in the study reflected on how the TLCS allowed them to carry forward district initiatives, both those in progress and those not possible without the TLCS structures in place. In further refining this perceived opportunity of developing systems, two sub-categories emerged as being shared across participants. These sub-categories were empowering teacher voice in school improvement initiatives and providing a systemic lens for improvement in teaching and learning. I will first discuss participant perceptions related to empowering teacher voice

**Empowering teacher voice in school improvement initiatives.** All participants discussed the influence of having more teacher voices at the table and no participants noted the additional voices as a negative. While at times participants noted the need to manage and attend to these new voices, the perception was that these voices strengthened district systems. Superintendents believed the additional voices at the table have been instrumental to the implementation of programs and initiatives. Two influences of empowering teacher voice were especially present in participant perceptions: (1) a perceived positive impact on principal workflow; and (2) generation of new ideas and concepts of current district reality in teaching and learning.
One advantage of empowering and involving teachers as perceived by participants was the impact of teacher leaders on the role and workload of principals; this advantage was noted by 12 of the 15 participants. Participants specifically noted the impact of the TLCS on the principal and their role in supporting the principal. The discussion of this additional principal support was related to the balancing of instructional support for teaching and learning and the day-to-day challenges of managing a building. Participants offered examples of this building level support and the role that having more voices at the table has played. Superintendent Johnson described the benefit of involving more teacher voice through TLCS:

I also think that it [TLCS] gives our teachers, as well as our principals, chances to interact in ways that we haven't been able to before and to initiate some things that we haven't been able to pull off prior to this time because we didn't have the staff to do it.

Johnson’s comment captured the perception of the 12 participants regarding the influence on principal role by noting both a positive impact on working relationships and a mobilization not only of voice but also the participants in the improvement process. Johnson’s comment also underscored a perception among all participants of this study that they were utilizing and empowering these individuals. In addition to enhancing the work flow of principals, participants also noted the influence of these voices on their role, specifically in the area of awareness of district current realities.

The TLCS was perceived as a tool with which the superintendent can better understand and support classroom instruction from their position of influence. Empowering teacher leaders in the conversations and work of district-level teaching and learning
initiatives appeared to lead to the generation of knowledge that did not exist prior to TLCS. Superintendent White gave the following example of this perceived impact:

We now have people that are in classrooms so much they [teacher leaders] often come to us and say, “This is an area that I see as a need in professional development,” and we work to align it with our goals and then are presenting more applicable and relevant professional development because of that. White’s comment captured the participants’ perception that new levels of understanding were being generated through the empowerment of teacher leaders. While all participants reported taking the time to visit classrooms and teachers prior to teacher leadership, the presence of additional voices through TLCS was seen as a tool to significantly increase participants’ feelings of awareness of teaching and learning in their districts, making them better able to communicate to others outside of school and advocate for the system, the work of teachers, and the challenges faced by classroom teachers.

In addition to a perceived increase in input from teachers, participants also reported a decrease in the control and delivery of professional development opportunities among building and district administrators. Superintendents reported the existence of some type of collaboration time either embedded in the day or allowed for through early dismissal or release. The most frequent mention was a Professional Learning Community (PLC) type system within the day and some type of daylong or early release/late start system of delivery outside of the teaching day. In addition, while only four of the participants required all teachers to be involved in instructional coaching or other formal methods of involvement with teacher leaders, all noted the transition of responsibility to teacher leaders for the lion share of professional development, design, delivery, and follow-up resulting in levels of
district coherence not seen previously. This finding was even seen in districts with reported strong PLC structures or teacher leadership models prior to TLCS.

The ability to scale up and systematize district initiatives through new structures was a perceived opportunity for these leaders. Related to this systemic focus is the perceived ability to develop the capacity of teachers, teacher leaders and administrators through the TLCS. Continued use of this new input structure has become important to the district and personal work priorities participants set as TLCS structures become more cemented in their district structures. The goals of the TLCS, discussed in Chapter One and the requirements for having plans approved, include a required 25% of teachers to be involved in the system (see Appendix E). Therefore, it was not a surprising finding that there were increased voices at the table; however, having those voices at the table do not necessarily mean they will be listened to by them and others. The participants of this study perceived that they were listening to these voices and through prompting provided examples of teacher leader empowerment. With increased involvement of staff, participants believed the TLCS allowed for them to have the communication and involvement structures necessary to bring focus to district systems. Related to this increase involvement was a finding that participants were utilizing TLCS as a systemic lens through which they could bring together the various initiatives and technical skills needed to improve teaching and learning across their districts. I discuss perceptions related to this systemic lens next.

**Providing a systemic lens for initiatives.** In leveraging new relationships with teachers, there was a perception among participants that the TLCS benefited and/or embedded more deeply existing programs and initiatives by producing a systemic method of delivery. Participants discussed the ability to scale up and systematize district initiatives
through new structures. Related to this systemic focus is the perceived ability to develop the capacity of teachers, teacher leaders and administrators through the TLCS. Participants also noted the ability to utilize the ongoing conversation structures of the TLCS to move forward more difficult new initiatives or to enhance prior initiatives that were difficult to implement. Participants suggested that, while initiatives will still come and go based on needs of students, the TLCS provided that larger framework for delivering and connecting new ideas, strategies and curriculum frameworks. In essence, the TLCS was the change and, as a result of the system, can at least mitigate the perception of disconnected initiatives or at its highest potential cause people to see the connection between new requirements or innovative practices. I first describe participant desire to have a unified system.

Participants’ perceptions of systems aligned with the language of the coding scheme for this study which defined systems as methods or organizational structures related to how decisions and are made and acted upon at various organizational levels. Superintendents reported the value in having district-wide systems focus to coordinate and bring cohesion to initiatives that may seem disparate at the classroom level. Superintendent Williams stated:

The districts I’ve been involved, it seems like district initiatives have probably been the most successful.

William’s statement aligned with the perceptions of other participants as believing in district-wide focus as having more powerful impacts those stand-alone initiatives at the building level. Participants suggested viewing the TLCS as a district-wide structure under which various technical work, ranging from curriculum design and adoption to individual teaching strategies could be viewed. Participants perceived they were mobilizing TLCS systemically
to foster connectedness in district systems, whereby all improvement efforts move together and in the same direction.

An important aspect of this perception shared by all participants was a feeling that the TLCS has pulled together initiatives. Superintendent Thomas commented on the positive impact of using the TLCS as a systemic lens, stating “I think our staff sees the connection with the initiatives in the building.” Thomas’s comment reflected the essence of what all participants were expressing in that there was a perceived decrease in resistance thought to be due to a better sense of buy-in and understanding the “why” behind actions.

District initiatives referred to by participants were linked to needed changes to teaching and learning approaches. First, the most prevalent of these teaching and learning initiatives, mentioned by 13 of the 15 participants was the focus on implementing the Iowa Core curriculum in a way that was horizontally and vertically aligned. Second, noted by 12 participants was support for new and existing teachers in their ability to meet students where they are as demographics and student family circumstances continue to change. The ability to scale and systematize these current initiatives through TLCS was reported as a large benefit of the program. A comment by superintendent Miller captured this perception:

I think it's [TLCS] made our professional development a lot more focused, a lot more teacher driven, and I think that's made it a lot more valuable to my staff.

Miller’s comments captured the belief of all participants, that work resulting from TLCS helped connect people to initiatives through buy-in and knowledge of the teacher input that goes into professional development decisions.
In the interview process and subsequent coding process, I was surprised at the consensus on the use of TLCS as a system. No participants talked about or framed TLCS as a program; instead, it was framed as a structure. The formalized collaboration structures and the ability to support teacher leadership through the incentive of pay was seen as a way to more fully realize the teaching and learning potential of their districts. The examples given by participants for this perceived opportunity supported the impression of participants that they were implementing this system with fidelity. A second opportunity shared across participants was the ability to utilize the cohesive systems created by TLCS to build individual and collective capacity to serve students.

**Opportunity two: Capacity development.** By refining participant data coded as opportunities, participants perceived the ability to utilize TLCS as a method to build individual and collective capacity within their systems. The coding scheme for this study defined staff capacity as the skills and abilities of staff to deliver effective instruction to meet student needs. For the purposes of this study, I defined individual capacity as growth in skills and abilities of individual teachers and collective staff capacity as the ability to gain a set of district-wide skills and abilities targeted at improving student learning.

Participants perceived an increased ability to address student learning needs as well as an openness to engage within the new coaching structures. Superintendents felt that the new structures allowed for targeted improvement, regardless of where a teacher was in their career or level of proficiency in best practices for teaching and learning. In addition, there was an increased openness assumed to be the result of the non-evaluative nature of the system. Participants also noted new learning for principals as well as the benefit of principals having a team of individuals at each. Using the definition of capacity included in the coding
scheme, two universally reported sub-categories related to capacity development opportunities of TLCS were uncovered: (1) “teaching and learning”, and (2) “building system resiliency”. I first discuss perceived capacity development opportunities for improving teaching and learning, then system resiliency opportunities.

**Capacity in teaching and learning.** The TLCS was designed with a theory of action that improving teachers will improve student learning. Participant findings related to the perceived improvement of teacher capacity to deliver quality instruction are consistent with this theory of action. This sub-section speaks to participant perceptions of the TLCS’s use to building individual capacity, which I previously defined as skills and abilities of individual teachers. These perceptions were framed in terms of technical skill or ability to implement strategies. When reflecting on the influence of TLCS on teacher capacity, Superintendent Johnson framed the need for coaching and collaborative structures and shared insight into the urgency the system helps bring into focus:

> You can’t just wing it day after day, and that those teachers [Teacher Leaders] that have that expertise have different results than teachers that don’t … all kids in every classroom … It’s an issue of equity and access to the curriculum.

Johnson’s statement captured the essence of what other participants believed about having a focus in the development of capacity. There was an understanding that teachers were at different places in their development and this system. TLCS, as opposed to technical program implementation, was perceived as being flexible to meet teachers in different stages of their careers and develop opportunities for all teachers to grow. Johnson’s statement also underpinned a perception across participants that there was a “right work” to be done, that right work being targeted best practices in teaching and learning. There was a perceived
desire among participants that there exists a needed understanding across systems of that “right work” and to build that understanding, teachers need support to learn best practice as well as when and how to apply these practices. Participants credited TLCS structure for its ability to scaled capacity development of staff.

All participants discussed what can best be described as an “opening of classroom doors.” Participants discussed prior to TLCS and with other initiatives the difficulty in getting teachers to open their classrooms.

Participants perceived success in getting teachers to engage in the coaching process. This perceived uptick in teacher engagement in the coaching process was seen in all districts. Superintendent Davis described with opening of doors in the following statement:

One of the things that's been really hard for us to do in the district is innovate, because it's kind of like whack-a-mole, you know? People kind of used to look sideways at you if you were doing something different than everybody else was doing. Now people are starting to look over the fence and say, “Hey what are you doing, and how do I do that? Can you teach me to do that?”

That’s really been a transformation.

Davis’ comment captured a perception among participants that they had seen more openness to learn new teaching techniques and best practices in teaching and learning under TLCS. Participants credited the quality of their coaching structures as well as focused effort to communicate the difference between the non-evaluative growth intent of coaching and ongoing evaluative structures that existed before TLCS.

Participants credited the way in which growth was framed within the new system for the resulting increase in openness among classroom teachers. In previous systems, the need
to grow was framed through the evaluative process by building principals. Participants credited the ability of TLCS to provide peer to peer input, thus taking the evaluative nature out of capacity growth. Superintendent White shared feelings related to a new openness to change due to peer feedback replacing the exclusive use of evaluator feedback:

Having the teacher leaders as instructional improvement leaders and working directly with teachers has created a sense of “I can improve and I have a resource that is not evaluative in nature.” It’s not the principal coming in and telling me I need to get better in a certain area. It’s somebody I can turn to and say, “I want to get better in this area. Can you help me?” And they do so without any fear or concern that it's evaluative. That has been significantly valuable as our teachers have continued to improve instructionally. I’ve seen that impact be very helpful and motivating to our teaching staff.

White’s comment captured the participants perceptions related to coaching structures being non-evaluative. Important to note in this finding; however, is that participants also perceived concerns for evaluation as being a point of resistance early in the process of TLCS. They noted great personal and systemic effort was made to both send a non-evaluative message and create structures and job descriptions that would not allow for this crossover between coaching and evaluation.

In addition to building capacity of teacher not serving as leaders, participants perceived growth in capacity for teacher leaders and building principals resulting from their engagement in the TLCS systems and structures. In reference to teacher leaders, participants discussed a need to give attention to the new relationships coaching roles created with their peers. This capacity development occurs by learning through doing with the support of
building and district administration. In this respect, the TLCS was not only perceived as a tool to develop teacher capacity, but also as a way to build capacity and acceptance of the individuals in teacher leader positions. Superintendent Williams made the following statement;

I feel that they are really gaining confidence and gaining the support of the staff, and what we do in professional development. It's not one of those deals where the administrator plans it, the administrator or AEA staff present it. It’s one of those that we're buying in and all working together on it.

Williams comment captured the perception that through ongoing implementation, teacher leaders were gaining capacity in their ability to coach teacher and develop positive learning relationships. Williams also discussed a theme among participants of increased teacher roles in leading teaching and learning initiatives. Related to this capacity growth in teacher leaders was a reported growth in principal capacity.

Participants reported that engaging in the TLCS model has also allowed for increasing the capacity of principals in understanding teaching and learning. Superintendent Johnson stated the following in regard to principal development:

And that they [Principals] have been able to learn along with the learning that the teacher peers have done since we participated in the new teacher center, which has fit nicely with some other things that we were doing in our district and our principals have been supportive of that and have learned along the way as well.

Johnson’s comment captured a participant perception that by leading these initiatives at the building level, principals have been exposed to a number of teaching and learning strategies.
In addition to increased knowledge of teaching and learning initiatives, this statement underscored the role of the principal in modeling instructional leadership. Surprisingly, there were only two participants who noted resistance from principals to the process. While participants noted a change in the conversation, 13 of the 15 noted general principal acceptance, even though the system required new learning and a flattening of the leadership hierarchy in their buildings.

Participants noted this increased instructional capacity allows for increasing staff understanding of the individual needs of students as learners. This ability for staff to be knowledgeable of and have the skills to better adjust to the non-academic needs their students bring with them for their homes had become an increased topic of conversation.

Superintendents were seeing the TLCS as a strategy to build understanding that will build system resiliency to address changing community contexts, family dynamics and student backgrounds.

**Building system resiliency.** Participants’ perceptions of staff capacity development went beyond the technical acquisition and application of strategies to the development of teachers’ ability to serve the unique needs of students. This finding related to the perceived ability to build collective capacity, which I previously defined as a district-wide set of skills and abilities targeted at improving student learning. The unique needs of student mentioned in this sub-section are influenced by community contexts. Participants noted a need to develop understanding and strategies among staff to understand and respond to these non-academic student needs, such as poverty, language acquisition and at-risk behavior. As previously noted, the participants in this study represented a variety of local contexts from high poverty to high affluence, from declining enrollment to growing enrollment, from urban
to suburban to rural etc. A theme that emerged from the collected data was, while the challenges are different, affluence and growth posed just as many challenges as poverty and decline in the perceptions of superintendents. As discussed previously, participants perceived they had leveraged TLCS as a systemic structure.

While all participants noted little community involvement beyond Board meetings or existing committees like SIAC into the ongoing structure and decision-making of TLCS, 12 of the 15 superintendents reported using the structure to create systems that were more resilient to the results of community circumstances. While each superintendent described different needs and differing approaches I included this as a unifying theme because, while the uses were different across participants, the utilization of the TLCS to address community action was a finding for the vast majority of the participants, 12 out of 15.

A description given by Superintendent Martin underscored an example of how four of the districts were using TLCS to scale efforts aimed at addressing student social and emotional needs: Martin explained:

Obviously, our TLC program is not just about academics, reading and writing. It’s broadened into many areas. Part of our TLC, we have a building facilitator at every building, their emphasis is on social emotional learning, well-being of students, helping teachers with behavioral issues and plans. A large part of our plan addresses some of those areas that we’re seeing some stress in.

Martin’s statement underscored the perception of participants that quality instruction went beyond the technical aspects of design and delivery of instruction. The statement described a perceived need for teachers to build a sense of understanding for their students’ diversity of thought and action as well as to develop an awareness of how events outside of school impact
student learning. In addition to developing capacity to respond to social-emotional needs of students, eight of the participants noted the use of TLCS to building capacity of staff to understand and work with students living in poverty.

Reacting to the impact of poverty at the classroom level was a discussion point among participants in districts with growing free and reduced lunch participation. Participants discussed the need for developing relationships, changing the structure of communication from school to home and the need for teachers to understand the impacts of poverty on student learning and behavior in addition to working with mental health and trauma. The most compelling example of using TLCS to build system resiliency in the area of poverty came from Superintendent Miller:

I think it’s [TLCS] why we've gone from 18% free and reduced to 48% free and reduced, but yet we’re still scoring extremely high in our testing. …. And I think the only reason we've been able to do that is because of the TLCS and the work that our TLCS mentors and instructional coaches and principals are able to do with our new teachers and some of our veteran teachers, in getting them to adjust their instruction to meet those needs.

Miller’s statement suggested TLCS as a mitigating factor to achievement decreases usually associated with growing poverty. Participants discussed a perceived disconnect between the experiences of teachers and the experiences of students. This statement also suggested TLCS structures, through its capacity development focus, can provide timely reactions to changing student needs. While the seven other participants could not draw as straight of a line from TLCS to success with meeting the needs of students, they shared similar feelings about the
need for staff to understand the impact of poverty on student learning as well as a perception of promise for the TLCS to assist in the development of this capacity.

Employing TLCS as a way to meet the needs of a changing demographic was not limited to the perceptions of leaders in impoverished or declining enrollment districts. Superintendent Taylor oversaw a growing district, and credited the TLCS process for exposing the needs of a group of students that could be overlooked in a growing, largely affluent district:

So I think just the whole thing of really paying attention to students even more, not just the academics, but our teacher leaders have been working on quality relationships with students. And then we started having those quality relationships, and making connections with kids, bring on some things we probably didn’t know, or we were ignoring.

Taylor’s comment fit with a perception across all participants, that structures and initiatives prior to the TLCS made it difficult to identify urgency for previously overlooked sub-categories within the district. Getting more people looking at the data was perceived to result in a better and truer concept of districts’ current realities.

When analyzing participant responses through the coding scheme for this study, capacity development emerged as perceived opportunity shared across participants. In further examination, sub-categories related to capacity development included teaching and learning, and building system resiliency. Building capacity in the delivery of teaching and learning initiatives was noted by participants as a positive benefit of TLCS to teachers, teacher leaders and principals. Additionally, participants discussed using the TLCS structures to build capacity in their staffs to address student needs resulting from community contexts. While
this opportunity finding was not surprising given the intended outcomes of TLCS, it was an important finding that, in the perception of superintendents, this outcome was being achieved in their districts. In addition to cohesive systems and capacity development, participants universally perceived TLCS as having a positive impact on staff climate and culture, this finding is discussed next.

**Opportunity three: Enhanced climate and culture.** In the analysis of data coded as opportunities, the opportunity of TLCS to enhance district climate and culture emerged as an additional universally reported finding. The coding scheme for this study defined climate and culture as factors, such as: openness to change, feelings of teachers toward administrators, working conditions (time and resources), willingness to participate in initiatives, work with teaching and learning initiatives, or strength or prominence of collective bargaining entities. Many of the previous findings related to the development of cohesive systems in which staff capacity can be developed were related to this finding. In addition to reported anecdotal evidence and general perceptions of impact as perceived by participants, all utilized some type of survey related directly to TLCS to identify staff perceptions of the program. The scoring rubric for approved TLCS plans (see Appendix E) requires some time for description of how districts will gather input on TLCS implementation on a yearly basis. While participants spent varying degrees of time and effort with the annual TLCS surveys, they did report a growing acceptance of the program as evident by surveys. Participants credited TLCS as either a direct or assumed indirect reason for enhanced climate and culture in their districts.

Participant perceptions of the TLCS’s influence on staff climate and culture centered on the structures for input and the success teachers were seeing as a result of the coaching
and focused professional development opportunities. Superintendent Anderson said the following in relation to systemic capacity building and district climate and culture:

I think it’s a really good opportunity to have systemic development in the schools and have collaboration where the authority ... instructional authority is more flat lined and it’s shared between more stakeholders…. Relationships are everything. And I think with teacher leadership compensation what’s that allowed is for an instructional level of relationships that you couldn’t have prior.

Anderson’s comment was representative of the overall perception across participants that structures that empower teachers and allow for increased teacher voice had positively influenced district culture. Anderson’s statement also captured a shared perception that the structures put in place had broken down lines between teachers and administrators, allowing for positive interactions and mutual understanding.

Participants noted many more opportunities for teachers to interact with administrators. Superintendents felt that this led to teachers better understanding the complexity of leading change and administrators better understanding the complexity of daily instruction in today’s schools. Superintendent Jones commented on the benefit of additional teacher participation beyond instruction:

It’s good to have them [Teacher Leaders] involved in their [Principals] meetings, because there are some things that we need their input from. Maybe it’s nothing to do directly with instructional coaching, nothing that they’re doing specifically, but just getting their input on some of the PD, and some of
the other things that they’re seeing. Their observations and their thoughts are important.

Jones’ comment captured the perception among participants that there was not only shared understanding, but also shared responsibility as a result of new communication structures. This impact of this as perceived by 12 of the 15 participants was exhibited in a breakdown of lines between administrators and teachers. This played out in comments related to labor relations.

Superintendents perceived TLCS to have a positive impact on labor relations, with 12 of the 15 participants noting improved labor relations after TLCS, and 3 mentioning significantly improved relations. Participants noted this improved relationship began with the teaching and learning focus of conversations that started during the application phase. Superintendent Davis was one of the three participants who noted significant improvement in association/union relationships. Davis claimed:

I meet with our union leaders. I’ve got the strongest relationship with the union than I’ve had in ___ years of public ed.

Davis’s perception was shared among the participants of this study. The reason for this improved relationship centered around a change in the conversation or, more precisely, the teaching and learning conversations demanded to occur as associations/unions worked with administrators to develop the application and the associated implementation agreements with local teacher associations/unions.

Superintendent Brown underscored this perceived source of improving labor relations with teacher groups:
We’ve always had a good relationship with our association. Not perfect, but a good one, but I think it’s even gotten better through this system because, again, we talk frequently about things that are very positive and go right to the classroom, rather than talking frequently about things that we’re ticked off about or someone has a grievance about.

Brown’s statement underscored the perceptions of participants related to a shift in conversations between administrators and associations/unions from management to teaching and learning topics. In the perception of these superintendents, these new conversations had a great deal of the contract interpretation conversations with a positive outcome to labor/management relationships.

Participants in this study perceived culture and climate were improved since the implementation of TLCS. Participants noted collaborative structures and their impact on relationships between administrators and teacher. Assumed as a result from these new relationships was a better mutual understanding between teachers and administrators, partially evident by improved labor/management relations. Participants believed the processes of the TLCS had created forced conversations around teaching and learning when teachers and administrators come to the table, which resulted in a positive growth in conversations related to teaching and learning and a better working relationship.

**Relevant disconfirming evidence.** In this section, I discuss relevant disconfirming evidence that emerged through the coding scheme that were most closely of interest to the intended line of inquiry intended by research question one. I first describe disconfirming evidence related to capacity development that leads into an disconfirming evidence related to system cohesion. Then I discuss disconfirming evidence related to climate and culture.
Disconfirming evidence are presented to add depth to the conversation of this research question. Participant pseudonyms are eliminated from direct quotes in this section as these disconfirming evidence add contextual understanding that could potentially lead to identification of the participants.

In terms of the perceived opportunity of the TLCS to develop staff capacity, only one participant noted an increase or quickening of pace for initiative implementation. The coding seemed to indicate a perceived quickening of pace; however, while all offered examples of improvements, only one specifically mentioned a time element to improvements. Additionally, only two participants in the study utilized a specific instructional framework or rubric with their TLCS system, which was a relevant piece of disconfirming evidence related to system cohesion. As previously noted, all but four participants noted their system as “homegrown,” citing no adopted program or framework. These two participants also were the only ones who noted the benefit of a common language brought as a result of the TLCS. One of these individuals with the framework was the individual who mentioned a quickening of pace in initiative development as a result of the TLCS. One of these two superintendents stated:

I will swear that the most significant impact that we’ve had, of the work that we’ve done, is the adoption of that framework so that we have a common expectation for what effective teaching looks like. We have a common language. So there’s objectivity to the game. Probably even more so, people know what the rules of the game are.

The experiences of these two individuals are important to note. Once this disconfirming evidence was identified, I revisited statements made and, in terms of perceived outcomes,
these individuals gave more specific information related to processes within their districts. This finding also underscored the potential variety inherent in the TLCS implementation process, by virtue of its allowance, of a great deal of local flexibility.

While all participants drew connections between TLCS and improved climate and culture, there were three participants who still reported poor staff morale, climate, and culture based on challenges facing their communities. Superintendents in these circumstances pointed to the TLCS as being a mitigating factor to the current stresses through its ability to provide structured support and teacher involvement:

They say that they're stressed. They are challenged to a high degree. They have a lot of new initiatives on their plate, which makes them stressed. They say, because we just sent out a survey to all of our teachers, that the stress is causing them to have low morale. … I don't think that the climate I just described has anything to do with the TLCS. In fact, probably the Teacher Leadership System has somehow dampened the effects, just because they do have teachers to rely on, to lean on, to help them.

The idea that the system was perceived as a mitigating factor suggested consistency with the key findings for this research question.

While these perceived opportunities were not present with enough frequency to report as findings, they were relevant to the discussion of perceived opportunities of the TLCS and bear reporting. Next, I summarize findings related to research question one.

**Summary of findings: Research question one.** This section outlined key findings related to research question one as they emerged through the coding scheme for this study. Findings indicated a general positive attitude toward the TLCS as a system and identified
participant actions in the implementation process as having the intent of realizing these opportunities. The analysis process identified three themes for which at least 12 of the 15 participants gave as opportunities resulting from the TLCS implementation in their districts.

The first opportunity related to the perception that varied or seemingly disparate district initiatives could be brought together under the system of teacher leadership. Noted in this process was the empowerment of teachers and the use of the TLCS as a systemic lens. Part of this systemic lens led to the second key finding, capacity development. Participants viewed the TLCS as a method to build individual and collective capacity to effectively provide teaching and learning opportunities for students. Two areas of perceived capacity growth were in the capacity of teachers, teacher leaders and principals to understand what quality instruction looks like. The final opportunity presented was the perception that teacher climate and culture has been enhanced since the implementation of the TLCS. While these opportunities were examined through the structure in comparison or isolation to the challenges that emerged in the findings, it is important to understand that these opportunities work with the challenges to frame the sensemaking of participants. Next, the findings related to research question two outline the key findings related to perceived challenges of the TLCS.

**Research Question Two: What Do Superintendents Perceive as the Major Challenges of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?**

The coding scheme for this study allowed for the identification of three perceived challenges in the implementation of TLCS: (1) “participation requirements;” (2) “teacher leader turnover;” and (3) “sustainability concerns.” In the first challenge, entitled “participation requirements,” superintendents shared a concern that stemmed from TLCS
requirement that 25% of teachers be involved in teacher leadership positions. Participants framed this concern in terms of their perceived challenge to identify enough interested high quality candidates to fill the required position and the challenge to find appropriate roles for all the involved teacher leadership positions.

The second challenge, entitled “teacher leader turnover,” presents findings of perceptions related to a TLCS requirement to have a yearly application and hiring process for teacher leaders. Participants framed this challenge in terms of the time and resources required to build capacity for teacher leaders to develop the technical and relational skills necessary to improve instruction in their role. Superintendents reported engaging in the technical process for application and selection, but noted replacing people in key positions such as full-time released teacher leaders out of concern for losing access to individual capacity of leaders as well as momentum for system improvement.

In the final presented challenge, entitled “sustainability concerns,” I present findings related to superintendents’ concern for the sustainability of the TLCS. The perceived lack of clarity regarding how the program is measured and how politicians will measure the system was a reported source of ongoing stress for these superintendents. Throughout this entire presentation of findings, key findings and their sub-sections represent themes from at least 12 of the 15 participants. Unless otherwise noted, findings represent themes across the entire participant group. Disconfirming evidence relevant to the discussion that add depth to or spark additional lines of inquiry in the understanding of this research question are presented prior to summary for this section.

**Challenge one: Participation requirements.** In examining participant data coded as challenges, participation requirements of TLCS emerged as a source of universal challenge
for participants. Prior to presenting findings on this study, it is important to communicate the source of this challenge. In order to be selected for participation and receive funding, participating districts are required to make a “good faith effort” to have 25% of their teaching staff involved in teacher leadership (see Appendix E – TLCS Scoring Rubric). Furthermore, this requirement applies to awarding these positions through a yearly application and review process, and requires all applicants to have served in the district a minimum of one year prior to becoming a teacher leader.

Participants across the board noted little concern for the development and assignment of teacher leaders who would be able to engage in the work full-time without also having teaching responsibilities. In the application process, districts were provided with models and exemplars from the state, which suggested a mix of full-time, part-time, and un-released teacher leadership positions to achieve the 25% requirement. Although no one noted being approached by the state about their participant numbers, 8 admitted to being below this percentage requirement. However, concern for being accountable for the money received created a challenge for participants to gain more involvement in the system. While these challenges played out differently based on the size of the district, each superintendent interviewed discussed varying degrees of concern related to this requirement. When discussing the positions chosen for participants’ models, two themes emerged related to the participation requirement concern. These themes were “interest” and “teacher leader roles.” I will first discuss the challenges related to interest.

**Interest.** Teacher interest in participating in teacher leadership positions emerged as a concern in the application process and provides a great deal of ongoing reported stress for the participants of this study in both maintaining program fidelity and meeting expected
outcomes for TLCS. All superintendents expressed the need to have high quality individuals in these positions. Superintendent Jackson expressed this need for quality in the following statement:

   How could it (TLCS) not be a positive thing? That’s how they looked at it, and it has been. But you know, if you don’t have the right person it can be a disaster.

As shared by all participants, this sentiment revealed tension between the participation requirement and a perceived concern for the ongoing identification of quality people to serve in these positions. Coded statements revealed these superintendents would rather have the right people than the right number of people. Notable to this assertion was the universal concern of superintendents during the application process, regardless of district size of whether not just the right people would apply; but, if enough people would apply at all. When prompted for their feelings on why they had this concern, responses related to the move to formalized roles for teacher leaders. A comment from superintendent Miller captured this participant perception:

   With most people [teachers] I've talked to, that's been the big concern, when you go from being one of the teachers to being the instructional coach, is how am I going to be perceived by my fellow teachers that I’ve known for years.

Miller’s comment aligned with the perceptions of other participants as recognition of the difficulty for some high-quality teachers to shift the nature of their peer relationships. Participants discussed individual conversations with staff members they believed would be suited for these positions, commonly responses related to concern regarding coaching or giving feedback to peers and how this would be received. In addition, also noted were
concerns on the part of teachers that the title of teacher leader would distance them from their peers.

The acknowledgement of the need for quality in these positions, underpinned the challenge of interest. Interest among participants played out in two ways, which emerged as a function of size. For five of the districts in the study, that had enrollments above 3,000 students, the concern for interest related to a perceived abundance of quality and a concern of alienating and possibly losing those not chosen. For ten of the districts if the participants in smaller district settings, the concern related to finding enough people or having to settle for lower quality in order to meet participation targets. Superintendent Williams represented one of the ten smaller districts in this study, and stated:

When we went through the process, no elementary teachers applied for the Instructional Coaches position…. On the secondary side, two applied. The first year we tried it, both of them tried to split time between the elementary and high school, but when you look at that, that's only a quarter of the time.

They just found out that they weren't effective that way.

William’s comment captured the essence of perceived experience for the ten participants who found it difficult to meet the 25% requirement and maintain quality. The statement refers to the inability to secure the right people at the right levels and the impact on trying to force-fit even high-quality people in the wrong settings. Participants in these settings went back to the drawing board and, in five instances, even submitted plan modifications to the state, which is allowed under the TLCS structure to address the participation challenge. This challenge for smaller schools generated a concern shared by those not able to fill the positions for sustainability. Superintendent Miller captured this concern in the following statement:
Maybe it’s going to get to a point where some of our smaller districts aren’t utilizing it, or aren’t able to utilize it, are going to have to ... Maybe they’ll force them to do something different. I mean, how long are they going to continue to give my district full funding for our TLC program if we can’t even find an instructional coach?

Seven of the ten participants who felt challenges with attaining the right number of teacher leaders specifically expressed the type of concern mentioned by Miller. Not meeting participation requirements was perceived as a concern on the part of superintendents that they would lose funding for the program. In addition to the loss of funding, they would also lose structures put in place that are impacting student learning.

Superintendents from the larger districts in this study reported a related problem of having numerous applicants and not being able to select them all and its potential impact on climate and culture. Superintendent Brown stated simply, “You know, people are chosen for the position, so we’re unchoosing [sic] people when you do it.”

Superintendent Davis reported an interesting result of this “unchoosing” process and the need to manage the selection process:

We’ve got some teachers, or principals rather, that are super good at hiring. They are great judges of talent, and they’ve got cadres of outstanding teachers. When we go to look for coaches, there were a couple of buildings that were like wells. They just had four or five teachers that would be great at that, and the principal’s like, “You can’t take all my teachers.”

Davis’s comment was consistent with the other larger district superintendents in that building leaders rely on individual teacher quality and this system seems to build collective teacher
quality. The selection processes required the attention of the superintendent to ensure the
talent pool was managed in a way that distributes talent across the district.

The challenges faced in both district sizes are reflective of both the established
positions required within the TLCS and the participation requirement. While participants
reported the impact of this concern for interest has subsided since implementation, the
concerns noted in the pre-implementation process regarding interest still persist, even though
they are lower than perceived anticipated impacts. Moving from potentially, a handful or no
teachers were being directly and formally involved in teacher leadership to approximately
25% has also challenged participants to examine the role of teacher leaders on an ongoing
basis.

**Teacher-leader roles.** All participants in this study discussed the ongoing nature of
their work related to defining teacher-leader roles. No superintendent reported utilizing
teacher leaders for other management functions usually associated with building
administrators, such as student supervision. The focus of participants’ statements regarding
teacher-leader roles and the perceived impact of these roles centered on their role in coaching
teachers and delivering professional development. However, all participants noted they
continued work to better define teacher-leader roles in their systems as well as needs were
related to the roles of teacher leaders who also have full-time teaching responsibilities.

Participants noted the first challenge related to teacher-leader roles as emerging
during the application process. A concern shared by 12 of the participants was the ongoing
discussion of teacher leaders as coaches. These 12 participants discussed experiencing
difficulty in the application and implementation process, with teacher leaders being perceived
as evaluators. This created a challenge for the consistent communication of the non-
evaluative nature of the position and ongoing efforts on the part of superintendents to provide clarity of role. Superintendent Brown had worked to address this challenge in the coming year through written communication:

    I’m looking at it right now, a Guidebook: Teacher Leadership Compensation System explains the role of each one of our leaders, what they’re supposed to do, and how they operate. So, that is a big challenge. Again, we all started out when no one knew how this was going to work and so, just making sure that everybody understands the roles is, I think, very, very critical.

Brown’s comment captured perceptions of all participants who noted some challenge related to teacher leader roles, and the 12 participants who noted specific actions to continue clarifying these roles. The most common tool mentioned was some type of handbook like Brown’s. In addition, participants also noted working with leaders to ensure coaching was the focus and coaching conversations do not end up in evaluation conversations. These efforts to clarify roles went beyond concerns over evaluation vs. coaching in which all participants in this study mentioned a continued concern for how to best utilize teachers who are not released from full-time teaching responsibilities. This concern for the role of unreleased teachers was ubiquitous.

    In the aforementioned and subsequent findings of this chapter, the participants in this study spoke a great deal about the perceived effective integration of the highest tier of coaches who were fully or partially released from teaching responsibilities to focus on teacher leadership. Participants reported significantly less success with teachers who received stipends for teacher-leader work, but continued to have full-time or mostly full-time teaching responsibilities. All superintendents described an ongoing struggle to define the work of
these un-released individuals. Addressing these teacher roles was reported as an ongoing source of concern regarding conversations and modification driving their work and conversations of the participants.

All participants noted an ongoing struggle to define the role of the teacher leaders with full time teaching responsibilities. Superintendent Jones commented:

I think that our model teachers, not our coach, our model teachers, we haven’t really utilized as much as we could, and the money they’re getting, they’re probably really not earning, in all honesty… I believe our model teachers there are very good. We have not utilized them as much as we want. We’re going to start ... They will be leading PD this year.

Jones’ comment captured a perception among all participants that these positions have required the most ongoing work to define in the TLCS system. Absent from the participants’ perceptions was communication related to “needing” these positions; instead, the perceptions shared focused on how to make these positions, as required by TLCS (see Appendix E - TLCS scoring rubric), more effective or even effective at all. Jones’ comment also captured the idea shared by participants that time is the biggest factor to effective use; the teachers in these positions were not perceived as having enough time to make major impacts. Jones’ comment also captured the iterative nature of these positions. All participants in the study had changed or were in the process of changing job descriptions for these positions, while 5 superintendents expressed optimism for their changes. On the other hand, no one expressed overall optimism in the position’s ability to have the large effect that full-time released positions had on overall teaching and learning quality.
Participation requirements of the TLCS have challenged superintendents in either generating interest where little exists or managing the impact of not selecting individuals where there is an abundance of interest. Additionally, these participation requirements were reported to be an ongoing challenge as superintendents work to clearly define teacher-leader roles, including a number of roles currently reported to not have the desired impact. These factors are related to the next challenge shared by participants: managing teacher leader turnover.

**Challenge two: Teacher-leader turnover.** When coding information related to participant challenges, a second key finding related to teacher-leader turnover was identified. During the interviews, participants discussed the amount of time and training they had put not only into the overall system, but also in the capacity building of their teacher leaders. Participants reported strong relationships between teacher leaders, and a growing acceptance and increased use of their role by teaching staff. This acceptance and access were seen as growing, even in systems where participating in coaching with teacher leaders was voluntary, which accounted for all but 4 participant districts.

When asked about the ongoing selection of teacher leaders, none of the participants noted a frequent turnover of teacher leaders as implied by the goal of the system to create career ladders and the requirement for a yearly application and selection process for teacher leaders. While two participants did not a shift in their full-released positions due to needs, none shared the belief that there should be yearly shifts that assume teacher-leader roles, especially for the positions that are full-time release. I considered this to be a challenge because the absence of mobility in these positions was in opposition to the intent and requirements of the TLCS, which is a challenge in meeting program requirements and intent.
While all participants noted adherence to the yearly application and selection processes, none noted purposeful efforts to generate internal turnover of full-time released positions, and only two noted an effort for internal turnover of the previously mentioned un-released teachers. To frame this challenge, I next overview perceptions shared by participants related to why their leadership positions had not turned over yet.

The TLCS requires an annual selection process, suggesting an underlying assumption that positions will turnover frequently. For the participants interviewed, aside from teacher leaders leaving the district, this transition of responsibility from teacher to teacher had not occurred. Two reasons emerged as motivation for this lack of teacher leader turnover: (1) the money tied to the positions; and (2) the investment in training teacher leaders.

One reason given by participants for people maintaining these positions was the fact that there was money tied to it. This money was more significant for full-time released teachers who received significant stipends for additional days or hours worked beyond the contract. Superintendent Anderson explained:

I’d like to see them stay in as long as they’re effective, maybe not as long as they desire. But there are two things, I think the model teacher thing we give an extra 1,500 dollars. That’s not going to matter too much to anyone, I don’t think. But the instructional coaches get 6,000 in our school. Six thousand dollars isn’t pocket change. We have one instructional coach I think that needs the money.

Anderson’s comment captured the perception across participants that the compensation is a factor in teacher leaders not wanting to leave the position, especially those who had fully left the classroom and were receiving the largest additional compensation. There was a shared
perception that this additional funding would be difficult to give up, especially for those with full-time positions who received the largest supplement.

A second reason given for low internal turnover was related to the ability of the district to maximize the systemic impact of these positions. Participants reported investing a great deal of time and resources in training teacher leaders. Additionally, participants discussed the time it took for a teacher leader to develop trust in a way that deepened the coaching conversation to a level of high impact. Superintendent White made the following comment regarding this concern for losing leadership capacity through turnover:

In our district, we thought we would rotate people in every two or three years. That’s not been the case. Once you put all this training into somebody and they get outside of the classroom, we’ve found, one: that they like the roles and don’t want to go back to the classroom, and two: that they’re highly trained in skills and we want them to continue to use those skills with our staff.

White’s impression of losing capacity by turning over teacher leaders was shared across participants. While one may argue that capacity could still impact students at the classroom level should the teacher return to full-time teaching, the essence of what participants were perceiving was that the influence of these individuals should be used with the widest audience possible, which is in the capacity of working with teachers to carry this learning to students in all classrooms. In addition, participants also noted the initial and ongoing concern for interest in teacher-leadership positions as well as the requirement for teacher leaders to be selected only from current staff as adding to the decision not to generate turnover in these positions.
The significant amount of training and perceived impact teacher leaders were having in the participants’ districts created a challenge related to turnover. While no participants mentioned individual capacity building or investment as a negative concept, they did express concern for losing time and momentum through teacher-leader turnover. At the time of this research, TLCS was entering its fourth year, which indicates that turnover would continue to be an element of the system that superintendents will be required to navigate. Time will tell if the intended turnover built into the grant becomes a reality or simply adds another layer in the system that is only accessible when a leader decides to move on.

The first two TLCS challenges perceived by participants related to the reaction of teachers within the system. However, the third relates to the sustainability of the system itself, largely due to factors outside of the local school district. Sustainability concerns were noted among participants as being an area of ongoing challenge to the implementation process.

**Challenge three: Sustainability concerns.** While examining coded data related to challenges, a third challenge emerged related to concerns for the long-term sustainability of the program. The findings for research question one presented optimism for developing cohesive systems, increasing staff capacity and enhancing climate and culture. While all superintendents in the study hoped the TLCS would not go away, participants noted the pressures that concerned them that someday it might disappear. Sustainability concerns can be broken into two interrelated sub-categories: “measurability” and “politics.”

**Measurability.** All participants in this study reflected on the nature of this initiative as being different from past initiatives in that the outcome was improvement in teaching rather than primarily a focus on student achievement metrics. While participants saw this move
away from a lone focus on success with state assessments, the theory of action for this initiative remained “improving student achievement through improving teacher quality.” While the opportunities noted by participants in the findings for research question one suggested an appreciation for the ability of funding to be utilized for systemic improvement, the participants were concerned about how those holding the purse strings at the legislative level might view timelines and success metrics. All participants not only talked about this initiative in terms of its initial success, but also noted the success of this program cannot be evaluated or realized in the short term. Participants noted the magnitude of this change and, with its magnitude, perceived the true impacts as not being measurable for several years.

Currently, the system is measured by goal outcomes developed by districts during the planning process. Although this includes student achievement, student achievement could be only one small part. At the time of my research study, no districts had been removed from the funding stream for a lack of progress toward the goals. Superintendent Taylor best described the concern over measurement in the following statement:

That’s one thing that I’m still struggling with is the whole TLC evaluation. You and I both know, the evaluation protocol from the department is weak at best. You can put down what your goals were and how you’re going to measure it, but when that happens, it all smells like roses. Is it really about masking all the thorns that are in there? And that's one thing I look at too. Obviously, you have those people, you know, your non-educators saying, “Yeah, but what has happened to student learning? Have your test scores gone up?” Well, that’s not the only measure. It’s also, “How are teachers feeling? How are they getting better?”
While few participants in the study attached outright the strength of the measurement criteria, all expressed concern for how it was measured and assessed. Not only did the application process allow for the selection of what goals would be measured, but it also allowed for flexibility in the metric applied to those goals. While I had mentioned previously that ten of the participants fell short of the 25% participation requirement, all noted success in other goal areas with a heavy reliance on qualitative data related to how teachers feel and perceive the system. All of the participants in this study had as part of their system a procedure to monitor employee perception surveys related to TLCS effectiveness. Each of the participants exclaimed these surveys had yielded positive results for their district and the perception among staff was that TLCS will continue to grow. What was unclear was whether each participant’s measurement criteria identified the areas Taylor referred to as “thorns.”

While all participants noted they felt that the program was making an impact, only three of the participants were willing to draw a direct line between TLCS and student achievement gains. Superintendent Jones provided a candid account on measurement that captured the uncertainty related to measurement expectations experienced across participants:

I’m not sure of the right way to assess it… we can look at Iowa Assessment scores, look at ACT scores, and that may be one indicator I think that has to be included in the indicators. That way we do aspire as well, we can look at our FAST scores and things like that. There can be an improvement; that doesn't mean it’s from anything to do with coaching or TLCS at all… So I’m not sure the right way to do it. You know, we talk about all of this different data, but I’m not sure if any of it is a true indicator of that it would be from
TLCS. I just, honest I don’t know if you can say any of it is that way. I’m not saying it’s not impactful, but at the same time, I think we want kids that are problem solvers, critical thinkers, collaborators and things like that, and we try to have our coaches promote some of those things as well. But to measure that? I don’t know how you’d measure that exactly, either.

Jones’ comment captured the reflective thinking-out-loud that participants in this study did when responding to questions related to perceived success or monitoring. All participants reported following the approved monitoring process. However, there was an uncertainty whether the monitoring that occurred was appropriate or if the data they examined would be taken seriously in conversations related to sustainability. While participants perceived it was making an impact, either through growing achievement or mitigating slips in achievement, they were concerned that they might not be given enough time with the system to begin to realize its potential.

Highly associated with the participants’ challenge of measurability was the challenge of navigating the politics of TLCS. TLCS was a program that began under legislative mandate and requires $150 million per year to maintain. In times of tight budgets and high accountability for public schools, the participants expressed concerns related to long-term support for the program by the Iowa legislatures.

Politics. Among all participants, there was recognition of the TLCS as being a centerpiece of the political agenda of former Governor Branstad. Nevertheless, governors change as do political parties and the priorities they represent, which resulted in perceived uncertainly by the participants. Superintendent Davis put simply in regards to the facilitation of TLCS: “The biggest challenge that we have is there is a constant cloud on the horizon.”
The “cloud” Davis referred to was the contemporary political environment and current status of the Iowa economy. In the introduction to this study in Chapter One, I noted that the TLCS was one of many initiatives that came during a half-decade period of the lowest funding rates Iowa Education has seen since the 1980s.

The political impact shared by 13 of the 15 participants was related to funding stability. The reason given by the two participants who were not concerned about funding centered on funding as becoming part of the state aid formula, which added another layer of protection by placing the funding stream into Iowa code. However, those who were concerned noted that this formula was under the purview of the legislature to change. While concerned participants felt some protection due to TLCS’s inclusion in the funding formula, all participants noted a concern for the use of TLCS money becoming flexible regarding its use. Currently the money can only be expended to support teacher leadership initiatives; however, the state legislature in the years preceding this publication had chosen to limit funding to schools while allowing flexibility to spend monies outside of their original or legally specified intended use. Superintendent Martin made a statement underscoring this concern regarding the impact of TLCS funding flexibility:

As our population changes, and it’s more of a challenge, and we have challenging students, behaviorally, it would be really easy to see teacher leaders just become deans of students who just kind of take a kid out of a classroom and deal with them…It’s not just a person to do stuff, is also a position that should help teachers improve their practice in whatever area that they’re assigned to. That would be one of the little fears that I think we have, and we’re vigilant about trying to make sure that doesn't happen.
Martin’s comments underscored the essence of how participants framed this funding flexibility problem. While participants noted they would attempt to continue the program in the absence of funding, given perceived positive results, they did note the price tag of TLCS continuation was a barrier. Martin’s comment also emphasized a finding discussed previously—that none of the participants in this study noted use of the teacher leaders for management functions. Martin’s comment also provided a glimpse of perceived local context barriers for program continuation, should the program be eliminated or funding be reduced. Implementing a system and generating buy-in to TLCS processes, while at the same time perceiving an uncertain future for the funding that supports it, was noted as a challenge by all participants.

The changing landscape of Iowa and National politics was a definite challenge to the implementation of TLCS in the perceptions of the participants. Superintendents had reported to participants in the study that sweeping system changes loom and there would be new expectations of staff as a result of this program, acknowledging they felt compelled to find a way to continue it the funding were to be stripped. The sustainability challenge was perceived as resulting from two interrelated areas of “measurability” and “politics.” These factors interact with each other, requiring the superintendent to engage in monitoring activities that result in data that supports the continuation of the program should the program be called into question. There was a perceived need to continue advocacy for the program and gather information in its defense important both in the local and state contexts as described by participants.

In addition, also clearly articulated from these findings was the necessity of the money to operate these systems. While five participants specifically noted they would
continue the system if the funding was reduced and another two had teacher leadership systems prior to the TLCS, there was a palatable fear that the systems they and their teachers had worked so hard to create could vanish if funding were eliminated. This funding concern was rooted in concerns over the metrics used to define success and their perceived difference from the metrics legislators would expect for program continuation.

**Relevant disconfirming evidence.** This section presents a discussion of relevant disconfirming evidence that emerged through the coding scheme that were of interest regarding the intended outcomes of this study. I first describe disconfirming evidence related to cohesive system development, then capacity development. Finally, I discuss disconfirming evidence related to climate and culture. These disconfirming evidences are presented as areas of interest to add depth to the conversation regarding this research question. As these disconfirming evidence add context clues that could lead to identification of the participant, participant pseudonyms were eliminated from direct quotes in this section.

The findings presented for research question two represented commonality across contexts. The disconfirming evidence for research question two were also context-related. Only two participants noted a community challenge to taking quality teachers out of the classroom to serve as teacher leaders. Both noted this concern had disappeared since implementation. Another disconfirming piece of evidence was the limited number of participants (3) who mentioned palatable ongoing resistance from staff. While all participants noted pockets of resistance, only three of them found this resistance to be coordinated or ongoing. These areas of resistance in each case were from secondary (grades 7-12) teachers.

Related to the discussion on teacher leader turnover, one superintendent noted a transition of teacher leaders to other positions outside of the district. In the eyes of this
participant, it was the teacher-leader experience that made these people attractive to the local AEA that hired them. Finally, three participants in the study noted a concern for other districts implementing the system with fidelity. They added that lack of fidelity was a potential factor should the TLCS be called into question for its effectiveness. These participants noted examples of other districts that, in their perception, were simply taking the money without changing district systems. These three participants also noted this concern when discussing long-term sustainability out of fear that the anomaly in a system seems to get the most attention when something is called into question. This disconfirming evidence is presented to add depth to the conversation regarding perceived challenges of TLCS as they relate to findings within the key findings of this research question.

**Summary of findings: Research question two.** This section provides a summary of findings related to research question two: “perceived challenges presented by TLCS”. The first challenge discussed was the requirement to have 25% of teachers involved in teach leadership at varying levels. Participants noted the management of teacher interest as indicative of this challenge. Generating enough interest to fill the required positions was a concern for superintendents of smaller schools. In larger districts, the concern was regarding alienating teachers who might not be selected due to robust candidate pools. The section continued with a discussion of teacher-leader turnover. Participants noted a reluctance to accept the internal turnover of teacher-leaders required by the system.

The third and final challenge related to the sustainability of the TLCS system underpinning this challenge was the interrelated problem of finding an adequate measure for the system and the current political environment of school expectations and funding. Finally, I noted some disconfirming evidence found in the coding process that related to the key
findings presented as challenges. The next section outlines findings related to research question three: “Influence of TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership”. This section presents strategies used to maximize the opportunities presented in the findings for research question one and mitigate the challenges presented for research question two.

**Research Question Three: How Do Iowa Public School District Superintendents Perceive and Express Changes to Their Instructional Leadership Activities in Support of District Level Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) Development and Implementation?**

The coding scheme for this study allowed for the examination of participant perceptions of the influences of TLCS on their instructional leader role as superintendents. Key findings related to this research question are presented in three sections: (1) “The superintendent as instructional leader;” (2) “Perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership;” and (3) “Influence of the TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership.” In the first section, “the superintendent as instructional leader,” I provide an overview of participants’ feelings regarding instructional leadership as a role of the superintendent. This overview includes themes identified through coding that captured perceptions of the instructional leader’s role in the context of other responsibilities as well as attitudes toward the role. Then I discuss findings related to “perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership,” which presents four summary characteristics developed from participant definitions of superintendent instructional leadership: (1) “communication;” (2) “empowering others;” (3) “personal engagement;” and (4) “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.” While these summaries were developed from emergent
codes when further refining instructional leadership codes, these characteristics were revealed as being closely connected in their application.

Following discussion of these summary characteristics, I present relevant disconfirming evidence uncovered in participant perceptions of instructional leadership. After establishing an understanding of how participants described superintendent instructional leadership, I present findings regarding participant perceptions of the “Influence of TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership.” This overview of findings related to TLCS influence on instructional leadership, provides an overview of findings developed from “general perceptions” across participants, then focuses on addressing findings of TLCS influence on the previously outlined characteristics of “communication,” “empowering others,” “personal engagement,” and “facilitation of a vision for teaching and learning,” which are summary characteristics previously presented in the first sub-section. As is the case throughout this entire presentation, key findings and their sub-sections represent themes from at least 12 of the 15 participants. Unless otherwise noted, findings represent themes across the entire participant group. Disconfirming evidence relevant to the discussion that add depth to or spark additional lines of inquiry in the understanding of this research question are presented prior to the summary of this section.

The superintendent as an instructional leader. All but one participant in the study considered himself or herself an instructional leader. While the participants did consider themselves instructional leaders, they also discussed the other aspects of their jobs that drew them away from this role. Items identified as pulling leaders away from instructional leadership included: finance/budgeting, human resources, facilitating board relationships and responding to community and parent concerns. Twelve of the 15 participants noted a
personal frustration, which I interpreted as guilt, regarding the interference of management aspects of their jobs getting in the way of their instructional leader roles. Seven of the 15 participants expressed their disappointment directly, beyond general statements about competing demands. Through these expressed areas of interference, participants were able to frame the impact of TLCS on their ability to engage in activities related to superintendent instructional leadership. A key finding emerging from the conversations related to instructional leadership was that TLCS had heightened or enhanced this role for the participants, allowing for them to assume the role more often or engage in more tasks related to teaching and learning. Participants noted this increased frequency, or primacy of the superintendent instructional leader role, had positively impacted them and their work.

All participants noted instructional leadership as a key function of the superintendency. Superintendent White described the instructional leader role as follows:

That’s what my primary job is, an instructional leader. There are a lot of management aspects to this job and a lot of things that pull you away from that, but the job of schools is to help kids learn, and so if you’re not an instructional leader, you’re not doing the primary job that you do.

White’s quote captured many aspects of participant beliefs regarding instructional leadership of the superintendency. Primarily, there was a firm commitment among participants that their role was to improve student learning and that superintendents must demonstrate instructional leadership. The role of the superintendent in this participant-described role was to facilitate conditions across the various elements of a school district whereby student achievement can occur.
White’s comments also underscored the aforementioned frustration that this role becomes secondary many times due to competing demands of the position. While participants did consider themselves as instructional leaders, they also discussed the other aspects of their jobs that drew them away from this role. In fact, one superintendent responded, “Probably not enough in my opinion” to the question about time spent in the instructional leader role, which directly captured the perception of most participants.

From the perceptions shared when filtered through the coding scheme, I surmised that the participants’ feelings about instructional leadership went beyond role and more to an overall perception that it was an inherent responsibility of the job. While this study did not attempt to verify or confirm actions or behaviors of superintendents, participants did describe a pull toward the instructional leader role and provided evidence they felt aligned with that role. The draw away from instructional leader responsibilities discussed in tandem with participant descriptions of the importance of the instructional leader role led me to deduce a compelling sense of guilt expressed by participants that they were removed from this role at times. Next, I discuss participants’ perceptions of the defining characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership.

**Perceived characteristics of instructional leadership.** To investigate these perceptions of the instructional leadership role in the absence of a substantial body of literature on instructional leadership specific to the superintendency, my questioning allowed for exploration of participants’ personal definitions of superintendent instructional leadership. When analyzing participant definitions across all participants, four summary characteristics that define instructional leadership for these superintendents were identified: (1) “communication;” (2) “empowering others;” (3) “personal engagement;” and (4)
“facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.” Each of these themes is discussed to capture the essence of the participants’ beliefs. While these characteristics were interconnected, both in my analysis and in the participants’ perception, they are presented in order of coding frequency.

Communication. Participants discussed the role of communicating at every level of the system. All participants noted definitions that were indicative of this summary characteristic. Words used by participants to describe this area included: “asking questions,” “reflective conversations,” “input,” and “listening.” Especially consistent across participant responses was the importance of “listening.” Superintendent Miller made the following statement:

Well, the ability to shut your mouth and listen is a big thing. I think you’ve got to be willing to listen to your instructional coaches. … Most superintendents haven’t been in a classroom in quite awhile… So I think, to be a good instructional leader, you’ve got to be willing to listen. You’ve got to be willing to gather information from as many sources a possible, but most importantly, I think you’ve got to be willing to listen to what your locals are telling you. This is what we think. This is why we think it will work. This is why this will work with our staff, with our kids. So I think getting away from thinking that the superintendent should have all answers to all things I think has just helped a lot.

Miller’s quote captured supporting information participants gave for their definitions and claims of instructional leadership. Participants gave examples regarding why they needed to listen, which Miller described as being necessary due to the superintendent being removed
from the day-to-day work of instructing students. This quote also captured themes among participants that communication is two-way, and that they rely on communication coming from within the system to make decisions. Miller’s statement also captured a participant theme—that instructional leadership from a superintendency involves a focus on purposefully stepping back in conversations to observe and reflect in an attempt to shape decision-making. Participants experienced a noticeable shift in their voice entering conversations as many more teacher voices come to the table. However, I interpreted this recognition as stressful because participants noted purposeful effort in their attempt to achieve this goal of stepping back. Their choice to quiet their voice at the table in teaching and learning work was indicative of their awareness of their positional authority as being palatable.

Connected to the idea of listening and gathering input was an awareness and self-monitoring of superintendent positional authority in conversations. Participants discussed the need to be non-judgmental in their responses. Superintendent Jones captured this idea with the following statement:

Not making judgments based on what you see. Don't make judgments, “Well that’s a good way, or a poor way of doing something.” It’s, “Here’s what I’m seeing.” Look at what you’re seeing, try to put a big picture together, what are you seeing?

Jones suggested a feeling that the role of the superintendent is not only to monitor himself or herself in conversations, but also to ensure communication from others is two-way to foster collaborative culture. Jones’ comment captured a participant belief that a good portion of their job as instructional leaders is to ask questions in an
attempt to help their staff clarify their thoughts and actions. Superintendents perceived that part of their role in meetings was ensuring all voices in the room are heard.

Listening without judgment yielded some positive outcomes reported by participants. Superintendent Thomas gave a specific example from TLCS of listening and its impact on instructional leadership:

You can start to feel some alignment when you're out there with the teachers and talking to them about it, to see that that’s the same thing that your instructional coaches feel. You can also feel when there's a disconnect and that we’ve created the environment where we're safe enough to say, “You know, are we really asking the right questions? Are we focused in on the right work? Let me just share something from a perspective or something that I’ve heard, you know?” So, the conversations have done that, and again, the TLCs, because of that focus, it forces you to really analyze your organization.

Thomas’s quote captured the essence of why superintendents described their responsibility to facilitate conversations, rather than dominate them. The type of questions included in Thomas’ comments were also indicative of the type of questions participants’ perceived as needing to be asked by those in their position. Participants relied on listening to inform decision-making in addition to gathering hard data on student achievement and TLCS implementation metrics.

Every participant in this study noted communication as a primary characteristic of instructional leadership as a superintendent. Discussions related to communication did not center on communicating [out] to others; rather, participants emphasized communication to
gather information about the current reality of their organizations. Participants focused on listening and asking questions as a key to instructional leadership in the superintendency. Connected to listening, are the people one listens to. Next, I discuss the empowerment of others which emerged from the data as a summary characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership.

**Empowering others.** Empowering others was another summary characteristic revealed in the definitions of superintendent instructional leadership given by 13 of the 15 participants. Words and statements used by participants in relation to this theme were: “setting an example,” “collaboration,” “buy in,” “get out of the way,” and “opportunity.” The essence of this characteristic is a desire to build capacity for more staff members to engage in the improvement of teaching and learning at the building and system levels. In the supporting statements for this summary characteristic, participants discussed an overall positive attitude toward involving the skills and expertise of others. Absent from reported data were examples of empowerment strategies prior to or outside of the TLCS, with participants using TLCS examples exclusively to describe this theme.

The coding scheme for this study defined capacity as “skills and abilities of staff to deliver effective instruction and meet student needs.” Participants were quick to celebrate the capacity and work of others in their system as well as share how trusting these individuals has paid dividends to the students they serve. Superintendent White commented:

I’m really blessed to know that out there daily, when I'm doing some of the things that maybe distract from the instructional leadership aspect of my job, that I've got teacher leaders in every building that are working every day on instructional improvement and that's their focus.
White’s comment captured a perception reported specifically by 13 participants—that more leadership from more individuals within the organization was positive to the desired outcomes of student learning. Furthermore, the training resulting from the TLCS has in the perception of participants provided consistent language, skills, and abilities for teachers to lead improvements in teaching and learning. This teacher involvement was also perceived to mitigate the aforementioned concern for management of the duties of the superintendency drawing participants away from instructional leadership. Through examining coded information, I surmised that participants perceived TLCS as a method to reduce anxiety regarding instructional leadership demands for superintendents through knowledge of capacity and involvement of teacher leaders.

Participants discussed the perception that they are able to rely on others and feel less pressured to have the answers. While participants in smaller districts specifically addressed this release of responsibility, 13 participants who noted empowerment shared this sentiment. Superintendent Wilson commented on the inability for one person, the superintendent to facilitate a system-wide change in teaching and learning:

For me, it's been, it doesn't have to be the [participant first name] Show. Just like it doesn't have to be the building principal show. You've got other people who are engaging in that work that you can, once you develop their skills, you can more fully begin to release that to them and let them go.

Included in Wilson’s comment was another perception of participants—that trust is not just given; it is the perceived role of the superintendent to develop the skills or provide systems to develop the skills that empower others to act. Participants discussed the nature of their ongoing involvement in teacher-leader initiatives as a method to monitor input structures
with the intent of ensuring teacher voice. Participants noted an active role in developing the conditions for this release of responsibility to teachers.

A statement by superintendent Thomas underscored a personal benefit shared by participants relating to their perceived outcome of building these structures:

I think more focus has been around students and student achievement and our priorities and that alignment that we've had with the resources. Hopefully that gets drawn back towards you, that because of your leadership that you've created this type of program, culture, climate there.

Thomas’s comment captured the sentiment that the superintendent can and should facilitate the involvement of others. It also referenced a belief among participants that their ability to involve and empower others was an important aspect in how they measured their own success as leaders as well as how they believed others measured their leadership impact.

Thirteen of the 15 superintendents interviewed noted empowerment of others in their personal definitions of superintendent instructional leadership. Participants discussed the advantage of more people working on teaching and learning as well as the role of the superintendent to facilitate opportunities for empowerment. While other summary characteristics were supported with statements that could be applied to any initiative, participants framed this summary characteristic in terms of TLCS structures. To facilitate structures for listening and empowering others, participants also noted the need to be engaged in the work of teaching and learning.

**Personal engagement.** Personal engagement was another summary characteristic developed from 12 of 13 participant definitions of instructional leadership. Participants’ words used to describe this theme included: “involvement,” “effort,” “visibility,”
“investment,” and “attendance.” Participants noted the importance of being perceived as part of the work in the development of trust and the need to build structures for communication. Personal engagement was also seen as a function to facilitate the other summary characteristics presented in this section. Two areas where participants discussed this need were by being generally visible as well as active in conversations.

One element of personal engagement as shared by superintendents, visibility, is best summarized in a comment from Superintendent Brown:

[Instructional leaders should] be out in the schools enough so that teachers understand that I really walk my talk and believe that what they’re doing in the rooms, the teaching and learning, is the most important thing happening. Coincidentally, I have to also do my due diligence with my board of directors and with the community and to make sure that I am out in the community enough that I understand what’s going on and they understand the schools well enough.

Brown’s comments captured the essence of what participants talked about regarding the personal engagement characteristic. Participants shared their duties to be visible in their schools to develop internal trust as well as in the community to build external trust and advocate for their schools. Participants also discussed a perceived expectation of being involved and engaged in teaching and learning processes, both to inform decisions and to send a message of understanding teacher needs and work requirements.

In addition to generally being visible, when participants described engagement in their personal definitions, they also discussed the need to be actively engaged when present
in conversations and visible at events. Superintendent Taylor expressed a concept of active engagement through this comment:

You have to be present and be in those leadership meetings. If you’re on your phone and you’re checking messages, or if you’re on a computer and you’re always in email, you’re really not invested, and people notice that, so it’s truly being invested in the conversations that are going on as far as how we want to improve each of the buildings.

Taylor’s statement captured the belief among participants—that simply being there is not enough. This perception related closely with participants’ belief that engagement must be active. Previous defining themes emphasized stepping back from conversations, which suggested a new role conflict for superintendents to make sense of regarding personal engagement.

This summary characteristic of personal engagement was not universal among participants; nevertheless, it was representative of 12 of the 15 superintendents who were interviewed. When analyzing coded data, the size of the district did not appear to be a variable in participants’ definitions that described this theme. Participants were aware that their staff is watching them. While some aspects of their personal beliefs toward instructional leadership, including stepping back to listed and empower others, suggested less direct involvement, personal engagement was still an important aspect of superintendent instructional leadership as defined by the participants.

Communication, empowerment, and personal engagement appeared to work together in the development of the next defining characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership. When analyzing the perceptions of participants, this theme of personal
engagement was closely tied to the aforementioned themes of communication and empowerment. Similarly connected was the last major defining characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership—facilitating a vision for learning.

*Facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.* The final summary characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership was facilitating a vision for teaching and learning. Twelve of the 15 participants explained personal definitions of superintendent instructional leadership that fit with this defining characteristic. Participant statements and descriptions used for this characteristic included: “establishing and communicating the why of initiatives,” “big picture,” “following the plan,” “deliberate action,” “tone,” and “resource alignment.” In this defining characteristic, participants described their perceptions of pulling together various entities in their organization to ensure connectedness and focus on existing district plans, goals and philosophies. Participants perceived facilitation of teaching and learning in the areas of connecting work to the intended outcomes and ensuring resource allocation in support of the district vision.

In connecting the work to the intended outcomes participants discussed their role in establishing and reminding people of why initiatives were being implemented. Superintendent Williams said the following about this role:

Sometimes you do need to take a step back every once in a while, review things then “why?” ... Concentrate on the change, “why we're doing this?” and try to build on that [why?] making sure everybody’s on the same page and on the same boat going the same direction.

William’s quote captured the essence of the discussions with participants. They saw their role as reminding the entire organization what are the intended outcomes of the district. They also
mentioned the position they played between the internal drive of principals and teachers and the external expectations of a Board of Education. Participants reflected a great deal on how staff excitement can result in a venture off the path of focus in which they often found themselves involved to slow things down so the system could be reflective and stick to its purpose.

A second area related to the facilitation of a vision for teaching and learning was—the area of resource allocation. Superintendent Martin best captured the perceptions of participants in the following statement:

I think I always see the superintendent and central office staff. ... Our role is to help set vision. Then also, our role is to provide the necessary resources…to support the employees, students, and patrons, anyway we can, to make that vision reality I think the job is to set the conditions, so that the district can be successful.

Martin’s comments captured the perception of participants that they believed resources should be tied to outcomes. In terms of instructional leadership, this meant ensuring purchased products, services and professional development helped the entire school system move forward. Martin’s use of the term “conditions” was especially important to the essence of participant perceptions in that superintendents believed their role in budgeting, staffing and developing procedures is instructional leadership by virtue of connecting those management functions with student learning outcomes. Instructional leadership in this defining characteristic according to the participants of this study involved leading staff to a vision or established outcome for student learning as well as for themselves from their position as managing resources to support the attainment of that vision or outcome.
Relevant disconfirming evidence: Perceived characteristics of instructional leadership. While the four summary themes described previously capture the essence of how participants described superintendent instructional leadership, I would also like to discuss two notable items of disconfirming evidence that were not prevalent enough in the coding process to be included as a finding. The first theme, which was discussed by only seven of the 15 participants was “knowledge of teaching and learning.” Participants describing knowledge of teaching and learning used the following words and statements to describe this characteristic: “expertise,” “knowing what good instruction looks like,” “learning conversations,” and “learning along side.” While almost half of the participants included this element in their definitions, it did not meet my criteria of 12; therefore, it was not included in the key findings.

This finding was especially prevalent among the four participants who previously served as curriculum directors. These individuals pointed to their previous experience in leading teaching and learning as directors as being invaluable to the processes of communication, empowerment, personal engagement, and facilitating a vision of teaching and learning. In addition to the curriculum directors, this characteristic was mentioned by four of the five participants in the “no additional assistance” category, which was comprised of smaller schools. Individuals with prior director experience and superintendents serving smaller schools reported being involved in learning with teacher leaders, and included the processes, practices and coaching models as important to their implementation role.

The second notable disconfirming item was related to “encouraging an environment of risk taking.” This was noted by three of the 15 participants. Words and statements to describe this theme included “encouraging risk taking” and “permission to play.” While these
participants talked about this characteristic, no one felt like their district had arrived at a place where this was occurring. Important to this study was the perception held by these participants—that the TLCS had the ability to bring about an environment of risk-taking once fully implemented over time.

**Summary of Findings: Perceived Characteristics of Instructional Leadership**

**Influence of TLCS on Instructional Leadership**

Analysis resulting from the coding scheme of this study allowed for the development of four summary defining characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership: (1) communication; (2) empowering others; (3) personal engagement; and (4) facilitating a vision for teaching and learning. When examining participant perceptions in context of the other questions through the coding process, I concluded that these characteristics were inextricably related based on the essence of participant perceptions. When asked about their personal definitions of instructional leadership, participants interwove the aforementioned themes, and were able to reflect on their personal definitions in terms of their own work. One might say these leaders attempted to give examples of how they “walk their talk.” Understanding their frame for instructional leadership helped extrapolate the conclusions related to their sensemaking activities related to TLCS.

Participants noted not only a need for prioritization of these interrelated defining characteristics of instructional leadership, but they also discussed the role of the superintendent to create the conditions for him or her to attend to these defining characteristics. The needed role for superintendents to leverage these defining characteristics that came with the challenges of formulating TLCS structures in their districts allowed for a perceived expansion of the instructional leader role on the part of superintendents. The next
section provides an overview of the participants’ perceptions related to expansion of the instructional leadership role that they perceived to result from the demands of the TLCS. Then I frame these perceptions in terms of the previously discussed summary characteristics. **Influence of TLCS on Instructional Leadership**

The coding scheme for this study allowed for the identification of sorting perceptions related to the role of the superintendent in the implementation of TLCS. All but two participants in this study stated their instructional leader role changed or was enhanced through the TLCS implementation process. In addition, the two who mentioned they noted little change exclaimed there were significant teacher-leader and collaboration initiatives made that were similar to the intended outcomes of TLCS prior to the program’s development and implementation. They also mentioned their desire to apply for the TLCS was due to their desire to expand these initiatives.

Participants’ perceptions related to TLCS were noted as being a teaching and learning initiative must be led from a teaching and learning lens. As policy mediators, superintendents reported approaching this initiative as instructional leaders with the goal of scaling up initiatives to improve teaching and learning district-wide. While this initiative involved financial and human resources components, as noted by the participants, the intended outcome was growth in capacity, not management to achieve metrics.

Furthermore, choosing to participate required districts to agree to the implementation of a set of structures. Adherence to specific structures was seen as being unique from other initiatives that allow a great deal of freedom in meeting targets, and rely heavily on the individual skills and talents within districts to identify needed structures and courses of
action. From the perspective of participants, implementing the system with fidelity requires people at each level of the organization to be focused on leading instructional improvement.

**Instructional leader role: General perceptions.** When participants were asked to describe their instructional leadership role in TLCS, each discussed several ways the TLCS had influenced their instructional leadership. One common area in which participants described influence was the conversations they had in administrative team meetings. Superintendent Davis shared the following:

I would say that it [the instructional leader role] has changed and I would say that it’s expanded. I think the reason that it has expanded is one of the things that TLC has done is it’s allowed the entire administrative team, and actually maybe required is a better way to look at it, the entire administrative team to change their focus.

Davis’s comment captured participants’ feelings that their involvement in conversations related to teaching and learning had changed since TLCS. As a result, their conversations had also changed, as had their role in facilitating teaching and learning initiatives. Participants discussed changes in conversations had in administrative team meetings in terms of a shift from procedural agendas to more open-ended discussions on teaching and learning challenges.

Related to this feeling of enhancing the instructional leader role for the 13 participants who reported influence was that TLCS necessitated a focus on the instructional leader role in learning. Superintendent Jones shared the following:

I think it’s just focused me more. More than anything, I think it’s focused me more on being involved in learning. Like I said earlier, you get caught up as
superintendent, filling out reports, doing paperwork, taking phone calls about a bus issue or personnel issue that, yeah, they may have things to do with learning, but not directly. It’s kept me more focused on instructional leadership role.

Jones comments captured the perception among participants that, with heightened attention on instruction came a demand for heightened oversight and knowledge of teacher leadership initiatives on the part of superintendents. Participants did not report this as a negative, but they did feel this new focus on instructional leadership did not come with a decrease in other role demands traditionally associated with the role.

While the framework for this study’s examination of instructional leadership in TLCS did yield resulting data supporting superintendents’ belief that the program did have an influence on their instructional leader role, the framework also allowed for me to examine this assertion in context of their self-described definitions of instructional leadership which I coded into four summary themes: communication, empowering others, personal engagement, and facilitating a vision of learning. I chose to report findings of instructional leader influence in context with the participants’ definitions of instructional leadership to better connect and describe how these participants viewed their instructional leadership roles as having been influenced by TLCS. Next, I examined participants’ perceptions in reference to these summary characteristics.

**Instructional leader role: Communication.** All participants in this study noted TLCS changed communication with two major groups, teachings and principals. First, the nature of communication with teachers was noted as changing as teachers took on formal teacher leadership roles. This was reported in terms of ongoing formal and informal
conversations with teacher leaders related to managing the anticipated and unanticipated results of assuming this role. Most frequently mentioned were teacher leader perceptions of difficulty in generating buy-in and in their newfound impression of teachers within their system. Participants not only reported being open to conversations in the past, but also discussed the TLCS structure made them more accessible to teachers, especially new teacher leaders. Superintendents reported this communication increase was positive, and seven participants noted this as an additional responsibility to be managed. Superintendent Anderson made a comment that underscored this collective belief:

[Conversations with teacher leaders] makes you more mindful when you need to have those conversations regardless. You can’t just choose to have them; you have to have them!

Anderson’s comment captured the perception that the instructional leadership role was expanded through new communication structures in both the formal structure of meetings and the informal settings of one-on-one. This reported increased frequency of conversations with teacher leaders was perceived as putting participants in the role as a coach, themselves. In addition to increased number of meetings, this expanded the time spent in discussing actual teaching and learning. In the reported findings for research question two: challenges, the participants talked about the extra time this takes, but noted that they did not feel stretched by these conversations. Anderson’s comment captured the responsibility the participants felt to listen to and coach teacher leaders through new conversations. While communication increased for teacher leaders, participants noted that communication not only increased, but also changed with principals.
While only two participants discussed difficulty in getting their principals to adjust to teacher leadership structures, all participants discussed the conversations with principals in formal and informal settings as having changed with TLCS. Participants noted a change in focus in their administrative team meetings with a shift from management to student learning conversations. Superintendent Brown captured this perceived change in the following statement:

I now work with principals on how they are using their teacher leaders and how they should be using their teacher leaders, where before the system, we talked about how the principal was called the instructional leader and how they had to go out and get in the classroom and do their walkthroughs. And now our discussion is, “How do you use the teacher leaders? When are they more appropriate to do the walkthroughs? When is it necessary that the principal should do that?”

Brown’s comment underscored a theme across participants—that the TLCS had created new demands from principals. These new demands result in increased conversations with the superintendent as they sought to understand and work through their new role. Participants discussed the transition of the principal from being, in some cases, the sole instructional leader in a building to having a cadre of individuals to share instructional leadership responsibility among one another. Brown’s comment revealed how coaching conversations had changed from strict metrics and evaluation to discussions of how to build and maintain systems of teacher leadership in their buildings.

When examining TLCS’s influence on superintendent instructional leadership, participants perceived the nature of their communication would change and increase as a
result of the TLCS. The influence of TLCS on communication as a characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership was consistent with the summary characteristics developed from participants’ definitions. Participants discussed increased frequency of communication resulting from teacher leadership structures, specifically new lines of communication with teacher leaders as well as changed conversations with building principals. The summary characteristic of communication as described by participants noted the need to listen and ask questions to clarify the thinking of the people within their organizations. Participant descriptions related to the perceived influence of how TLCS had shaped their communication efforts is consistent with the characteristics described in the summary characteristics of instructional leadership overviewed previously in this chapter. Therefore, in analysis of participant perceptions, the implementation of TLCS had enhanced or expanded the communication role of these superintendents.

**Instructional leader role: Empowering others.** While only 13 of the 15 participants discussed beliefs associated with the summary characteristic of empowering others specifically in personal definitions of superintendent instructional leadership, all participants in the study discussed the influence of TLCS on providing structures and opportunities for empowerment. Participants discussed the key increase in their role of empowering others occurred through the application process. All participants led this process in their districts. The process required participation of many stakeholder groups, including teachers, parents, and community.

After the application process, participant reports of direct involvement did taper off, but continued to be explained in terms of their efforts to ensure systems were in place for empowering others and ensuring leaders under their supervision provided for empowerment
opportunities. Efforts to empower others went beyond the monitoring of structures for adherence to district applications and TLCS requirements. A commonly discussed aspect of empowering others was stepping back in conversations through listening and questions, allowing principals and teacher leader teams to work through problems without interference, but with clarity of intent. For example, superintendent Taylor stated the following:

Actually, we let each building do it differently that first year, and I could have predicted this. There was some failure, but sometimes it’s better for people to figure it out themselves. So after the first year we all came back and said, “This worked, but this didn't work, and here’s how we're all four going to do it the same next year.”

This statement captured the belief among participants that part of empowering others was letting them work through their own problems with guidance. However, this statement also underscored participants’ feelings toward TLCS as providing a layer of security that actions were thought through and more fully fleshed out before occurring by nature of the number of people involved. In this sense, participants seemed to be explaining their role as allowing for organizational sensemaking to address the challenges and find the opportunities of TLCS.

This organizational sensemaking involved the superintendent as instructional leader, ensuring systems for communication and decision-making as well as providing ongoing feedback and questioning to deepen conversations.

While much of the conversation related to empowerment involved examples of internal structures, such as involving more teachers in meetings or transitioning professional development responsibilities from administrators to teacher leaders, participants also noted efforts to empower teacher leaders to have a voice beyond the walls of the school.
Superintendent Brown made the following statement regarding getting teacher leaders in front of larger audiences outside of the school:

We always try to keep the teacher leaders in front of them [the school board] when we do an annual invite to them, we do updates on certain very specific topics, so I’d say my work with them [the school board] has been broadened to make sure they understand the significance of that system [TLCS].

Brown’s comment not only underscored a belief among participants that voice goes beyond meetings and professional development, but it also underscored another idea consistently shared—that the promotion of this program is ongoing. Part of this ongoing promotion of the TLCS involved not only getting teachers involved in the decision-making process, but also allowing them to talk about their work to a broader audience.

When examining TLCS influence on superintendent instructional leadership, participants perceived the nature of their efforts to empower others as having changed increased as a result of the TLCS. The influence of TLCS on empowering others as a characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership was consistent with the summary characteristics developed from participant definitions. Participants discussed their role in ensuring empowerment of others occurred through district structures and reported increased conversations with leaders regarding ensuring teacher voice influences decision-making on teaching and learning. Additionally, participants reported increased effort to showcase the work of teacher leaders by providing them an audience to discuss their work beyond the walls of the school. Participant descriptions related to the perceived influence of how TLCS had shaped their efforts to empower others was consistent with the characteristics described in the summary characteristics of instructional leadership overviewed previously in this
chapter. Analysis of participant perceptions revealed the implementation of TLCS had enhanced or expanded empowerment role of these superintendents.

**Instructional leader role: Personal engagement.** Increased presence in teaching and learning conversations and initiatives was noted by 12 of the 15 participants. Influences included increased participation in meetings, engaging in professional development with staff, or changes in the way they ran their administrative team meetings. Participants perceived a change in their level of engagement in TLCS in comparison with previous teaching and learning initiatives. When examining this perception, it is important to note that, while the superintendent is not targeted for professional development, the nature of the TLCS being awarded through an application process, suggests a de facto responsibility of the superintendent for the architecture and facilitation of the TLCS for their districts. Because of the heavy involvement in the application process, participants reported a strong sense of connection to the ongoing implementation of the TLCS. Participants reported difficulty in completely stepping back because of their heavy involvement in mediating the initial challenges of the system mentioned previously in this chapter. This created a sense of responsibility on the part of participants to tend to the system that they helped put in place. In the perception of participants, personal engagement both resulted from and was driven by their continued involvement in teaching and learning conversations.

Through increased involvement, all but one participant noted their focus on instruction, while not changing in priority, had changed in actual involvement. Superintendent Jones reported bringing more focus to the academic role:

*Working with instructional leaders, not just principals, but with our instructional coaches and our model teachers. And having those meetings with*
our TLC team, to talk about what’s going on, how things are going, and hearing those perceptions. It’s made me focus a little. I’d like to think I had been focused on that anyway, and I think I have been, but it’s just increased.

Jones’ comment captured the essence of what participants were saying regarding their personal involvement. Participants reported their involvement had increased through the addition of formal and informal conversations around TLCS. This was reported to result in gaining a better understanding of where the district’s current and potential reality for teaching and learning. Jones’ comment also captured the idea that, while participants believed instructional leadership was part of their job, not only had the structure allowed for increased teacher engagement, it had also allowed for increased superintendent engagement, resulting in more time spent reflecting on or working to align teaching and learning systems in their districts.

When examining TLCS influence on superintendent instructional leadership, the participants perceived the nature of their personal engagement as having changed and increased as a result of the TLCS. The influence of TLCS on personal engagement as a characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership was consistent with the summary characteristics developed from participants’ definitions. Participants discussed increasing participation in formal and informal conversations related to teaching and learning. Additionally, there was also a perceived ownership on their part due to their advanced involvement in securing the TLCS money and negotiating the systems that were intended through the application process. Participants’ descriptions related to the perceived influence of how TLCS had shaped their personal engagement in teaching and learning were consistent with the characteristics described in the summary characteristics of instructional leadership.
overviewed previously in this chapter. Therefore, the analysis of participants’ perceptions revealed the implementation of TLCS had enhanced or expanded the personal engagement in teaching and learning initiatives for these superintendents.

**Instructional leader role: Facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.** While 12 of the 15 participants in this study specifically noted elements used to develop the summary characteristic of facilitating a vision of learning, all participants in the study described the expansion of their facilitation role in response to the TLCS. Participants discussed the need to align the TLCS to existing district structures and needs. Participants noted the excitement of teacher leaders in having a voice in the process and the facilitation role, as described by participants, appeared to play out as a gatekeeper role. In this sense, the facilitation required by superintendents manifested as taking steps to keep a focus. Participants not only noted the value and capacity brought by expanding the teacher leader role, but also voiced a need, through communication, involvement and personal engagement to ensure decisions made were consistent both the TLCS plan and the existing goals of the district. This expanded role involved more actively investigating the work occurring and the focus of that work.

There was a feeling of responsibility among participants to ensure the outcomes of collaborative processes in TLCS yielded actions focused on the right work as it pertained to district goals and the vision. Superintendent Thomas shared a statement that captures the essence of this focus:

> As a superintendent with the different expectations and goals that we’ve established through the board, the responsibility that I think as a superintendent is: Are those resources aligned to the right work? Have we
created the right type of culture and environment for people to be successful with the right tools along that line?

Thomas’s statement aligned with the perception of participants that the TLCS cannot be implemented separate from other initiatives, and it was their role to ensure TLCS implementation fit within these systems. Superintendents felt the power of the TLCS was in the system it puts in place through which various initiatives can be lensed. Participants felt a tug between their empowerment role and this role of facilitating a vision in that this role was where personal intervention is more prevalent. This personal involvement was reported in terms of putting the brakes on intended actions when they were not systemic. However, this tension between empowerment and their role as facilitator was perceived to be mitigated through communication and personal engagement.

From the perceptions shared by superintendents in this study, there was theme of managing the excitement resulting from additional voices and expertise at the table. Superintendent Wilson made the following statement related to leading through the excitement to ensure alignment to vision and goals:

A part of my challenge on a daily basis is that it feels like there are, there’s 10,000 things that we can attend to. A lot of that stuff is either important because it’s a compliance issue that we have to attend to, or it may just be good stuff. I think that what this [TLCS] has forced me to do is really identify between the great stuff that supports our priorities and the stuff that probably really needs to go to the side for right now.

Wilson’s comment was indicative of the impact new systems and structures for input had on the decision-making of superintendents. Participants discussed using new exchanges of
information that came from new formal and informal communication structures to make better decisions as to what to do to better focus on teaching and learning.

When examining TLCS influence on superintendent instructional leadership, participants perceived the nature of their facilitation of a vision for teaching and learning as having changed and increased as a result of the TLCS. The influence of TLCS on facilitating a vision for teaching and learning as a characteristic of superintendent instructional leadership was consistent with the summary characteristics developed from the participants’ definitions. Participants discussed their role in ensuring action were aligned with the vision and strategic plans of their districts. In the context of the TLCS, participants noted extra effort and attention in this area to implement this initiative in comparison to past initiatives they had led. Participants perceived they had a pulse on the community and vision of the district and felt a responsibility to tend to that vision when approaching TLCS implementation. Participant descriptions related to the perceived influence of how TLCS had shaped their efforts to facilitate a vision of teaching and learning were consistent with the characteristics described in the summary characteristics of instructional leadership overviewed previously in this chapter. Thus, the analysis of participant perceptions revealed the implementation of TLCS had enhanced or expanded the role of superintendents in facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.

**Relevant disconfirming evidence: Perceptions of influence.** This section discusses relevant disconfirming evidence that emerged through the coding scheme that were relevant to the intended outcomes of this study. I first describe disconfirming evidence related to cohesive system development, then capacity development. Finally, I discuss disconfirming evidence related to climate and culture. Disconfirming evidence are presented as to add depth
to the conversation regarding this research question. As these disconfirming evidence added context clues that might lead to identification of the participant, participant pseudonyms were eliminated from direct quotes in this section.

In the aforementioned findings related to TLCS influence on instructional leadership, there was a great deal of alignment of perceptions with findings representing at least 12 of the 15 participants. These findings suggested that TLCS had influenced the superintendent instructional leader role. Nevertheless, in an effort to add further depth of understanding and transparency, I overview two key disconfirming evidence related to the findings presented for research question three.

While perceived role impact varied among participants, mainly due to size of district or additional administrative support, one individual noted unchanged day-to-day work demands related to TLCS. This bears mentioning because responses to other questions were consistent with findings from those who did note work demand changes. For example, this individual’s responses were consistent with those of other participants when describing overall changes to workflow, and in reference to the four summary characteristics described in these findings.

This individual was from a larger district in the study and credited the additional layers of support in a larger district as the reason for this perception of impact. However, this participant was the only one of the larger districts superintendents who did not actively seek involvement opportunities and the participant did not represent the largest district in the study; two other participants leading larger districts reported significant day-to-day work demand changes. The participant noted the presence of existing teacher leadership structures in the districts, which smoothed the implementation, but did not discuss his/her role in
implementing these pre-TLCS structures. The participant also noted a great deal of personal involvement in the application and early stages, but handed over the lion’s share of responsibility to another central office staffer once implementation had begun. This disconfirming evidence is important as it suggested the importance of local context in decision-making and perception of influence. It also suggested the amount of personal choice the superintendent has in his or her level of involvement and engagement with the program. This is important, especially when considering the role of the superintendent in mediating policy as discussed in the relevant literature.

The next notable individual piece of disconfirming evidence in the study was the participant who responded “no” to the question, “Do you consider yourself and instructional leader?” Like the previously mentioned participant, actions described were consistent with the findings of others in the study although individual perceptions differed. Since there was a small group of superintendents in the state and an even smaller group of shared superintendents, for the purposes of reporting on this disconfirming evidence, I did not mention the individual’s name. This individual recently took on a shared superintendent role. This individual was still serving the district he/she served for several years prior to the sharing arrangement in addition to the new district. The following quote by this individual; however, actually tended to support the aforementioned findings on impact to superintendent instructional leadership. He/she talked about his/her perception that direct involvement was slipping away as new demands of the shared superintendence creep in and consume more time.

This disconfirming evidence was relevant based on the participant’s description of how achievement had continued to be high in both districts since the sharing agreement
started. The participant suggested TLCS as the program that allowed for achievement to continue despite the absence of a person with time for instructional leadership in the superintendent position. This participant made a compelling statement related to TLCS and his/her reflective process about his/her decreased involvement and the increased leadership behavior of principals and teacher leaders:

But there are other times I think, you know, really though, isn’t this what the TLCS was supposed to be about? Not everything was supposed to be driven from the top down. Teachers were supposed to have more input, more say, into instructional practices, and curricular practices, so maybe that’s a good thing. Maybe I just need to adjust my vision of what the superintendent should be, to the new norm, which is that we watch those people closest to the instruction having more say in how that instruction works?

This disconfirming evidence suggested the need for both awareness and supportive roles to replace active engagement on the part of shared superintendents, who may not be able to be as actively engaged in the teaching and learning process.

**Summary of findings: Research question three.** The coding scheme for this study allowed for the analysis of instructional leadership perceptions of superintendents. Participants in this study perceived TLCS to have the influence of expanding or enhancing their role as instructional leaders. Participant definitions of instructional leadership were presented as four summary characteristics: “communication”, “empowering others”, “personal engagement”, and “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning”. Participant perceptions of the expansion of their instructional leadership role resulting from the TLCS implementation process were discussed and then compared to the summary characteristics.
Participant perceptions of TLCS influencing their role as instructional leaders were supported through alignment to these summary characteristics as well as general perceptions of increased instructional leadership resulting from TLCS. Finally, relevant disconfirming evidence were discussed which enhanced understanding of the potential influences of TLCS on the instructional leader role of Iowa superintendents.

Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter presented my findings from the data collected through interviews that were analyzed using the coding scheme. This coding scheme was created through the lens of sensemaking perspective in order to identify superintendents’ shared perceptions of instructional leadership in the context of TLCS. Related to this aforementioned framework, the TLCS was considered as the episode or the source of interruption that initiated sensemaking activities that aimed to bring order to the interruption in organizational structure required by the TLCS. Within this episode are several events whereby sensemaking is triggered, such as: planning and application, implementation, and sustaining and facilitating participants’ processes and reported outcomes of engaging in these events in their local context, shared perceptions of opportunities, challenges, and instructional leader role conceptions that emerged as findings.

Nine themes emerged related to the research questions of this study. In response to research question one – “perceived opportunities,” participants noted the ability to utilize TLCS as a structure to create “cohesive systems” for teaching and learning. Related to the perceived opportunity of developing system coherence was a feeling that the system, through its organizational structures, had the potential for “capacity development” of staff in delivering quality instruction on the individual level and collectively as a district.
Additionally, a third finding related to perceived opportunities was a shared perception on the part of participants that the structures put in place has “enhanced culture and climate” of their districts in how teachers interacted with each other and interacted with administrators.

In response to research question two – “perceived challenges,” participants noted ongoing elements of TLCS events that caused ongoing challenges and continued sensemaking. The first perceived challenge was the “participation requirements” of having 25% of teachers participate in teacher-leader roles. Participation requirements were reported to cause concern for filling the required quantities while maintaining personally desired concepts of quality in teacher leaders. The second finding related to research question two was a perceived concern for the impact of “teacher leader turnover.” Participants reported a desire to have teacher leaders stay in their positions for several years from a reported fear of losing the capacity built in those individuals to build staff capacity through their established relationships and skill in teacher leadership. Finally, participants’ interviews generated a third finding, concern for “sustainability.” Participants expressed perceptions of concern for appropriately measuring the impact of the system at the state level and concerns for the perceived influence of the current economy’s influence on lawmaker decisions related to systems like TLCS that require significant state funds to support.

In response to research question three – “perceived influence on instructional leadership.” three findings were identified. The first finding discussed participants’ general impressions of the “superintendent as an instructional leader.” In this finding, participants perceived the instructional leader role not only as important, but also noted the competition of other superintendent roles in their perceived ability to assume this role as frequently as desired. The second finding related to research question three identified four summary
characteristics that captured how these participating superintendents “perceived
characteristics of instructional leadership.” Participants shared personal beliefs about
superintendent instructional leadership that were summarized into four areas:
communication, empowering others, personal engagement, and facilitating a vision for
teaching and learning. The third finding related to research question three described
participant perceptions related to the “influence of the TLCS on superintendent instructional
leadership.” In this finding, participants discussed general impressions of their reflection on
and engagement with instructional leaders since engaging in TLCS process. I shared
participant perceptions that aligned with the aforementioned summary characteristics to give
insight into these participants’ perceptions of TLCS influence on instructional leader
behavior.

Superintendents believed the TLCS influenced the way they worked and spent time
reflecting on and engaging in instructional leadership. The findings revealed a high level of
perceived participation and ownership of the policy on the part of the superintendent.
Connections and contributions of this study to relevant literature as well as implications for
administrative practice, educational policy and research are discussed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate superintendents’ perceptions of their role in the context of the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System. Research has indicated that the role of the superintendent in the leadership process is a significant factor in a district’s response to accountability for academic achievement (Fuhrman, 2003; Goertz & Massell, 2005). Furthermore, Rorrer and Skrla (2005) noted, “…the mediating role of the district and school leaders’ responses to accountability is often overlooked in the debates about policy success” (p. 54). Despite a variety of research studies on the topic of instructional leadership in schools and a long-standing depiction of the various roles of the superintendent, the study of the instructional leadership has leaned heavily toward principals and has needed further examination (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 1994; Thomas, 2001). Critical to the understanding of how and why superintendents assume the role of instructional leader is an understanding of how these leaders approach leadership practice and how this approach supports systems of teaching and learning (Morgan, Petersen, Cooper, & Fusarelli, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). To examine this line of research related to superintendent instructional leadership in context of the TLCS for the purpose of adding to this line of research, the framework of sensemaking was applied in the current study. Sensemaking was utilized to better understand – through the lived experiences of superintendents – the perceived influences of TLCS on participants’ reflections, conceptualizations and approached their role as instructional leaders.

Using the analytical framework of sensemaking, this study attempted to understand how superintendents viewed the TLCS in the context of their work during the application and
implementation phases. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) stated, “Sensemaking in organizations has been seen as consisting of specific episodes, is triggered by ambiguous events, occurs through specific processes, generates specific outcomes and is influenced by several situational factors” (p. S6). The TLCS represents a shift in how state-mandated district organizational structures in a specific state are utilized to guide districts’ implementation of teacher leadership in practice. Sensemaking describes episodes as an interruption, to which all actors in the system must make sense of to address.

In the case of the current study, the episode was TLCS implementation. Sensemaking posits the organization is not a set of documents or hierarchy, but a socially constructed concept vulnerable to the perceptions and the actions based on the perception of those within the organization (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Therefore, to understand the role of actors in the implementation process, examination of the organization must go beyond study of systems and structures to understand the perceptions of those interacting with the system. This study examined the role of an individual actor, the superintendent of schools who has been largely ignored in the consideration of the TLCS. Appropriate to the study of individual sensemaking processes, this study utilized phenomenology to understand and investigate the how superintendents approached and reflected on their role conceptualizations as they made sense of events occurring as part of the TLCS implementation process. Findings related to these perceptions were utilized to answer the research questions for this study, more specifically: the perceived opportunities of TLCS, perceived challenges of TLCS, and perceived influence of the TLCS on how participants reflected on and conceptualized their instructional leader role.
The findings of this study contribute to the current body of research that attempts to understand superintendent instructional leadership, the policy-mediating role of the superintendent and conceptualizations of teacher leadership programs. The findings also present a new line of inquiry to the role of the superintendent, in his or her own right, through examination of superintendent sensemaking activities related to TLCS events.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the findings in context of relevant literature discussed previously in Chapter Two. These findings are discussed in reference to the three research questions of this study. A discussion of limitations of this study is presented after a discussion of the finding. The chapter continues with an overview of implications of this study to school leaders, policy and research. Recommendations are offered for future research and final comments are made on the purpose, findings and significance of this study.

**Discussion**

Scholars have noted “…profound differences in how local schools make sense [and respond to] state initiated changes” (Rossman & Wilson, 1996, p. 416). The interpretation of and approaches to state policy changes by actors at the local level has been noted in relevant literature as an important factor in policy implementation differences. This study examined one set of actors, superintendents, in context of a statewide teacher leadership initiative, the TLCS. Superintendents perceived the TLCS as changing the organizational structures of their districts. These structural changes were perceived by the superintendents of this study as an opportunity to develop cohesive systems for capacity development and as a method to improve staff culture and climate. However, these same system requirements as leveraged by these superintendents to create opportunities were also the source of their reported challenges as they accepted participation and reporting requirements they perceived to be barriers.
Findings of this study also suggest the TLCS as conceptualized as an episode in sensemaking has influenced the way these superintendents think about and reflect on their instructional leader role as they make sense of TLCS. These perceived influences on their instructional leader role were reported in the context of TLCS application and implementation events participants were involved in.

The actions and justifications provided by participants revealed the process of sensemaking when faced with events that disrupted the normal functioning of the district regarding teaching and learning initiatives. It became clear from the connection between perceived opportunities and challenges and the demands that emerged as themes that leaders were utilizing the sensemaking process of creation, interpretation, and enactment. Participants framed issues in terms of their local context and beliefs about instructional leadership. In the case of this study, enactment took the form of instructional leadership behavior. To contextualize the relevance of the findings presented in this study, this section examined findings in the context of relevant literature.

**Research Question One: What Do Superintendents Perceive as the Major Opportunities of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?**

In response to research question one, I identified three findings: “cohesive systems”, “capacity development”, and “enhanced culture and climate”, The first of these findings, entitled “cohesive systems” described the belief on the part of participants that the TLCS has the potential to bring together disparate initiatives in their districts. The second key finding of the perceived opportunity of “capacity development.” In this section I described participant perceptions of the ability of TLCS to develop the individual and collective capacity of teachers to enhance teaching and learning activities. Third, I discussed the key finding of
“enhanced climate and culture” by presenting participant perceptions of the benefits of the TLCS structure to building better climate and culture among staff. In this section I will describe the connection of these findings to the relevant literature presented in Chapter Two.

**Cohesive systems.** Superintendents identified the ability to develop cohesive systems as an opportunity of the TLCS. The coding scheme for this study defined systems as: “methods or organizational structures related to how decisions are made and how decisions are acted upon at various organizational levels. Organization and systems may include committee structures, hierarchies, or initiatives related to teaching and learning.” The desire on the part of participants to leverage TLCS as a system for their individual districts is consistent with relevant literature on policy implementation. Bredeson and Kose (2007) noted to bolster urgency for internal initiatives superintendents utilize external policies to forward agendas related to collaboration and student achievement. Participants viewed the ability to distribute authority throughout the organization as an opportunity to scale-up district initiatives and build individual capacity using the TLCS as the method of urgency.

Participants discussed the difficulty in scaling up initiatives prior to the TLCS, specifically noting manpower and expertise. In making sense of TLCS, participants viewed TLCS as an opportunity to empower more individuals to be involved in district-wide efforts to improve teaching and learning, and they perceived this involvement as a systemic method for improving teacher connection to teaching and learning initiatives. Perceptions shared aligned with the research on the value of distributed leadership approaches in connecting teachers to initiatives. For example, Paulu and Winters (1998) published results from a national forum on teacher leadership in which participants reported the value of involvement in decision-making and idea sharing through teacher leadership structures as generating
connections to school initiatives. Additionally, Hart (1995) examined several common teacher leadership models and found teacher leadership as a useful structure in addressing the varied demands faced in schools that are above the ability of a single individual, the principal, the fully address. The perceived ability of TLCS to succeed as a system lens by empowering others where other initiatives have failed also aligns with research on educational reform initiatives.

Findings of this study suggested that the TLCS was perceived by participants as a way to provide an organizational structure for success, which was perceived by participants as being able to provide a structure from which more specific technical initiatives could flow. In a summary review of educational reform, Fullan (1982, 2009) found that educators often take on reform efforts but lack the capacity to systematize the reform. As a result, they trivialize the core elements of the reform, changing the language and modifying only superficial structures while leaving the current practices that were the focus of the reform largely unchanged. Participants’ perceptions in this area suggested a desire to change more than superficial structures to maximize the opportunities of these required organizational structures. The TLCS’s required adherence to specific organizational structures was perceived as a lever for urgency to shift organizational structures participants’ districts. To this end, participants perceived TLCS as an umbrella initiative under which other disparate initiatives could be placed to develop a coherent message and district-wide approaches to teaching and learning. The result of viewing the TLCS as a systemic approach to school reform was a reported opportunity to build teaching and learning capacity in staff.
**Capacity development.** A second finding related to research question two was a perceived opportunity to develop the individual and collective capacity of staff in the improvement of teaching and learning. Capacity was defined in this study as: “The skills and abilities of staff to deliver effective instruction to meet student needs. Staff capacity could include the ability to develop and deliver quality lessons or assessments.” Ackerman and McKenzie (2006) proposed teachers do not fully harness their inherent power unless they go beyond their classrooms and impact other teachers. While 11 of the participants reported participation in their teacher leadership coaching structures were voluntary, all perceived greater buy-in and participation resulting from the quality of teacher leader action. These actions were consistent with the literature’s attempt to define quality teacher leadership.

While the literature has not yielded a unified definition of teacher leadership, it has noted actions associated with teacher leadership. These associated actions include: The creation of empowerment through professional learning communities (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000); a focus on connecting entire learning communities (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002); and a focus on instructional leadership, sustainability of improvement (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995), teacher experimentation, use of powerful practices (Wasley, 1991), and commitment to continuous learning (Fullan, 1994).

Participants reported a perceived increase in staff capacity in the deliver quality teaching and learning experiences, offering examples of how the TLCS fulfills these aforementioned criteria. Participants perceived teachers to be functioning as professional learning communities both within and beyond their buildings at the district level. They reported a feeling that teacher leaders and principals were acting as instructional leaders in facilitating teaching and learning initiatives. They also reported a perceived increased use of targeted
teaching strategies as well as increased use of teacher leadership structures. The perceived ability to build staff capacity was rooted in perceptions of system elements that are consistent with research on effective teacher leader structures. The relevant literature was also consistent with findings related to participant perceptions of capacity development of building principals.

There were only two participants who noted a difficulty with principals accepting the TLCS structures, but all noted a change in the types conversations had with their building principals. Several studies have supported the notion that teacher leader effectiveness is significantly impacted by the support of the principal. For example, Bishop, Tinley, and Berman (1997) described the role of the principal in establishing the appropriate school culture for teacher leadership, recognizing teacher leaders and inspiring teacher leader confidence. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) conducted case study analysis of three teacher leaders and found the principal as a key player in developing school organizational structures that either nurtured or inhibited teacher leadership. Hart, (1995) suggested in the study of non-hierarchical models for teacher leadership that the relationship between the principal and teacher leaders is key in successful teacher leadership initiatives. Participants noted a perceived growth in their principal’s ability to understand best practices for teaching and learning as well as facilitate instructional leadership with the additional support brought by TLCS. However, the limitations of this study did not allow for an investigation of principal capacity or the influence of superintendents’ involvement in teacher leadership processes on the capacity of principals.

The first finding of cohesive systems and second finding capacity development were closely linked. The systemic lens of TLCS has been perceived to provide opportunities the
structures needed for capacity development. Related to systems and capacity development was a participant perception that TLCS has influenced their staff culture and climate.

**Enhanced culture and climate.** The opportunity of the TLCS to positively impact staff culture and climate was the third finding related to research question one. The coding scheme for this study defined culture and climate as including “willingness to engage in professional learning and coaching structures. Climate and culture can also relate to the working relationship between staff and students and/or management and staff.” Participants perceived the additional time spent with teachers in the formalized application processes and subsequent implementation activities as positively influencing the way staff approach their work, each other and their leaders. Participants reported better relations with their teacher associations/ unions as well as a perceived increase in mutual understanding and respect for role challenges between teachers and administrators. In the analysis of participant statements, these new working relationships emerged as factor participants used to describe the perceived success of the TLCS system.

The reported perceived positive influence of the TLCS on staff climate and culture fits the general research on the topic of distributed leadership’s impact on staff culture and climate. Hartley (2009) discussed the appeal of and subsequent acceptance of systems designed to distribute leadership; and noted: “It (distributed leadership) has considerable appeal…even though – in education – there exists virtually no evidence of a direct causal relationship between distributed leadership and pupil attainment” (p. 148). Early progress reports on the TLCS have been consistent with Hartley’s assertion. TLCS studies and reports have indicated a high level of buy-in, even though they also clearly noted the actual impact was too early to determine. For example, mixed methods analysis on the perception of TLCS
by Iowa teachers and administrators has reported generally positive attitudes toward the system, but did not draw lines between the system and student achievement (Citkowicz, Brown-Sims, Williams, & Gerdeman, 2016; Iowa Department of Education, 2016). In fact, several districts in these reported findings did not improve in student achievement metrics, a finding also expressed by all, but two participants.

Findings related to research question one were consistent with the literature on teacher leadership, policy, and superintendent roles. The opportunity for a cohesive system in which individual and collective capacity can be developed with an outcome of enhanced climate and culture fits with the opportunities available and reported in the literature.

**Research Question Two: What Do Superintendents Perceive as the Major Challenges of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?**

In response to research question two, I identified three findings: “Participation Requirements,” “Teacher Leader Turnover,” and “Sustainability Concerns.” The first finding, “participation requirements,” described participant challenges related to achieving the required 25% teacher leadership requirement. The second finding, “teacher leader turnover,” described participant perceptions of not wanting to see turnover in key teacher leadership positions. The third finding, “sustainability concerns,” described perceived challenges related to the metrics that would ultimately be used to measure the impact of the system as well as concern for the power state lawmakers have on the future of the system. In this section, I describe the connection of these findings to the relevant literature presented in Chapter Two. More specifically, I discuss how the findings related to the challenges have not been presented in relevant literature.
Participation requirements. Participants reported the requirement to have 25% of teachers involved in leadership structures as a challenge. This challenge manifested in two related ways. The first manifestation of this challenge was finding enough interested, high quality individuals to serve in teacher leader capacities. Participants reported wanting quality over quantity in these positions. The second manifestation of this theme was the difficulty in defining the roles of teacher leaders who also serve as full-time or un-released classroom teachers.

Research supporting the 25% requirement was absent from the literature. The review of literature related to teacher leadership or distributed leadership in schools did not yield a recommended number or percentage of teacher leaders required for successful teacher leadership. Participants reported concern for having to select lower skilled or unqualified teacher leaders simply to meet participation requirements based on a number that in their perception and my review appear arbitrary. Related to this concern of participation, the findings suggested some of the teacher leader positions are unneeded.

All participants shared their ongoing perception of the effectiveness of teachers serving in teacher leader positions who are also full-time classroom teachers. Participants noted changing the job descriptions or purpose of these individuals almost yearly. While participants expressed the 25% requirement as a challenge, none noted using these positions outside of their intended use as outlined in their TLCS applications.

In their ongoing work to define teacher leader roles, none of the participants noted teacher leader use for managerial functions. While participants did note ongoing effort to define teacher leader roles, none noted the desire to have them used for building management
purposes. None of the interviewed participants noted teacher leader use for management of buildings or to assist the principal with roles and responsibilities outside of instruction.

A body of teacher leadership research reviewed for this study suggested a tendency to use teacher leaders as needed, rather than in line with intended purposes. For example, Stone, Horejs and Lomas (1997) used case study methodology to study teacher leadership at each level of school, elementary, middle and high, finding a tendency to utilize teachers outside of teacher leader roles based on management needs of the building. The findings of the current study related to studies by Danielson (2005) and Neumerski (2013) who revealed a tendency in relevant teacher leader literature to utilize teacher leaders outside of their intended roles.

Participants in the current study reported a perception that their TLCS has been implemented in such a way to protect the role of teacher leaders from use as building managers. Therefore, this study yielded data suggesting the TLCS as implemented by these superintendents protected teacher leader roles and falls in line with research on how to avoid misuse of teacher leaders for school management functions. To avoid this tendency for management uses, Muijis and Harris (2003) posited teacher leadership should be defined as roles and responsibilities as evidenced by collaboration and collegiality. Muijis and Harris suggested the three tasks of leadership through coaching and facilitation, leading teacher development in teaching and learning, and modeling development of effective teaching in a comprehensive review of teacher leadership literature.

This universally perceived challenge from participants of this study is important in that the basis for the requirement does not appear to be rooted in relevant research related to distributed leadership or teacher leadership. The concern for identifying enough high-quality teachers to fill the required positions along with the challenges the requirement poses for
defining roles of teacher leaders who also teach full time are important characteristics of this perceived challenge. However, the discussion of this finding did yield an important unintended finding that teacher leaders in the TLCS were perceived as being utilized for teacher leadership and not falling victim to the imposed managerial duties present in the literature. Therefore, while this study suggested a concern for role definitions and quantity of teacher leaders, it also indicated teacher leaders were being utilized as intended and not to provide extra management support for building principals.

Teacher leader turnover. The second finding related to research question two dealt with challenges related to keeping perceived high-quality individuals in teacher-leader positions. As previously mentioned, the TLCS requires an annual application and appointment process. Participants in this study did not report a desire to have these positions turn over and, while they did conduct the yearly application and selection process as required, they did not turn over key positions such as full-time released teachers.

Participants’ desire to keep teacher leaders in their positions long-term was framed as a desire to maintain capacity built in of those teachers. This leadership capacity, in the perception of the participants, required a great deal of time and training which participants reported concern about losing if the positions turn over. Participants noted teacher leaders coming into their own, only after given a chance to grow in their roles. This finding was not consistent with relevant research on teacher leadership. Spillance et al. (2004) described distributed leadership as having multiple leaders in the organization and did not suggest limiting teacher leadership to a few people or a formalized hierarchy. When analyzing this finding in relation to the first finding of participation requirements, it appeared that participants were viewing teacher leadership as the role of a few, rather than as a
responsibility of all, which could account for this concern of turning over teacher leaders in key positions. In this sense, the findings suggested the conceptualization that teacher leadership is the role of some, but not all in the organization. This conceptualization contrasted with Ogawa and Bossert’s (1995) assertion that leadership is an organizational quality in which positional leadership and teacher leadership are inseparable in the overall understanding of leadership practice. The hierarchical structures specified by the TLCS appeared to support this assertion through its requirement for defined roles and specified quantities of teacher leaders.

This finding appeared to be rooted in the reality that the TLCS creates a new hierarchical system in which some teachers receive training and support to become teacher leaders and others do not. I was unable to locate any relevant literature that supported the formalization of roles and hierarchies in teacher leadership systems. However, the evidence presented suggested that all teachers should be involved in the teacher leadership process.

Sustainability concerns. Two major themes emerged from collected data related to the concern for the long-term sustainability of the TLCS: (1) a perceived disconnect between the metrics outlined for success and those who would be ultimately used to measure the success of the TLCS if the program were called into question; and (2) the current nature of Iowa politics in relation to the economy. The reported challenges of sustainability were highly contextual to the current state of Iowa politics and the relative newness of the TLCS. While these specific concerns were outside the realm of the relevant research, the nature of these concerns aligned to research on educational policy reform.

How policies are designed and received plays a profound impact on how they are implemented and effects implementation. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) claimed “Polices
work by bringing the resources of government – money, rules, and authority – into the
service of political objectives; and by using those resources to influence the action of
individuals and institutions” (p. 133). Matland (1995) explained successful implementation
as “…its ability to execute faithfully the goals and means present in the statutory mandate” (p.
155). The methods used to engage actors in the policy reform ultimately impact success and
fidelity of implementation.

The nature of the Iowa-specific concerns related to sustainability have been evident in
this line of research. The measurements given in the policy design differed greatly from
previous policy metrics of student achievement indicators such as standardized test scores,
graduation rates, and college entrance. In the “execution of the statutory mandate”,
superintendents felt a great deal of uncertainty related to the political nature of the system in
a context of state funding reductions resulting from slower than expected economic growth.
The concern on the part of superintendents related to the uncertainty regarding measurability
of impact and political nature of the TLCS suggested a perception that Iowa school reform
had taken a linear trajectory in the past which overlooked the complexity leading to
disconnection between policy as written and policy as enacted. Weaver-Hightower (2008)
utilized an ecology metaphor to describe policy analysis as “complex, interdependent, and
intensely political” (p. 154). This finding suggested that TLCS provided a break with this
linear trajectory and, therefore, caused concern on the part of superintendents whose
experience with reform has largely been to ensure linear implementation of policy.

While the perceived opportunities of the TLCS were largely consistent with literature
addressing teacher leadership, policy reform and instructional leadership, the challenges were
largely rooted in items that were outside of the relevant literature referenced in Chapter Two.
Given the nature of the TLCS as providing specific organizational structures and its differing approach to measurement and accountability, the third finding revealed a perceived gravitation toward instructional leadership approaches on the part of participants.

**Research Question Three: How Do Iowa Public School District Superintendents Perceive and Express Changes to Their Instructional Leadership Activities in Support of District Level Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) Development and Implementation?**

The third research question was designed to discover participant perceptions related to their reflection and conceptualization of their instructional leader role in the context of TLCS. There were three findings related to this research question: “the superintendent as instructional leader;” “perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership;” and “implications of TLCS on instructional leadership.” In the section entitled “the superintendent as instructional leader,” I present findings related to the participants’ perception of the general primacy of this role in the superintendency as well as their perceived responsibility to assume this role. In the section entitled “perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership,” I present summary characteristics of participant described defining characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership. In the final section, entitled “implications of TLCS on instructional leadership,” I discuss participant perceptions that the TLCS has enhanced or increased reflection and thinking about their instructional leader role by sharing themes of general perceptions and themes related to the aforementioned instructional leadership summary characteristics. In this section I describe the connection of these findings to the relevant literature presented in Chapter Two.
**Superintendent as instructional leader.** The first finding related to research question three describes general perceptions and approaches toward superintendent instructional leadership. These findings provide a frame for the other findings of this research question by conceptualizing how participants approached instructional leadership in their role as part of and outside of TLCS-related responsibilities. All participants in this study not only felt a perceived importance of instructional leadership, but also noted the other roles and responsibilities pulled them away from instructional leadership. These findings were consistent with the literature on superintendent instructional leadership.

Relevant literature related to the instructional leader role of the superintendent discussed the pull between instructional leadership and other demands of the superintendency. While there has been a recognition that the superintendent be knowledgeable and skilled in the areas of curriculum and instruction, momentum for conceptualizing the superintendent as an instructional leader has ebbed and flowed due to the various political, board and community expectations (Peterson, Barnett, Bjork, & Kowalski, 2005). The findings of this study were consistent with the literature in that participants in this study perceived a pull to other positional roles such as finance, human resource management, and district communication/spokesperson. Furthermore, participants reported frustration regarding the time these roles take from their instructional leader role. The literature also pointed to the need to examine superintendent instructional leadership in terms of their approaches to filling this role in the context of their districts.

Relevant literature pointed to the approach used in this dissertation research to examine both how superintendents perceive instructional leadership and how they act on these perceived characteristics. A critical aspect to understand how and why superintendents
assume the role of instructional leader is comprehend how these leaders approach leadership practice and how this approach supports systems of teaching and learning (Morgan et al., 2002; Spillane et al., 2004). Therefore, the process of identifying perceived characteristics and analyzing those characteristics against perceived approaches in implementing TLCS aligned with existing approaches found in the literature.

**Perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership.** Four interrelated summary characteristics emerged: “communication,” “empowering others,” “personal engagement,” and “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.” As previously noted in the review of literature, the examination of the superintendent instructional leader role has been limited and focused heavily on the study of the role of principals as instructional leaders (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 1994; Thomas, 2001). However, Leithwood et al. (2014) identified 12 district-level actions that supported improved student learning, the Wallace Foundation conducted research of better performing districts to identify seven central office actions associated with improved student learning (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010), and Hoyle et al. (2005) identified 12 ways superintendents can bring coherence for system change in teaching and learning that suggest superintendent actions associated with instructional leadership. In Chapter Two, I synthesized the research suggesting superintendent instructional leadership behavior and the research related to principal instructional leadership into six summary characteristics of instructional leadership (see Table 2.1).

When comparing the four emergent summary characteristics developed from participants’ definitions of superintendent instructional leadership (“communication,” “empowering others,” “personal engagement,” and “facilitating a vision for teaching and
learning,“ with the six summary characteristics outlined in Table 2.1, the findings of this study aligned with relevant studies related to instructional leadership. Figure 5.1 provides a summary of these connections in terms of best fit with relevant literature and participants’ perceptions of role definitions.

Table 5.1. Summary of participant characteristics related to characteristics identified in the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Establishing and communicating a vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative processes / Involving others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination and personal involvement in developing or redesigning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluating Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering others</td>
<td>Establishing and communicating a vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative processes / Involving others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building instructional capacity of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal engagement</td>
<td>Coordination and personal involvement in developing or redesigning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building instructional capacity of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating a vision for teaching and learning</td>
<td>Coordination and personal involvement in developing or redesigning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Align resources to instructional outcomes and teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes that emerged in the summary characteristic of “communication” aligned with literature related visioning of the program, facilitating collaborative processes, coordinating system redesign and monitoring and evaluating progress. Participants’ perceptions of their thinking about communication focused on developing understanding of new system structures and monitoring those structures for fidelity to district plans. Participant thinking
about communication was similar to the findings of Klar and Brewer (2013), who revealed in a mixed-method study of three high-needs middle school, conceptualized communication in terms of “setting direction” (p.772). Klar and Brewer found perceptions of instructional leaders building shared vision, fostering acceptance of group goals, creating performance expectations and communicating direction. These findings were similar to the way participants in this study described communication in the frame of superintendent instructional leadership.

Themes that emerged in the summary characteristics of “empowering others” aligned with literature related to communicating a vision, involving others, and building instructional capacity. In a comprehensive review of scholarly research on distributed leadership, Harris and Gronn (2008) noted resistance to teacher leadership as having an anti-democratic managerial bias. However, they also noted distributed leadership lays the groundwork for democratic leadership. Harris and Gronn claimed “de-monopolizing” leadership increases member voice thereby increases member participation in organizations. Harris and Gronn’s review of literature bringing together early distributed leadership theory, management formations, and contemporary conceptions of distributed leadership relate to the perceptions of the participants in this study. Perceptions of participant thinking related to empowering others included a feeling that these leaders were important to the facilitation and visioning of collaborative structures to increase what Harris and Gronn referred to as “voice.” Furthermore, they perceived this “voice” as the increased presence of teachers in TLCS structures as a conduit for capacity development.

Participants’ perceptions of “personal engagement” connected with relevant instructional leader literature related to coordination of systems and building instructional
capacity of staff. Participants thought about their personal engagement in terms understanding and responding to opportunities and challenges in the system so that their concept of the system’s potential to develop staff capacity could be fostered. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) conducted research on principals and teachers in high achieving schools using survey responses and document analysis of student achievement. In their study of school leader efficacy, Leithwood and Jantzi suggested that district organizational structures and conditions influenced leader efficacy. Participants’ perceptions of personal engagement aligned with this research in that the purpose of the reported involvement was to coordinate systems in a method to create situations in which capacity can be fostered and principals and teacher leaders can build efficacy in their roles.

In participants’ descriptions of “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning”, they described their perceptions related to setting a long-term vision for teacher leadership as well as their efforts to determine needed human and material resources in support of that system. Participants discussed their thinking about making sure their ability to align resources was utilized to support the vision. This aligned with the strategy of “strategic resourcing” identified in a meta-analysis conducted by Robinson et al. (2008, p. 656). Robinson et al., discussed strategic resourcing as allocating human and material resources in alignment with teaching and learning initiatives. Participants noted a perception of needing to protect TLCS and other resources by aligning plans, goals and visions of teaching and learning at local level.

The finding of alignment between summary characteristics in this study of superintendent instructional leadership and the summary characteristics found in the literature related to principal, superintendent, and central office instructional leadership
strengthens the findings of research question. This claim of strength is founded in the alignment with the criteria I utilized as a frame to develop findings related to perceived influences of the TLCS on these superintendents’ reflections and conceptualizations of their instructional leader role.

Influence of TLCS on superintendents’ instructional leadership. The findings suggested that the TLCS can influence the instructional leadership behavior of Iowa superintendents. They also revealed the superintendent as a key player in the implementation of this policy. Participants noted a perceived ability to spend more time in the instructional leadership role as a result of leading the TLCS in their districts. The findings indicated the use of the instructional leader role as a strategy or approach to leverage opportunities presented by the TLCS and to mitigate challenges of the TLCS. While this finding was unique in that the role of the superintendent in TLCS it has not been examined prior to this study. The findings were consistent with research on the role of the superintendent in policy implementation.

Organizational management, policy development, and political negotiation often dominate the workflow and personal agenda of superintendents (Alsbury & Whitaker, 2007; Bjork, 1993; Candoli, 1995; Grogan, 2000). Kowalski (2001, 2005a, 2011) proposed the superintendency as evolving by adapting to various role conceptualizations over time including teacher-scholar, business manager, educational statesman, social scientist, and most recently communicator. Communication has traditionally been viewed as a skill; Kowalski (2005) contended that communication must be viewed as a role because virtually every modern school reform effort involves the superintendent working directly with teachers and principals. As a communicator, superintendents should play a key role at the
local level in school improvement efforts (Henkin, 1993; Murphy, 1994). However, discussion of school improvement issues can create conflict that administrators must have comfort in managing (Carlson, 1996; Kowalski, 2005a). This research on the role adaptation of superintendents aligned with the finding of this study that leaders perceived a shift toward an instructional leader role when leading implementation.

The literature has pointed to the responsibility of district leaders to mediate policy to their context through “…integrating and aligning purposes, goals, policies, and practices” to the policy instrument (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005, p. 58). Ball (1994) viewed policy as both “text” and “discourse.” On one hand, text is the physical policy documents whose words are used to influence but cannot ultimately control interpretation. Discourse, on the other hand, involves how people construct meaning and intent from the policy (Ball, 1994). In the case of this study, the role conceptualization based on the perceived needed adaptation to the TLCS, as a policy instrument was assuming the role of instructional leader. Therefore, the policy mediation that occurred in these participants’ districts was viewed through the lens of instructional leadership. Hence, the findings of this study demonstrated the ability of policy to influence the work and role development of superintendents, which were consistent with relevant research on the topic of educational policy implementation.

There was a noticeable divergence from established research in the consistency found in the opportunities and challenges identified as well as the perceived assumption of the instructional leader role. Scholars have noted “…profound differences in how local schools make sense [and respond to] state initiated changes” (Rossman & Wilson, 1996, p. 416). It was unclear if the unique nature of the TLCS as a policy that demands a specific
organizational structure contributed to the nearly universal findings related to sensemaking of opportunities and instructional leadership roles.

**Summary of Discussion**

A discussion of the themes emerging from the participants’ responses to the research questions revealed a connection between the findings of this study and the relevant research presented in Chapter Two. The opportunities provided through teacher leadership initiatives, discussed in response to research question one and the perceived opportunities of TLCS were consistent with the research. Superintendents perceived utilizing this policy in a way consistent with the relevant literature. Specifically, they reported mobilizing the TLCS as a system under which a myriad of current and future initiatives could be lensed to build staff capacity. Additionally, these systems of distributed leadership were perceived to be received by staff in a positive manner consistent with the broad appeal of distributed leadership initiatives noted in the literature.

While many of the findings for research question two were not included in relevant literature due to the uniqueness of the TLCS, it informed several important points about the program. For example, program requirements for having 25% of teachers participate which, in turn, contributed to concerns for quality and role definition as described by participants, did not appear to be based on any relevant research. Additionally, although the TLCS was perceived by participants to avoid the pitfalls of other hierarchical teacher leadership programs in that participants did not report utilizing teacher leaders for management or supervisory functions within schools. However, participants reported a great deal of concern regarding how the program will ultimately be measured and viewed in the contemporary political environment of Iowa.
Finally, findings related to research question three provided new insight regarding the potential influences of the TLCS on superintendents. The findings of this study were consistent with literature of the role of the superintendent in educational policy reform. The adaptability of the superintendent to needed demands of the policy were consistent as well as the finding that this particular policy led to the assumption of an instructional leader role were unique to this study.

Limitations

As a phenomenological study, this research was limited to the recollection of lived experiences of the participants. Data collected were limited to participants’ responses to the screening protocol and interviews. No superintendents were observed in their daily work. Furthermore, the study did not include any document analysis of TLCS materials of the participant districts nor were there methods to confirm actions described by superintendents. The finding of role influence was based on participant perception and could not be verified through this study.

Another important limitation related to the data collected was my role as a practicing superintendent which introduced researcher bias. I attempted to account for this bias by utilizing a coding framework to bracket my judgments in analysis. While I have not had close relationships with the participants, I am a peer. As a peer, I may have received more open conversation and/or may have received subjective information from participants due to my peer role and a desire to maintain professional standing in the eyes of other superintendents.

In addition, also related to my role as a superintendent is the potential limitation of researcher bias. As a superintendent implementing the teacher leadership system, there was not a way to fully account for my researcher bias. While I called attention to my researcher
role and described methodology to ensure trustworthiness and rigor, potential implicit researcher bias remains a limitation of this study.

Participants were selected using purposeful sampling after responding to a screening questionnaire (see Appendix D-1). By nature of the screening protocol, it should be noted that this study only examined superintendents who perceived some level of change in demands or challenges and involvement in teaching and learning as a result of the implementation process. This study did not include thoughts and perceptions of superintendents who did not perceive both an influence of TLCS on demands and personal involvement in teaching and learning. The study also did not include superintendents who either in year one of implementation or were not involved in their district’s application process.

Additionally, this research study did not examine how employees, students, parents or community members perceived the involvement of the participants in the TLCS application and implementation process. Participants shared a great deal about their increased communication with teacher leaders and principals in relation to the TLCS implementation process. They also noted this increased involvement did not cause burdensome pressure to their skills and abilities. This study was limited to perceptions of influence and was not designed to verify participants’ perceptions, rather to collect and analyze those perceptions. Therefore, the findings of this study should be viewed based on these limitations.

**Implications**

The purpose of this study was to investigate superintendents’ perceptions of their instructional leadership in the context of the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation
System. This section presents implications for practice in areas for people in the field of educational leadership.

**Practice**

**School leaders.** The use of phenomenology to investigate how superintendents make sense of and respond to the TLCS and subsequent impact of those sensemaking activities on superintendent role have several implications for school leaders. Research specifically examining the role of the superintendent in implementing instructional policy at the local level is incomplete and has often focused on the role of the principal (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Demir, 2015; Spanneut & Ford, 2008; Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park, 2008). The presence of an investigation of the superintendent as an instructional leader in the research has been limited, dominated by a small number of researchers whose work has largely been absent in contemporary journal publications (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson & Johansson, 1997; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Herman, 1990; Hord, 1993; Morgan et al., 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Petersen, 1998, 1999, 2002; Peterson, 1984; Wirt, 1990). However, the relevant literature has also indicated that the role of the superintendent in the leadership process is a significant factor in a district’s response to accountability for academic achievement (Fuhrman, 2003; Goertz & Massell, 2005).

This study addressed the superintendent’s role specifically, which has been overlooked in the statewide evaluation of the TLCS conducted by the American Institutes for Research (Citkowicz et al., 2016) in which superintendents were lumped together with other administrators, thus minimizing the unique nature of central office administration, principals, and superintendents. By examining perceptions of the superintendent work in context of the
TLCS, this study contributes to the thin body of research on the superintendent’s role in policy implementation and instructional leadership in the superintendency. The study also presents the first research that examines the superintendent in the context of TLCS.

The findings of this study suggested leaders are using TLCS as an opportunity to build cohesive district systems for capacity development and noted a corresponding positive enhancement of school climate and culture as a result. Building on the perceptions of participants of this study, leaders and policy makers can gain insight in the potential of this system as well how it is being used by superintendents as key actors in the implementation process. The findings also revealed perceived challenges related to the participation requirements of this system and the policy’s uncertain sustainability. Superintendents and other key educational leaders may take note in order to advocate for the revision of this policy based on foundational research regarding effective teacher leadership, which focuses on what teacher leaders can do to be effective instead of how many teacher leaders are needed.

An additional implication for school leadership is the influence of the required changes to district organizational structures on the study’s findings. The opportunities, challenges and instructional leader influences found in this study are in the context of a shift from a strict hierarchical school organizational structure to a flattened structure required by the TLCS. The findings of this study suggest a new demand for leader adaptability to function within a flattened school organizational structure. This change will require leaders to reflect on their values for involving others in the school improvement process and stretch their ability to engage others, including building administrators, to function within a new flatter organizational structure. Leaders’ ability to be adaptive to new district structures as
traditional hierarchies flatten through the introduction of non-administrative instructional hierarchies for teacher leadership will influence the success of the TLCS in the long-term.

This study revealed there is a need for a coordinated effort to gather or advocate for the use of consistent success metrics for the system proactively to respond to the financial and political context of the system. Finally, the participants of this study perceived an expansion in the frequency and primacy of their instructional leadership role in the context of TLCS implementation. The findings also revealed the superintendent is able to function as an instructional leader based on data in the form of summary characteristics regarding superintendent’s instructional leadership in its own right. These implications can impact the perception of the superintendent as an instructional leader as well as implications for how superintendents are trained and prepared.

**Instructional leadership.** The study revealed that superintendents can function as superintendents while at the same time attending to traditional district management and community relations roles. The participants of this study saw their engagement in the TLCS processes as a positive outcome of the implementation process. Superintendents should take note because of their position as a mediator of policy and their influence over district-level initiatives. Engagement in communication with the intent of listening, creating systems to empower teachers in school improvement efforts, personally engaging in the work and facilitating a vision of teaching and learning through human and material resource allocation could be utilized to accomplish federal, state or locally initiated system changes. As participants and the relevant literature noted while in the presence of the regular interference of other roles associated with the superintendency, superintendents will have to be purposeful in their attempts to demonstrate instructional leadership, lest they be drawn from this role.
Leadership preparation. The findings of this study also have implication for the preparation of school leaders in three major ways. First, school leadership programs should develop in potential superintendents the ability to understand how systemic organizational change differs from program implementation. The TLCS requires organizational changes at the district level. This study revealed the important role the superintendent can play in the development of district systems for teaching and learning. Findings suggested a need for superintendents to facilitate the development and monitoring of systems that empower teachers to lead at the district level. The superintendent of schools should be knowledgeable of and actively engaged in the development and implementation of teacher leadership structures if they are to experience success.

Second, the study revealed the need to develop skill in coaching and developing principals to support teacher leaders. Superintendents must be able to understand how to fully utilize these structures to foster success in teaching and learning initiatives. Participants in this study reported perceived changes in the conversations had with building principals in adjusting to this new structure and the additional voices. While leaders reported they did not perceive their skill sets were stretched by these new conversations, the general nature of the reported examples suggested superintendent support of principals may not have the level of impact they perceive.

Third, superintendent and administrator preparation programs should include practical examination of teacher leader, distributed leadership and collaborative structures. The participants of this study noted the perceived ability to bolster current initiatives and embark on initiatives not before possible. They credited this newly perceived focus and momentum in teaching and learning to the presence of the teacher leaders and the
collaborative structures brought by TLCS. Regardless of funding stream, the findings of this study revealed a positive attitude toward teacher leadership as well as participant perceptions of initial success and potential impact on student achievement. Therefore, exposure to these structures should be included in superintendent preparation programs.

**Policy.** Implications of this study regarding educational policy development can be summarized in three general areas: consideration of superintendent influences on policy implementation, policies that provide organizational structures, and use of non-arbitrary research-based criteria. This study revealed the role of the superintendent regarding his or her influence on both policy fidelity and policy flexibility. Participants in this study were positive toward the policy in general because it was perceived as a structure under which current and future initiatives could be implemented systemically. Nevertheless, the finding related to the 25% participation requirement, which challenged participants to find enough quality individuals and continue trial and error methods at teacher leader role identification, did not appear to be grounded in relevant research.

**Implementation.** Werts et al. (2013) suggested the actors implementing policy are key to the success of policies aimed at changing practice. A gap between policy and practice exists in part because depending on the magnitude of change required, policy actors react either as skilled implementers or unskilled targets dependent on their capacity to un-learn and re-learn the necessary capabilities to implement the change (Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007). Discussion regarding the role of district leaders in responding to accountability measures and policy implementation is often absent from analysis when determining success of initiatives (Bredesen & Kose, 2007; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). The findings of this study revealed that educational policy makers should consider the superintendent as a mediating
factor in designing policy requirements. In the perception of these participants, the TLCS by nature of its requirement to modify organizational structures for teaching and learning, required the ongoing attention and involvement of the superintendent of schools. In the development of policy, policy designers should note this mediating role as well as the skills and knowledge needed to effectively implement the policy for its intended outcomes.

**Organizational structure.** Participants reported the draw to TLCS as a lever to bring systemic focus to disparate initiatives. For example, in this study all participants valued collaboration, but prior to TLCS felt they had no financial vehicle to fully realize systemic collaborative structures for improving teaching and learning. In this sense, current and proposed teaching and learning initiatives, including responses to community context challenges, were bundled together under the lens of TLCS. In the introduction, I reviewed a myriad of recent initiatives aimed at improving Iowa schools. However, the participants of this study did not perceive TLCS as another initiative; rather, they perceived it as the initiative under which other initiatives could be lensed. In consideration of intended outcomes of future policies, policy makers should also consider how changes brought could impact other initiatives on the table. Specific to Iowa, policy designers should consider the ability of TLCS to be a delivery mechanism for future academic achievement-oriented policies or policy interpretations.

**Non-arbitrary research-based criteria.** In the review of relevant literature, I could not locate a percentage or number representing a tipping point of participation for which teacher leadership can be more successful. However, in the findings for this study, each superintendent expressed challenges related to the 25% requirement of the TLCS. This challenge manifested itself in concern for hiring enough high-quality teachers as well as
challenges to define roles for teacher leaders who also teach full time. While size of district played a factor in actually meeting the participation requirement, the finding related to concerns for finding high quality participants was universal.

The implication for policy from this finding was related to closely examining typical or standard district contexts when setting technical policy requirements. The selection of the 25% requirement appeared to be the result of policy negotiations or consideration of some existing teacher leadership models and was not grounded in educational research. Policy makers should take caution when designing flexibility of requirements by foreshadowing their impacts and consulting relevant research. In a study of participants who served districts representing a variety of district context, the finding of a universal challenge related to this requirement is important and bears consideration. When continuing to examine TLCS structures the participation requirement should be considered and re-designed to assure a measure of quality rather than quantity.

**Research**

Through the data collection and analysis process, the actions and justifications provided by participants revealed the process of sensemaking when faced with events that disrupted the normal functioning of the district regarding teaching and learning initiatives. It was clear from the connection between perceived opportunities and challenges that leaders were utilizing the sensemaking process of *creation, interpretation and enactment*. The result of this sensemaking activity was the assumption of an instructional leader role in the implementation of the TLCS. This study has implications related to both research and theory, which will be described.
**Measures.** The implication of this dissertation research regarding the study of superintendent instructional leadership is threefold. First, this study adds to a thin line of research on superintendent instructional leadership. The summary characteristics of instructional leadership in the superintendency developed from participant responses contributes to the body of research on instructional leadership from the position of the superintendency in the context of other roles inherent in the position. It also develops the line of research related to policy influence on the superintendent as he or she performs the policy mediation role.

Second, through the qualitative phenomenological approach used, researchers can gain insight into the meaning superintendents attach to actions. This was evident in the process I used to have participants reflect on answers given in the screening process (see Appendix D-2; Interview 2, questions 8 & 9). If I had limited utilization of these collected responses to their responses, the ability to cause reflection and glean insight into the processes driving these perceptions would have been lost. The reflective inquiry utilized in qualitative method allows for a deeper understanding and the development of meaning that adds context to the role of the superintendent as policy implementer and instructional leader.

Third, the selection criteria used for the study involved the process of having a screening protocol which allowed for the selection of participants who had similar exposure to the phenomenon under study. This screening protocol allowed for purposeful selection if individuals who both reported some level of influence of the TLCS as well as had similar exposure to the program [application and implementation]. The use of “additional support” as a criterion for selection was useful in developing three groups of participants. With the wide-ranging school sizes in Iowa, I was unable to identify through relevant literature a good
definition of “small,” “medium,” or “large” schools. The utilization of additional assistance mitigated the school size effect as different district contexts have different layers of administrative structures and role divisions under the superintendent. While additional assistance did line up with school size, it allowed for more diversity in the one to two additional assistance category, as the category varied the most with size and administrative structures of support under the superintendent. I would recommend this selection method for future studies of policy reform influences.

**Theory.** The study also has implications for the application of theory and theoretical frameworks. The analytical framework for this study was sensemaking perspective. This framework was chosen to underpin the design of this study because the TLCS is an interruption to current school district organizational structures. I was interested in if in working through these interruptions, superintendents’ roles were affected. Therefore, the methodology of this study was designed to gather information on events within the TLCS, investigate through the perceptions of participants how they processed these events to conclusion and to gain insight into perceived outcomes of these sensemaking processes. Also, through the selection criteria I was able to consider factors of individual district contexts that influenced sensemaking processes.

Weick (1995) posited the idea that the sense-making process for leaders causes policies to look differently in different school environments due to the leader’s ability to understand the intent of the policy and the underlying social environment in which it will be implemented. Sensemaking forwards that meaning cannot be entirely clear up from and develops as an interactive process within contexts (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, Touré, & Yamashita, 2009; Fullan, 1982; Seashore Louis, 2010; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002),
making it a social process and an individual cognitive process (Weick, 1995) The use of sensemaking as the analytical framework for this study contributes to previous application of this theory in education. Sensemaking has been used to examine similar initiatives in other contexts similar to the distribution of leadership or decentralization of decision-making the TLCS brings to the educational setting (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). The application of sensemaking as analytical framework was consistent with its application as a tool to understand how organizations make sense of change to return to the core activities of that organization, in this case educating children. However, in the study of the superintendent and his or her competing job demands, I had to take great care in the application of sensemaking to draw conclusions on TLCS as the context and instructional leadership as the phenomenon.

By selecting a sensemaking perspective, I viewed TLCS as the overarching constituent, which Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) called “episodes.” Sandberg and Tsoukas defined episodes as instances that “…take place from the moment some aspects of the ongoing processes of organizing are interrupted until they are satisfactorily restored (or in some cases permanently interrupted).” Weick (1969, 1979) contended that organizing is a function of individuals taking action interactively to confront their environment. Then they seek to make meaning of this environment by chunking, labeling and connecting their lived experiences. I utilized the methodology of the study in an attempt to discover the meaning participants ascribed to the TLCS and the role of the superintendent in its implementation.

Through the application of methodology, I found it difficult at times to separate TLCS influences from other cognitive and socially constructed factors of sensemaking. This required a great deal of reflection throughout the coding process to separate event-specific
information from information gleaned from the overall system of TLCS. The role responsibilities of superintendents are difficult to separate from their other roles of CEO to the board, chief communicator, bureaucrat and politician. Weaver-Hightower (2008) used an ecology metaphor to describe this challenge of separating the actions of individual actors from their context. It is important to understand how leaders do not make decisions or live experiences in isolation, but how they conduct these actions as part of the ecology of their district. As a result, I took care in the coding process to identify findings related to the phenomenon of leadership through the lens of events, not the overall system. Then I reassembled these ideas by considering overall system factors of TLCS specifically. The coding scheme allowed for this separation to a certain degree, aiding the process. Therefore, I would recommend sensemaking as more applicable to events within a larger context than the larger context itself. In this case TLCS was the larger context. For study of superintendents in the context of large reforms like TLCS, I would suggest the identification of a theoretical or analytical framework that focuses more on change theory.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of this study contribute to the relevant research on the understanding of superintendent instructional leader conceptualizations as well as the role of the superintendent in implementing policy. Additionally, this study opens lines of research specific to the influence of state-initiated teacher leadership systems of superintendent sensemaking activities. While these contributions suggest several lines of inquiry, I recommend two qualitative studies and one quantitative study that are closely tied to the new line of inquiry created through this study. These recommendations are based on the key findings that superintendents perceived the TLCS to influence their reflection of their
instructional leadership and that superintendents perceived the TLCS as having the opportunity to build cohesive systems, develop staff capacity and improve culture and climate. These studies are situation within the aforementioned limitations of the study.

**Qualitative Studies**

The aforementioned limitations of this study suggested a relevant line of qualitative analysis to further investigate the influence of TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership. I would propose the following research questions to guide this additional study:

In what ways do superintendent perceptions of perceived influence of TLCS on teaching and learning align with perceptions of staff and student metrics? I would recommend case study methodology to gain closer insight into superintendents’ perceived outcomes of TLCS at the district level. I would suggest interviews or focus groups be conducted with teacher leaders and principals with the intent of discovering their perceptions of the superintendent’s impact of perceived changes to role. Additionally, I would suggest document analysis to be used to gain a clearer understanding of the districts’ previous, current and perceived reality in terms of teaching and learning initiatives and the outcomes of those initiatives. Such document analysis must include the examination of TLCS application materials submitted plan changes and yearly monitoring reports to the state. This type of qualitative analysis could help to better identify areas of needed growth or development for superintendents when taking on instructional leadership roles.

Additionally, given the high level of agreement regarding opportunities and challenges and those factors’ influence on instructional leadership, I would suggest the replication of this study with superintendents who were not involved in the initial application process for their TLCS systems. In addition to the replication of research questions in this
study, I would suggest the pursuit of an additional research question: What elements of the initial applications do and do not align district need based on your perceptions? This line of inquiry would also contribute to the body of research on superintendent instructional leadership and their policy implementation role as well as allow for the investigation of consistency in role behavior for superintendents who were not involved in the design of the program but were tasked with implementing it. Of specific interest to this line of study would be the extent to which superintendents report they are taking on the instructional leader role as well as the roles they do assume in implementing a process that they were not involved in designing.

This study was comprised of willing participants who applied within the first two years and were highly motivated to implement the system. Given leader turnover in the state, the number of superintendents who meet my criteria for participation is dwindling and while this line of research shows the influence of TLCS from application through implementation as a baseline for examining the potential of TLCS as a leverage for superintendent instructional leadership, the findings presented will need to be examined against the ability of superintendents to assume leadership roles in preexisting systems.

**Quantitative Studies**

Similar to the previous qualitative suggestion, I would also suggest quantitative analysis through survey methodology to cast a wider net related to perceptions of the superintendent as instructional leader. This study would be guided by the following central research question: do the perceptions of staff match the perceptions of the superintendents’ conceptualization of his/her instructional leader role? The purpose of this study would be to examine the relationship between the perceived influences of the superintendent as
instructional leader and the trend data of metrics associated with both teacher perceptions of district TLCS initiatives and student growth metrics. Such a survey could be built to ask staff and administrations their perception of their local superintendent’s engagement in the four areas of instructional leadership found in this study: communication, empowering others, personal engagement, and facilitating a vision for teaching and learning. Such a study could help support understanding of the impact or influence of a growing instructional leader role in the superintendency.

**Conclusion**

With the price tag of $150 million per year, the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS) represented a significant investment in Iowa Schools. The intent of this system was growing student achievement through growing the capacity of teachers to deliver quality teaching and learning experiences. However, the findings of this study suggested that the influence of the system goes beyond teachers to influence the way superintendents think about and approach their work.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to knowledge of how superintendents conceptualize their instructional leadership in the context of the Iowa TLCS. While relevant research has pointed to the role of the superintendent as being important in a local response to policy, this line of research does not address superintendent instructional leadership conceptualizations in the context of a teacher leadership system requiring the organizational structure changes of TLCS. Furthermore, perceptions of superintendents of the TLCS in the state-level analysis of the system have not separated the unique perceptions of superintendents or studied his or her role conceptualizations related to the implementation of TLCS.
To develop a context and framework for this study, I reviewed relevant literature related to teacher leadership, the role of the superintendent, instructional leadership, and policy implementation. Research on teacher leadership suggested a strong draw to these structures by nature of their distribution of decision-making and input. However, the development of a unifying definition of teacher leadership was noted as difficult by researchers. In addition, also relevant was the role of school leaders in creating the conditions in which teacher leadership can flourish, including facilitating a collaborative culture, recognizing teacher leaders and avoiding using teacher leaders to fulfill management and supervisory responsibilities.

The literature related to the superintendent’s role discussed the evolution of the role based on the societal and local contexts of schools. These evolving roles included teacher-scholar, business manager, educational statesman (politician), social scientist and communicator. This role evolution suggested a needed flexibility in how superintendents view their required roles to respond to current realities in their district context. Research related to instructional leadership relied heavily on research related to the principal role, with the superintendent role being largely ignored in the relevant research. Using relevant literature on principal, superintendent and central office factors associated with improved teaching and learning, I summarized six characteristics of instructional leadership for superintendents: (1) “establishing and communicating a vision,” (2) “collaborative processes / involving others,” (3) “coordination and personal involvement in developing/redesigning systems,” (4) “building instructional capacity,” (5) “monitoring and evaluating impacts,” and (6) “aligning resources to instructional outcomes and teaching and learning.”
Research related to educational policy implementation literature noted the role of the superintendent in mediating policy at the local level. Research suggested the way in which the superintendent perceives the policy and perceives his or her place in the implementation process impacts the overall success of the policy. As much of the research found in the literature review for this study described perceived characteristics and individual influences, qualitative inquiry developed as the appropriate methodology for a study aimed at contributing to this body of evidence.

The methodology for this study was phenomenology. In this methodology, the phenomenon under investigation was superintendent instructional leadership and the context for the phenomenon was TLCS. Purposeful sampling of Iowa superintendents who were involved in the application and implementation of the TLCS in their district were selected. Additionally, in an attempt to capture perceptions of superintendents representing varying Iowa school district contexts, participants were placed in groups based on their responses to the additional administrative support they had while working to implement TLCS.

Participants were also asked if they perceived any initial influence to their leadership or involvement in teaching and learning initiatives since working on TLCS. In order to frame thinking around participant perceptions in a method consistent with the relevant literature, the analytical framework of sensemaking was applied. TLCS required interruption to district organizational structures therefore, can be perceived as a sensemaking episode.

In an attempt to understand how participants thought about these interruptions as well as how thinking and outcomes of this thinking influenced conceptualization of instructional leadership, a coding scheme was developed from sensemaking perspective. Data were collected in the form of statements from semi-structured interviews. The coding scheme
developed allowed for coding data into constituents of sensemaking: “events,” “processes,” “outcomes,” and “influencing factors.” Data were further refined through this coding structure into characteristics of these constituents. These characteristics were then coded into research questions. Finally, data related to each research question were coded, yielding the emergent codes representing the key findings of this study as well as disconfirming evidence that added depth to understanding participant perception.

Nine themes emerged from an analysis of the data gathered from 15 Iowa superintendents who participated in the study in response to the three research questions. Findings yielded a great deal of consistency across participants, with key findings representing perceptions of at least 12 of the 15 participants.

In response to research question one, the opportunities of “cohesive systems,” “capacity development,” and “enhanced climate and culture” emerged as shared perceptions. Participants perceived TLCS as an opportunity to build cohesive systems whereby different teaching and learning initiatives could be viewed collectively under a systemic lens as opposed to standing alone. The coding structure for the study indicated a perception among participants that this system coherence was related to the system’s ability to expand involvement through the empowerment of teacher leaders and to provide a systemic lens through which initiatives could be collectively examined and acted upon.

In response to research question two, the challenges of “participation requirements,” “teacher leader turnover,” and “sustainability” emerged as shared perceptions among participants. Participants perceived the “participation requirements” of the TLCS as a challenge to their work in supporting teacher leadership initiatives. TLCS districts were required to have 25% of their teachers engaged in some form of teacher leadership.
challenge was universal among participants and was described as stemming from two concerns. The first concern related to a perceived inability to find enough high quality interested candidates. The second reported concern regarded the inability to fully realize and define the role of teacher leaders who are also full-time classroom teachers.

The second perceived challenge that emerged was concern for teacher leader turnover. Participants discussed a perceived concern for lost capacity if teacher leaders are lost to other positions or go back to the classroom. Therefore, there was a reported resistance to turning over teacher leaders, especially in key full-released positions of leadership.

The third challenge perceived by participants was a concern for the long-term sustainability of the program. Participants expressed concerns for a perceived disconnect between the program metrics outlined in the TLCS and the success metrics that might be interpreted by legislators if the program’s success is ever challenged. While participants expressed feelings that the program was successful, they noted slow development of student achievement metrics, which they felt could undermine support for the system, given its $150M price tag. In addition to perceived unclear metrics, participants expressed a related concern for the political nature of the initiative in context of contemporary economic challenges and policies aimed at flexible use of funding streams outside of their codified intent in law.

In response to research question three, three themes emerged in relationship to participant conceptualizations of the superintendent as an instructional leader: (1) “the superintendent as instructional leader”; (2) “perceived characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership”; and “influence of the TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership”. The interview protocol allowed for superintendents to reflect on their personal
definitions and conceptualizations of the superintendent as instructional leader as well as report perceived differences in their instructional leadership prior to and during TLCS.

In the finding entitled “the superintendent as instructional leader,” I provided an overview of findings related to how these participants perceive that role in the context of their other roles as well as present perceptions of the instructional leader role in the context of other superintendent roles. Participants not only perceived the instructional leader role to be important to assume, but also expressed feelings of being drawn away from this role to perform other duties.

As discussion of superintendent instructional leadership was lacking in the relevant literature, the interview protocol was designed to collect participants’ perceptions of superintendent instructional leadership as a way to frame and discuss perceived changes to that role in the context of TLCS. Therefore, the finding entitled “perceived characteristics of instructional leadership” was presented. This finding included four summary characteristics developed from participant perceptions of the defining characteristics of superintendent instructional leadership: “communication,” “empowering others,” “personal engagement,” and “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.”

The third finding, entitled “Influence of the TLCS on superintendent instructional leadership”, was presented in terms of general participant impressions of their instructional leader role in context of the TLCS, followed by participant perceptions of their instructional leader role conceptualization based on TLCS in terms of the summary characteristics of “communication,” “empowering others,” “personal engagement,” and “facilitating a vision for teaching and learning.” Findings suggested participants perceived their thoughts and
intended actions in the application and implementation of TLCS in their districts has been enhanced or expanded through their role in the TLCS process.

Participant perceptions, as interpreted through the framework of sensemaking, suggested engaging in the TLCS has influenced thinking and conceptualization of their instructional leadership. The interpretation of and approaches to state policy changes by actors at the local level is noted in relevant literature as an important factor in policy implementation differences. This study examined one set of actors, superintendents, in context of a statewide teacher leadership initiative, the TLCS. Superintendents perceived the TLCS as changing the organizational structures of their districts. These structural changes were perceived by the superintendents of this study as an opportunity to develop cohesive systems for capacity development and as a method to improve staff culture and climate. This finding was consistent with research suggesting the use of policy by superintendents to create leverage for organizational change.

However, these same system requirements as leveraged by these superintendents to create opportunities were also the source of their reported challenges as they accepted participation and reporting requirements they perceived to be barriers. The identification of these challenges in this study was important in that the source of the challenge, TLCS program requirements, did not appear to have a research base. Findings of this study also suggested the TLCS as an episode in sensemaking had influenced the way these superintendents thought about and reflected on their instructional leader role as they made sense of TLCS. These perceived influences on their thinking related to their instructional leadership were reported in the context of TLCS application and implementation events participants were involved in”. These findings were consistent with relevant literature on
superintendent role, in which superintendents assumed role conceptualizations based on their interpretation of contextual needs.

Implications of this study regarding the work of school leaders included contributing to a thin body of evidence of superintendent instructional leadership apart from principal instructional leadership, which dominated the literature on the topic. A key implication of this study was teacher leader systems that require adherence to a set of organizational changes could influence how the superintendent of schools conceptualizes his or her instructional leadership. Findings of this study also suggested the sensemaking of superintendents about teacher leadership influence teacher leader programs and systems at the local level.

This study was the first to examine the role of the superintendent in the context of TLCS, which contributes to research on the perceived influence of this system on local actors. This study has implications for the preparation of superintendents by suggesting a need for training in teacher leadership systems approaches and requisite knowledge in how to coach teacher leaders and principals in teacher leadership systems.

Implications for policy included consideration in the policy planning and development process of how superintendent perceptions of the policy influence implementation. The participants of this study reported a great deal of ownership and work related to achieving their perception of success for the TLCS in their local districts. The study provided implications for development of policies that allow for the collection and bundling of current educational reform initiatives. Finally, policy developers should consider requirements in terms of available research to ensure policy requirements could be effectively met. Participants in this study expressed a great deal of positivity toward the
potential of this system, mainly in its perceived ability to provide a structure under which other initiatives for capacity development could be lensed. In the case of TLCS, participants perceived this policies requirement of 25% participation as not considerate of varying district contexts.

Finally, this study provided implications for research. It was deemed appropriate to assess how individual actors in the context of policy perceive policy implementation and its subsequent influence on their leadership conceptualizations, phenomenology. The use of sensemaking perspective allowed me to examine participant perceptions in terms of the meaning participants attached. Through the analysis framework, I was able to deduce themes through the separation of events, processes, outcomes and influences in the sensemaking process to better identify the influence of TLCS from other context influences on participant thought and belief. The use of the screening questionnaire in the participant selection process was useful in identifying participants from different district contexts who shared experiences in the phenomenon of TLCS implementation. The methodology of this study, based on my perceived ability to answer the research questions, appeared to be an appropriate model to examine individual influences resulting from policy implementation in terms of how actors make sense of the policy.

This study is significant in that it studied superintendent leadership in the context of a statewide teacher leadership initiative. This study found that perceptions resulting from personal engagement in the TLCS application and implementation process influenced how participants thought about and conceptualized instructional leadership in the superintendency. The findings revealed the way leaders engage in sensemaking around policy can influence reflection and conceptualization of their instructional leader role. This
study also provided the first examination of the role of the superintendent in the TLCS implementation process, thus contributing to a thin body of research on how superintendents perceive instructional leadership as well as how those perceptions cause them to think about their role. The study also provided a framework that can be utilized to examine sensemaking in the context of external policies requiring changes to organizational structures and hierarchies. As a superintendent, I found the unique nature of this study to be surprising given my personal perceptions of my own ability to either nurture or inhibit policy outcomes. While this study did not yield findings that participants were inhibiting processes within their districts, their perceived involvement and thoughts about instructional leadership aspects of their job revealed they were a key influence regarding how the TLCS had been implemented in their districts. It is my hope that this research inspires other to investigate the role of the superintendent in the context of teacher leadership.
REFERENCES


Herman, J. L. (1990). Instructional leadership skills and competencies of public school superintendents: Implications for preparation programs in a climate of shared governance. Accessed from


Petersen, G. J. (2002). Singing the same tune: Principals' and school board members’ perceptions of the superintendent's role as instructional leader. Journal of Educational Administration, 40(2), 158-171.


## APPENDIX A. TEACHER LEADERSHIP & COMPENSATION

### IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September, 2013</td>
<td>Planning grants available to all school districts who applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 2014</td>
<td>Local plans submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March, 2014</td>
<td>First round notifications - 39 districts approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August, 2014</td>
<td>Implementation begins for first round recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2014</td>
<td>Second round of local plans submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2014</td>
<td>Second round notification - 76 districts approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August, 2015</td>
<td>Second round recipients begin implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2015</td>
<td>Third round of local plans submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2015</td>
<td>Third round notification – 219 districts approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August, 2016</td>
<td>All Iowa districts implementing TLCS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX B. TEACHER LEADERSHIP APPROVED MODELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL 1</th>
<th>MODEL 2</th>
<th>MODEL 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Career Paths, Leadership Roles, and Compensation Framework (284.15)</td>
<td>Instructional Coach Model (284.16)</td>
<td>Comparable Plan Model (284.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on work of Iowa’s Teacher Leadership and Compensation Task Force, Creates Model, Mentor, and Lead teacher roles.</td>
<td>Includes 3 leadership roles: Model teacher, Instructional Coach, and Curriculum and Professional Development Leader</td>
<td>Includes the 5 “Must have criteria that all teacher leadership and compensation plans must meet: 1. Minimum Salary of $33,500 2. Improved Entry to The Profession 3. Differentiated, Multiple, Meaningful Teacher Leadership Roles 4. Rigorous Selection Process for Leadership Roles 5. Aligned Professional Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maxwell (2012).
APPENDIX C. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
5555 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515-294-5566

Date: 6/27/2017
To: Douglas Wheeler
5697 NW 3rd Ct.
Des Moines, IA 50313

CC: Dr. Douglas Wieszczek
2683 Lagomarsino Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Leveraging Policy to Foster Instructional Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Iowa Superintendent Leadership Behavior in Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLCS) Districts

IRB ID: 17-242

Approval Date: 6/26/2017
Date for Continuing Review: 8/25/2019
Submission Type: New
Review Type: Expedited

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 50), please be sure to:

- Use only the approved study materials in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.
- Retain signed informed consent documents for 3 years after the close of the study, when documented consent is required.
- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study by submitting a Modification Form for Non-Exempt Research or Amendment for Personnel Changes form, as necessary.
- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.
- Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- Complete a new continuing review form at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Please be aware that IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. Approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 202 Kingland, to officially close the project.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or irb@iastate.edu.
# APPENDIX D. PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATION

## D-1. Screening Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Your Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I would like to participate in this research project studying superintendent instructional leadership and decision-making in Iowa Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) Districts.</td>
<td>YES, NO, I need more information and would like to be contacted before indicating YES or NO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Please verify below that you meet the participant criteria of this study. (Please select all that apply)</td>
<td>I am an Iowa Public School Superintendent, In my current role, I led the planning and application process for the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS), In my current role, I led at least one year of full implementation of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) in my district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Work Phone</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Personal / Cell Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In addition to you and principals (including principals with dual assignments, for example principal and k-6 curriculum director), how many administrators or specialists (not on teaching contract) are employed full time by your district to support teaching and learning (curriculum director, assistant superintendent, teaching and learning director or similar)?</td>
<td>0, 1-2, 3+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. To what extent has participation in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) presented new leadership demands and challenges for your work?

- No/None
- Slight
- Considerable
- Great

8. To what extent has your direct involvement in teaching and learning initiatives been influenced by participation in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?

- No/None
- Slight
- Considerable
- Great
D-2. Interview Protocol

Research Questions:

1. What do superintendents perceive as the major challenges and opportunities of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?
2. What leadership demands result from the challenges and opportunities presented by the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?
3. What is the influence of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) on superintendent behaviors associated with instructional leadership?

Interview Questions:

Interview 1

Date of Interview: ________________

Demographic Questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years in Education:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as Teacher:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Years as Administrator:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Positions Held:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positions held outside of education:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Current Superintendency:</td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL Superintendent Experience:</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Tell me about the district you serve?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What is your district leadership structure?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What are the needs of the students and families you serve?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) What makes your community unique to other communities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) What about your local community context offers opportunities and challenges for your district to succeed? - MOVED</td>
<td>RQ #1, RQ#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What characteristics of your families or students pose opportunities/challenges?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What characteristics of your staff pose opportunities/challenges?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) What characteristics of your community that are not involved or do not have students in your school pose opportunities/challenges?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) What characteristics of your local economy pose opportunities/challenges?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Tell me about your leadership journey. How have these experiences shaped your personal leadership philosophy and the way you approach your work as a superintendent?</td>
<td>RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Question</td>
<td>RQ#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What key experiences in ________ (building, district or position) do you feel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shaped your approach to leadership today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Describe your work as a superintendent? What are your priorities?</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ2, RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) How did you set these priorities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Have your priorities changed in the last few years?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Describe your work with the Board as it relates to improving student achievement</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What is the Board’s expectations for student achievement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Describe your efforts to bring student achievement items to the Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) What are some steps you take to foster the relationship you have with the Board?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Describe your work with your leadership team (including principals) as it relates to improving student achievement</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Describe your efforts to bring focus to student achievement with your leadership team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What are some steps you take to foster the relationship with and professional expectations of your team?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) What do you believe are the defining characteristics of instructional leadership?</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Are there any characteristics you feel are more important than others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Are there any characteristics you feel are more challenging to achieve than others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Do you consider yourself an instructional leader? Why? Can you describe an example of a time when you feel you demonstrated instructional leadership?</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Question:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Are there situations when you do not feel like an instructional leader?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) In what ways is the context of this district consistent with your leadership philosophy and priorities? In what ways is the context divergent?</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ2, RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) In what ways can this consistency impact your daily work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) How would you describe the staff climate and culture in your district?</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Probe for examples or anecdotes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Is there an acceptance of change or doing things differently?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Do they feel a sense of efficacy for their work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) What are your challenges to maintaining a positive climate and culture?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Interview 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) What are your personal and professional views on the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System?</td>
<td>RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Did it take multiple applications for your district to be chosen for TLCS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the reasons given for unsuccessful applications?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) In what ways is the TLCS similar or different from previous initiatives you have led?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Tell me about why you think the program was created?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Tell me what you think encouraged early applicants to apply?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Last time, you mentioned ______ as opportunities in your community context and ______ as challenges in your community context. From your perspective, in what ways can the TLCS influence these opportunities and challenges? What is the involvement of the greater community or school families in the implementation?</td>
<td>RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) How does this influence change your daily work and leadership agenda in this district?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What role do you play in leveraging the TLCS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Talk about the process for TLCS application. Who led the process? Who was involved?</td>
<td>RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) How were community members involved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) As you reflect on this process, what if anything would you do the same?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) As you reflect on this process, what if anything would you change?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) What were the items that were easy to come to consensus on in the application process? What were the difficult items that took more time?</td>
<td>RQ#1, RQ#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Did you use any strategies to bring people to consensus?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Are there any compromises made during the process that now you wish would not have been made? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) What model of teacher leadership are you utilizing in your plan: Are you using a national or homegrown model? Are teachers required to participate in coaching?</td>
<td>RQ #1, RQ#2, RQ#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What criteria did you use to select your model?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) As you reflect on the structures put in place to support your chosen model of teacher leadership, what do you perceive are the strengths and challenges of this model?</td>
<td>RQ#1, RQ#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probing Questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Did you or your team take advantage of training or support to determine the model or to implement the model?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) What staff capacity is needed to support this model?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) What system capacity is needed to support this model?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(7) In the first interview you described your staff climate and culture, including ________. Has the TLCS influenced your staff climate and culture? In what ways?

**Probing Questions:**
- a) Relationships between administrators and teachers?
- b) Areas of resistance?

(8) In the screening protocol for this study, you responded ____________ (Slight, Considerable, Great) to the question:

To what extent has participation in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS) presented new leadership demands and challenges for your work?

Tell me more about why you responded in this way. What new demands and challenges were created for you in your work since participating in the TLCS?

**Probing Questions:**
- a) Are you spending any more or less time with some stakeholder groups?
- b) Where do you wish you could spend more time?

(9) In the screening protocol for this study, you responded ____________ (slight, Considerable, Great) to the question:

To what extent has your direct involvement in teaching and learning initiatives been influenced by participation in the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS)?

Tell me more about why you responded in this way. What roles, responsibilities or involvement do you have in teaching and learning initiatives as a result of participation in TLCS?

(10) During our last interview, you noted you (were, were not) an instructional leader and noted the following characteristics as being indicative of instructional leadership ________. Has your role as an instructional leader changed since the TLCS implementation? In what ways?

**Probing Question:**
- a) Has your role in other areas (management, working with community etc.) changed?

(11) As you reflect on your personal work flow and leadership role, how has it changed from before TLCS to now? Have any changes influenced your ability to forward your leadership agenda?

**Probing Question:**
- a) Have there been any surprises or other system impacts of being part of the TLCS?

(12) Have you felt new demands as you work to support principals and teacher leaders in the implementation of TLCS? Have these demands challenged you in terms of needed abilities or skills sets as a leader?

**Probing Question:**
- a) Have the conversations changed?
- b) Have they asked for new types of support or advice?
(13) How do you assess the progress made as a result of the TLCS in terms of your personal capacity as a leader and your district’s capacity to serve students?

Probing Questions:
   a) What skills have you learned and or began again since leading this initiative?
   b) Do you feel the goals you have set in your plan can be measured adequately?
   c) Do you have any concerns about initial results?

RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3

(14) Describe any unanticipated or indirect results of the implementation process?

Probing Questions:
   a) How have these unanticipated or indirect results changed your work or the work of your staff?
   b) How have these unanticipated or indirect results affected resources in other areas?
   c) Have these unanticipated or indirect results caused you to modify your initial plans for TLCS?

RQ#1, RQ#2

(15) Now that you are in to the implementation of the TLCS, what are your thoughts about the program?

Probing Questions:
   a) Do you have any concerns about the TLCS moving forward?
   b) Would you apply again?

RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3
Dear ________________,

My name is Doug Wheeler. I am currently working on my dissertation project at Iowa State University and am reaching out to you to request your participation in this research project. The data collected during this project will be utilized as part of a Capstone/pilot project that will produce an article, which will be provided to the National Superintendent’s Roundtable for distribution to their members and in my published dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to examine superintendent instructional leadership behavior in districts implementing the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS). Specifically, I will be examining how the implementation process has influenced the role and decision-making of local superintendents. Since this study focuses on superintendents, I am seeking research participants with the following characteristics:

1) Currently serving as an Iowa Superintendent;
2) Leaders who have participated in both the application process for Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS) participation; and
3) Leaders who have led at least one full year of implementation of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS).

Final participants will be selected randomly based on the number of full time administrators or specialists beyond you and principals responsible for administering teaching and learning activities in your district. The targeted dates for selection of two projects related to this study are as follows:

☐ June 2017-September 2017 – pilot project participants selected
☐ September 2017 – December 2017 – dissertation project participants selected

If you are not selected for the pilot project, your name will be kept on file for selection in the dissertation study.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer questions over two 75-minute one-on-one sessions. While these interviews must take place in a private setting, they will occur at a time and location of your choosing. The conversation and responses will be audiotaped for transcription. I may also contact you by phone or e-mail prior to the interview or after interviews to ask follow-up or clarifying questions. All information will be kept confidential.

All audio recordings will be used for the purpose of data collection and analysis. The transcribed version of the recording will be kept for a period of seven years after any subsequent publications have been completed. The recordings will be erased at the conclusion of the study.

Upon agreement for the study, you will be provided and required to sign a consent document prior to the first interview. When participants are selected for each stage of the study you will be notified.

In the data collection and analysis process, I will be working under the advice and counsel of Douglas Wieczorek, Ph.D., as the faculty advisor for this project. Dr. Wieczorek and I will be the only investigators who will have access to collected data.

To indicate your willingness to participate and to provide data to assist in the screening and selection process, I am asking that you click the following link to answer a few short questions and provide additional contact information. By indicating you desire to participate in this study on the electronic questionnaire, you are giving initial consent to participate. If you are an interested participant not chosen for this study, your responses on the questionnaire may be presented as summary data. If you are chosen for this study, you will be asked to sign a formal consent document prior to the first interview session. This full document is attached to this e-mail along with a copy of the questionnaire content. Please click the following link to participate in the screening questionnaire.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SuptInstructLead

Thank you for your time and consideration to participate in this study.

Best Regards,

Doug Wheeler
Iowa State Graduate Student

Attachments – pdf of Screening Questionnaire, Consent Document
D-4. Consent Document

Title of Study: Leveraging Policy to Foster Instructional Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Iowa Superintendent Leadership Behavior in Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS) Districts.

Investigators:


Major Professor – Douglas Wieczorek, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Education, Iowa State University.

Overview:
This form describes a research project. It has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can choose to discontinue participation at any point during this study. Please discuss any questions you have about the study or about this form with the primary investigator before deciding to participate.

Introduction:
The purpose of this study is to investigate the instructional leadership behaviors and perceived leadership influence of policy implementation of Iowa superintendents implementing the Iowa Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS).

Prior to being contacted to participate fully in this study you were asked to fill out an online questionnaire. By indicating you desire to participate in this study on the electronic questionnaire, you are giving initial consent to participate. Questionnaire responses from those not chosen for this study may be presented as summary data in manuscripts. Participants selected to participate in the study are asked to sign this formal consent document prior to the first interview session.

You are invited to participate in this study because you meet the following criteria

4) Currently serving as an Iowa Superintendent;
5) Leaders who have participated in both the application process for Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS) participation; and
6) Leaders who have led at least one full year of implementation of the Teacher Leadership Compensation System (TLCS).

You were randomly selected based on the number of full time administrators or specialists beyond you and principals responsible for administering teaching and learning activities in your district.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate and answer interview questions over two sessions that will take approximately 75 minutes per session. You may also be contacted by telephone and e-mail after interviews to review your responses or to ask follow-up or clarifying questions. All information will be kept secure and confidential. The Principal Investigator will maintain security of all data. Only the Principal Investigator and the Major Professor will have access to the data for the purposes of analysis. An online transcription service rev.com/professional will also have access to collected data for the purpose of audio transcription only. Only approved individuals associated with this project or professional transcriptionist will have access to the research data.

Interviews will be recorded for the purpose of data collection and analysis. The transcribed version of the recordings will be kept for a period of seven years after any subsequent publications have been completed. The recordings will be erased at the conclusion of the study.

Information gathered and learned will be shared with the National Superintendent’s Roundtable, in published dissertation and in subsequent publications. Findings from this study may also be presented in public conferences.
**Risks or Discomforts:**

The risks for participating in the study are minimal and are mitigated by interview protocol and data collection and storage methods. While participating in the study you may feel the following risks or discomforts:

- Risks to your employment because you are going to share perceptions of challenges and frustrations within the local context you are leading
- Feeling of anxiety or uncertainty while being interviewed
- Feeling uncomfortable while completing the interview
- Risks of expressing your ideas, views and experiences as they relate to the performance of your professional responsibilities
- Elements of leadership capacity will be explored, putting professional reputation at risk
- Risk of expressing views of community/local context that might not be favorable to stakeholders such as parents, students or patrons of that community.
- Risks of expressing personal ideas and opinions about the success or quality TLCS program and how it has impacted your life and work due to the substantial amount of funding tied to participation.
- Personal identity could be discovered, but this is unlikely due to the confidentiality of the interview sessions and the methods used to protect data.

**Benefits:**

If you decide to participate in this study, there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will contribute to understanding of the complexity of the superintendency in general and better understand how Iowa superintendents manage this new initiative in the context of existing initiatives and their local contexts.

**Costs and Compensation:**

You will not have any costs associated with this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Participation Rights:**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. Your choice of whether or not to participate will have no impact on you in any way.

For further information about the study, contact Douglas Wheeler at 515-577-4913 dwheeler@iastate.edu, 5697 NW 3rd Ct., Des Moines, IA 50313. You may also contact Douglas Wieczorek at 515-294-4486 dwieczor@iastate.edu, 2683 Lagomarcino Hall for further information about the study. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator 515-294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011.

**Confidentiality:**

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken:

- Your responses will be coded with a number and only the key personnel of this research study will have access to the key to indicate what number belongs to each participant.
- Your name, district name will be assigned a pseudonym and any other identifiable information will be changed to prevent deductive disclosure in any conference papers or publications.
- In any articles or presentations, personal details about you or identifiable details about the school, school district, or school community will not be revealed.
Your confidentiality is important to participation and these measures are in place to help protect your identity and to mitigate the risks of participation.

**Title of Study:** Leveraging Policy to Foster Instructional Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Iowa Superintendent Leadership Behavior in Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLCS) Districts.

**Audio Recording Consent:**

_______ I agree to be audio recorded

_______ I do not agree to be audio recorded

**Consent and Authorization Provisions**

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant’s Name (printed) ________________________________

Participant’s Signature ________________________________ Date

Researcher’s Signature ________________________________ Date

Douglas Wheeler
Ph.D. Candidate
Iowa State University
# APPENDIX E. TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND COMPENSATION (TLC)

## PLAN APPLICATION SCORING RUBRIC

Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) Plan Application

### Scoring Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPLICATION SECTION</th>
<th>10 – 8 (High)</th>
<th>7 – 5 (Medium)</th>
<th>4 – 2 (Low)</th>
<th>1 – 0 (Off Topic or Blank)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent to which the planning process: a) utilized the time and resources available to develop a high-quality plan; b) engaged each stakeholder group (teachers, administrators, and parents who are not a member of another stakeholder group); and c) built demonstrated commitment and support among these stakeholders.</td>
<td>Provides a clear description of how the planning grant, if available, was used to develop the plan and how the use of funds contributed to the quality of the plan.</td>
<td>Provides some evidence that the planning grant, if available, was used to develop the plan.</td>
<td>Provides no evidence on how the planning grant, if available, was used to develop the plan.</td>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extent to which the plan clearly articulates a vision and specific goals that is both tailored to the local context and aligned with the vision and goals for the statewide TLC system.</td>
<td>Expresses a clear vision and specific goals for the district’s TLC plan connected to both the local context and the vision of the statewide TLC system.</td>
<td>Expresses a general vision and goals for the district’s TLC plan with limited connections to the local context and the statewide vision of the system.</td>
<td>Expresses the vision of the statewide TLC system as the district’s vision for the TLC plan or a vision that is not aligned with the statewide goals of the system.</td>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.17.2014
## Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) Plan Application
### Scoring Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3</th>
<th>The extent to which the district's plan connects to, supports and strengthens existing school improvement structures, processes, and initiatives in the district.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides a clear description of how the teacher leader roles connect to, support and/or strengthen the most significant district efforts to improve student learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a basic description of how teacher leader roles connect to, support and/or strengthen district efforts to improve student learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a limited description of how teacher leader roles connect to, support and/or strengthen the district's overall approach to improve student learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 4</th>
<th>Extent to which the plan will improve entry into the teaching profession for new teachers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The plan clearly describes how the district will utilize teacher leaders and the additional funding to improve entry into the teaching profession for new teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The plan focuses primarily on the district's current teacher induction and mentoring program with only minor enhancements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The plan does little to improve entry into the teaching profession for new teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Part 5 | Extent to which the plan:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) creates new multiple, meaningful, and differentiated teacher leader-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides a detailed description of the new clearly differentiated teacher leader roles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a basic description of the new teacher leader roles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a vague description of the new teacher leader roles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Provides a detailed explanation of how each |
| Provides a limited explanation of how each of |
| Provides little explanation of how each of the roles, |

6.17.2014
| Part 6 | Extent to which the plan describes a rigorous selection process for teacher leaders that includes detailed descriptions of how the district will determine and evaluate the following in selecting teacher leaders. | The plan includes a detailed description of how effectiveness of the candidates will be determined and evaluated in the selection of teacher leaders. | The plan includes general guidelines on how effectiveness of the candidates will be determined and evaluated in the selection of teacher leaders. | The plan describes a selection process that does not consider the effectiveness of candidates in the selection of teacher leaders. | No response provided or response did not answer the question. |
| Part 7 | The extent to which the district’s plan articulates how the district’s professional | The plan clearly articulates how the district’s professional | The plan provides a basic description of how the district’s professional | The plan does not explain how the district’s professional development | No response provided or response did not |
Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) Plan Application
Scoring Rubric

| a) utilizes teacher leaders in the development and delivery of professional development by: | development program aligns with the teacher leadership system (i.e., describes an extensive role for teacher leaders in the development and delivery of PD). | development program aligns with the teacher leadership system, but makes limited use of teacher leaders in the development and delivery of PD. | program aligns with the teacher leadership system, and/or does not use teacher leaders in the development and delivery of PD. | answer the question. |
| 1) identifying teacher leadership roles; | The plan clearly describes how the district’s TLC plan aligns with and incorporates the key elements of the Iowa Professional Development Model. | The plan provides a basic description of how the district’s TLC plan aligns with and incorporates some elements of the Iowa Professional Development Model. | The plan does not include an explanation of how the district’s TLC plan aligns with and incorporates the key elements of the Iowa Professional Development Model. | |
| 2) aligning teacher leadership roles with identified goals; | | | | |
| 3) describing responsibilities of teacher leadership roles in planning professional development; and | | | | |
| 4) describing responsibilities of teacher leadership roles in delivering professional development; and | | | | |
| b) aligns with the Iowa Professional Development Model by providing evidence of teacher leadership roles in: | | | | |
| 1) collecting and analyzing student data; | | | | |
| 2) using student data to establish goals and select content; | | | | |
| 3) ensuring an ongoing professional development cycle; and | | | | |
| 4) coordinating periodic synthesis of summative evaluation data. | | | | |
Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) Plan Application
Scoring Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 8</th>
<th>Provides clear measures as to how the district will determine the impact and effectiveness of the TLC plan.</th>
<th>Provides a basic description, but limited use of specific measures as to how the district will determine the impact and effectiveness of the TLC plan.</th>
<th>Provides a general idea of how the district will determine the impact and effectiveness of the TLC plan, but does not provide specific measures.</th>
<th>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which the district has a clear vision as to how it will: a) measure the impact and effectiveness in achieving the goals described in the plan; and b) monitor and adjust its plan over time.</td>
<td>Provides a clear description of how the district will monitor and make adjustments to its TLC plan over time.</td>
<td>Provides a basic description of how the district will monitor and make adjustments to its TLC plan over time.</td>
<td>Provides a limited description in general terms of how the district will monitor and make adjustments to its TLC plan over time.</td>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 9</th>
<th>Provides a clear, detailed description of the district's capacity to implement the TLC plan and sustain it over time.</th>
<th>Provides a general description of the district's capacity to implement the TLC plan over time with some detail. Includes key district personnel responsible for the success of the plan.</th>
<th>Provides a limited description of the district's capacity to implement the TLC plan over time with little detail.</th>
<th>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which the district has the capacity to implement the plan and sustain it over time.</td>
<td>Provides a clear, detailed description of how the funds will be used to support the elements outlined in the district's TLC plan, including: clear description of roles and amount of funds per role; clear description of allocations/expenditures/costs; and clear connections between budget/costs, roles, and goals.</td>
<td>Provides a basic description of how the monies will be used to support the elements outlined in the district's TLC plan, including: partial description of roles and amount of funds per role; partial description of allocations/expenditures/costs; and partial connections between budget/costs, roles, and goals.</td>
<td>Provides a limited or incomplete description of how the monies will be used to support the elements outlined in the district's TLC plan, including: limited description of roles and amount of funds per role; limited description of allocations/expenditures/costs; and limited connections between budget/costs, roles, and goals.</td>
<td>No response provided or response did not answer the question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Part 10 | Provides a clear, detailed description of how the funds will be used to support the elements outlined in the district's TLC plan, including: clear description of roles and amount of funds per role; clear description of allocations/expenditures/costs; and clear connections between budget/costs, roles, and goals. | Provides a basic description of how the monies will be used to support the elements outlined in the district's TLC plan, including: partial description of roles and amount of funds per role; partial description of allocations/expenditures/costs; and partial connections between budget/costs, roles, and goals. | Provides a limited or incomplete description of how the monies will be used to support the elements outlined in the district's TLC plan, including: limited description of roles and amount of funds per role; limited description of allocations/expenditures/costs; and limited connections between budget/costs, roles, and goals. | No response provided or response did not answer the question. |
| The extent to which the district's budgeted use of teacher leadership funding is aligned with the narrative of the plan. | 6.17.2014 | 6.17.2014 | 6.17.2014 | 6.17.2014 |