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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Teacher learning, accountability and policy enactment in Ontario: the centrality of trust

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Abstract
This article considers the role of trust in teacher professional learning as a form of policy enactment. Drawing upon an experienced teacher's understandings of an assessment policy, *Growing Success,* in Ontario, Canada, we foreground the sociality of trust and how trust is an essential ingredient for teacher learning as policy enactment. Using a narrative methodology, we investigate how this teacher engaged in two parallel professional learning opportunities, centered on the same policy. These opportunities fostered very different, conflicting perceptions of the policy. In this way, our work indicates how a single policy may be interpreted as more or less 'disciplinary' or 'developmental,' depending on the relations of trust that are ascribed to it through the professional learning opportunities that attend its enactment. Based on our analysis of the data, we conclude that professional learning contexts need to be 'trust-rich' if they are to serve as a vehicle for meaningful policy enactment.

Keywords Policy enactment · Professional learning communities · Teacher professional learning · Trust

1 Introduction

This article explores the centrality of trust in fostering teacher learning as a vehicle to enact educational policy reform. Through the insights of an experienced classroom teacher, we reveal how an Ontario provincial assessment policy, *Growing Success*, came to be enacted and how trusting relations were central to this enactment. We understand policy enactment as a form of professional learning (Coburn and Stein 2006) and foreground how such enactment cannot be decontextualized from the broader conditions within which it operates (Braun et al. 2010). As Coburn and Stein (2006) argue, since the 1990s, policy implementation researchers have come to recognize that policy implementation requires teachers to learn about new

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reforms and to consider how best to engage with them to effect enhanced student learning. On this account, student learning is dependent upon how successful teachers are at learning about exactly what is required to effectively implement a particular initiative; learning on the part of teachers is therefore central to successfully implementing/enacting a particular policy. At the same time, this learning does not occur in isolation, and we argue it is essential to explore the role of trust in the work of teachers as policy actors, particularly in relation to teachers' learning as a form of policy enactment. Developing trust in relation to implementing/enacting particular reforms is an important part of the constitution and maintenance of an environment that supports teacher professional learning. Such professional learning needs to be undertaken within community:

> …characterized by strong cultures of trusted colleagues who value each other personally and professionally, who are committed to their students, who are willing to discuss and disagree about evidence and data that can inform them about how to improve their practices in ways that benefit their students—and who are willing to challenge one another's practice in doing so. (Hargreaves 2007, p. 188)

Consequently, understanding the nature of these trusting relations (or the lack thereof), what they look like and how they might be cultivated is crucial to fostering substantive learning on the part of teachers working in conjunction with one another to effect substantive reform.

The article begins by considering the notion of trust, the role of policy and accountability in relation to trust and the relationship of trust to professional learning. After explicating the methods and methodology, we describe the context of our work. We then consider the case of 'Alec,' an experienced teacher in a regional city in Ontario, and how he understood and engaged with the policy. We elaborate how notions of trust influenced the teacher learning that attended his understandings of the policy. We analyze the significance of trust on his perceptions of the policy and its enactment and conclude by considering the implications of this work.

2 Trust

In this section, we consider the significance of sociality to notions of trust, the relationship to policy and broader accountability pressures and the place of trust regarding teachers' professional learning.

2.1 The sociality of trust

Trust is an inherently social construct. As O'Neill (2017) argues, by 'placing or refusing trust we aim to judge who is *honest, reliable* and *competent* in the relevant matters' (p. 28, emphasis original). Trust implies a 'willingness to be vulnerable based on the confidence that the other party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open' (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 1999, p. 189). Such an approach entails an expectation that others will act in a cooperative and honest manner, a disposition to be vulnerable founded on the virtues of others, and implies interactions that require a level of risk taking and faith. Trust in others and procedures is important in ensuring the smooth running of schools, as they are 'fundamentally social institutions that depend daily on the quality of the interpersonal relations with which they are imbued' (Goddard et al. 2009, p. 293). The conditions for trust are important, as trust is enhanced or diminished depending upon the actions of others (Cerna 2014). As a dynamic

process, trust moves from a belief in positive expectations, to a decision to work with others in a way that makes one vulnerable, to taking action. Trust can be understood as an ‘emotion and a rational decision…[dependent] on the context’ (Cerna 2014, p. 9).

2.2 Trust in context: policy and accountability

An important component of context is the policy conditions within which teachers work and learn and that influence their capacity to deploy professional judgment. Such policy conditions can be more or less supportive of the development of teachers. Less developmental policies might be understood as ‘disciplinary policies’ that encourage passivity on the part of teachers (Ball et al. 2011a). More disciplinary policies ‘produce a primarily passive policy subject, a “technical professional” whose practice is heavily determined by the requirements of performance and delivery’ (Ball et al. 2011a, p. 612). Under such circumstances, teachers are framed as ‘receivers’ of policy ‘products’ developed elsewhere. Compliance with the demands of such policies are construed as essential. These approaches challenge notions of trust and mitigate against trusting relations between those involved. These disciplinary policies have included those emphasizing the measurement of standardized educational performance and outcomes. Such policies have been part of broader calls for increased accountability in education systems based on these seemingly more ‘objective’ measures [cf. Porter (1995)]. Taken together, these developments have presaged the administration of education characterized by ‘policy as numbers’ (Ozga and Lingard 2007).

For O’Neill (2013), this increasing emphasis on accountability has seen it ‘as a successor to trust, and…has reduced reliance on trust’ (p. 9). Under these circumstances, increasing ‘organizational professionalism’ (Evetts 2009) is evident. Driven by demands for accountability, ‘organizational professionalism’ is characterized by control of the workplace, managerialism, development and use of productivity targets and performance reviews. Such an approach is also bureaucratic in orientation (Tschannen-Moran 2009), seeking top-down control, centralization and standardization of teachers’ work. A bureaucratic orientation ‘embodies an implicit distrust of teachers and the contributions they have to offer’ (Tschannen-Moran 2009, p. 220).

In large measure, more accountability-oriented conceptions of professionalism constitute trust as a ‘generic attitude,’ which can be lost or compromised. In its absence, accountability is the only way to ensure the continued functioning of society ‘under a system of formal rules and regulations, which have to be negotiated, agreed to, litigated, and enforced, sometimes by coercive means’ (Fukuyama 1995, p. 27). The clear danger of such a system in schools is that the assertion of authority and rules to achieve compliance is unlikely to work: ‘Teachers resent these tactics; they see them as an assault on their professional status. As such, they become less willing, not more willing, to cooperate…on a common agenda’ (Tschannen-Moran 2009, pp. 224–225).

In contrast, ‘developmental’ policies encourage teachers to be active policy subjects and cultivate a more ‘authentic’ professional disposition, characterized by originality, judgment and commitment (Ball et al. 2011a). Such an approach acknowledges teachers’ professionalism and necessitates trust being evident throughout the school (Tschannen-Moran 2009). This ‘occupational professionalism’ places greater value on autonomy, collegiality, collaboration and accountability to professional ethics under the purview of professional bodies (Evetts 2009). A more ‘professional orientation’ sees less emphasis on rules, increasingly shared control and collaboration. Such an orientation is grounded in trust and foregrounds teachers’ professional and ethical commitments, enabling increased autonomy and discretion

in their work (Tschannen-Moran 2009). This is also more likely to foster teachers as 'policy enthusiasts' who become advocates for particular policies that they see as relevant and beneficial and for whom 'the abstracts or ideals of policy exhortations or texts are translated into actions, things to do in "real" situations' (Ball et al. 2011b, p. 631).

In reality, schools are influenced by both disciplinary and developmental policies and adopt characteristics of both the professional bureaucracy, which seeks to standardize the skills that professionals bring to the organization, and more occupational professionalism. Developmental policies foster a more professional orientation while the organizational professionalism associated with disciplinary policies seems unlikely to cultivate the sorts of contextualized professionalism so necessary in specific situations.

Finally, we note that there has been relatively little attention to teacher professional learning in relation to policy reforms, specifically in relation to issues of trust. There is a related body of literature examining the cultivation of professional capital in relation to policy and practice in Ontario (Campbell et al. 2016). Associated studies exist into broader policy trends in Ontario (Anderson and Ben Jaafar 2003) and more global influences, such as neoliberalism (Sattler 2012). Other work has examined the nature and effects of the implementation of specific initiatives, such as zero tolerance approaches to school violence (Daniel and Bondy 2008). However, we focus strongly here upon the nature of issues of trust in relation to professional learning as policy enactment.

2.3 Trust and teacher professional learning

At the same time, given that policy enactment is increasingly seen as an issue of teacher learning (Coburn and Stein 2006), better understanding the nature of the particular conditions that foster enhanced teacher learning for productive policy reform is crucial. Trust is an essential component of teacher professional learning, forming 'the backbone of strong and sustainable professional learning communities in schools' (Hargreaves 2007, p. 187). Professional learning in schools is dependent on the development of environments that allow teachers to analyze and apply knowledge of particular cases and strategies to their own circumstances rather than simply 'being presented with ideas and strategies' (Reiser 2013, p. 13). Such opportunities involve sharing and challenging extant practices, experimenting with and reflecting on new practices and being accepting of the risks involved in pursuing improvements to teaching and learning. Effective learning about practice cannot exist without some form of trust: 'The functioning of the system and possibility for reform will be difficult in complex systems without a certain level of trust' (Cerna 2014, p. 23).

Since the enactment of policy requires teachers to engage in some form of 'interpretation' of policy—which is itself an 'interpretation' in relation to a particular issue (Ball et al. 2012)—productive policy engagement entails the freedom to learn about policy reforms. It also necessitates trust in the relations among those engaged in the policy reform process. However, given that policy enactment is a complex process of 'sense making,' in which teachers come to understand the policy in their specific context (Weick et al. 2005), a better understanding of the relational circumstances that contribute to such sense-making in context is imperative. Recognizing the nature of their learning, and how it is enhanced, or constrained, by the policy and more localized conditions within which it is enacted, is crucial for understanding the role of trust in shaping professional learning opportunities for policy enactment. Sustained, productive professional learning is unlikely to eventuate without at least some trust (Tschannen-Moran 2001). We seek to reveal the role of trust in policy enact-

ment as a form of teacher professional learning and to complexify current understandings of policy enactment through this work.

3 Context

In this article, we consider how a single teacher, working in two different professional learning environments, came to interpret a provincial assessment policy in contradictory ways and how notions of trust shaped these interpretations.

3.1 The policy

As a component of the Province of Ontario's *Student Success/Learning to 18* (Ontario Ministry of Education 2003) framework, the *Growing Success* policy (Ontario Ministry of Education 2010) focuses on issues of assessment. The objective of *Growing Success* (2010) is to 'ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students' (p. 6). To achieve this objective, the policy requires teachers to learn, understand and operationalize the difference between assessment *for* and *as* learning and assessment *of* learning. According to the policy, assessment *for* and *as* learning can be differentiated from assessment *of* learning in relation to whether assessment is utilized for learning or evaluation:

> Assessment *for* learning and *as* learning requires that students and teachers share a common understanding of what is being learned. Learning goals clearly identify what students are expected to know and be able to do, in language that students can readily understand…[while] [e]valuation is based on assessment *of* learning that provides evidence of student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/course, often at the end of a period of learning (pp. 33–38; emphasis in original).

Aiming for 'student success,' the policy reiterates that assessments *for* and *as* learning are strategies for assisting students to better understand the purpose and nature of their learning. Specific 'learning goals' are explained as shorter-term goals that students work toward achieving in smaller unit from lessons to units of work. Learning goals help teachers to develop assessment tasks that provide descriptive feedback to students. This feedback highlights areas of success and areas that require further improvement along with guidance on how to achieve these improvements. This understanding is in contrast to assessment *of* learning, which the policy stresses is more typical for evaluation purposes.

The policy is quite explicit that enactment requires collaborative professional learning at all levels across the education system and the development of trust among educators, parents and students. Enactment 'depends on the professional judgement of educators at all levels, as well as on educators' ability to work together and to build trust and confidence among parents and students' (p. 2). The enactment of this policy, therefore, requires teachers to challenge long-established beliefs and practices around assessment, a challenge requiring trust among teachers as they engage with one another for assessment reform.

3.2 The teacher and his learning opportunities

The focus of our interest is the professional learning of one teacher, whom we have given the pseudonym 'Alec.' Alec is experienced, highly regarded and has worked for more than

20 years as a full-time secondary science, mathematics and information technology teacher. At the time of our data collection, he was teaching all three subjects and hence was a member of three different subject departments. Faced with this division, he consulted with his principal and chose to participate primarily in the mathematics department.

According to Alec, professional learning in his school was centered on the development of departments as 'PLCs'—Professional Learning Communities. Although no consensus exists as to the attributes of a PLC, a review of the literature by Lee et al. (2011, p. 820) revealed that a PLC exists when 'a group of teachers collaboratively and critically exchange their instructional practices in an ongoing, reflective, inclusive, learning-oriented and growth-promoting way to support innovation and knowledge sharing.' PLCs provide a forum for the development of a shared framework for working and learning together. By developing networks of shared practice, trust can be built in the mutual obligations that teachers have to each other (Sergiovanni 2005). Trust, therefore, is foundational to PLCs and their capacity to promote organizational learning, as it allows for 'the presence of habituated searching for new information, processing and evaluating information with others, incorporating and using new ideas, and of generating ideas within the organization as well as importing them from outside' (Louis and Murphy 2017, p. 108). Strong trusting relations also enable sharing of practices and are important to the mediation of shared leadership and shared vision for shared practices; collective learning is enabled through trust relationships and collegiality that help foster shared understandings (Chen et al. 2016). Where trusting relations are absent, particularly in relation to administrator-initiated reform, productive change becomes difficult (Louis 2006). Furthermore, organizational learning is generally conceived of as being incremental rather than an instrumental implementation of a certain practice (Louis and Murphy 2017); consequently, PLCs may be better suited to enacting developmental policies for substantive organizational change. However, PLCs can also foster more reductive and problematic practices and be used for more disciplinary purposes, potentially reinforcing existing prejudices if the more critical aspects that characterize more productive PLCs do not exist (Lee et al. 2011).

This explicit focus upon PLCs reflects provincial efforts to promote school-level control of school improvement. In turn, there was a sustained effort to provide resources to districts and schools to facilitate capacity building and professional learning opportunities for teachers and principals (see Campbell and Fullan 2006). With these resources, the district developed training sessions for education officers, senior school administrators and department chairs in the development and maintenance of PLCs.

Despite the common training sessions, a range of understandings influenced the development of PLCs within schools. Some subject departments continued to operate along disciplinary specific lines, while others focused more strongly on addressing provincial mandates around improving literacy and numeracy. This latter group of PLCs came to be seen as an instrument for school-based accountability in meeting the provincial requirements.

In contrast to the instrumental approach developed in the PLC, there was a contemporaneous development of the 'Family of Schools' (FoS) concept. This district initiative, which built on the consensus conceptualization of the PLC outlined above, provided opportunities for secondary math teachers to work with class teachers from 'feeder' elementary schools (the elementary schools from which secondary schools drew their students). The FoS that Alec worked with was supported by an experienced secondary mathematics teacher who had also been the math department chair in Alec's former secondary school. The remit of the FoS was to facilitate conversations around math education, interpret provincial standardized test results for teachers and link teachers to external discipline and pedagogical experts. Alec's professional learning experiences around the *Growing Success* policy spanned both the departmentally based PLC and the broader FoS.

4 Methodology

This article has been developed from a larger study into the enactment of Ontario's *Growing Success* policy. The larger study involved interviews with five administrators and teachers at different stages in their careers and considered their insights into the enactment of *Growing Success*, including their roles in enacting the policy, and attendant professional learning opportunities. The first author had ongoing working relations for over a decade with these educators (see Author 2014). In keeping with processes of purposive selection (Bryman 2012), Alec's narrative has been focused on in this article because he was a full-time teacher who worked across two iterations of mathematics-centered professional learning opportunities that were ostensibly focused on supporting the enactment of *Growing Success* and yet did so very differently.

The methodology of our research into Alec's work and professional learning experiences can best be described as narrative; which gives access to the individual's contextualized experiences and insights. Narrative approaches are 'increasingly seen as crucial to the study of teachers' thinking, culture and behavior' (Zembylas 2003, p. 214), and narrative inquiry is a strategy for 'reflecting a person's life history [and]...the contexts in which teachers live' (Connelly and Clandinin 1999, p. 2). More specifically, narrative descriptions 'exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement with the world. Narrative is the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed purposes' (Polkinghorne 1995, p. 5). Further, narratives possess the capacity to both represent these past 'events, happenings and actions' and reveal the meanings ascribed to these by the narrator in the context of a co-constructed social interaction (Bamberg 1997). While we acknowledge the limits of focusing upon one individual's perspective and how his narrative as an account of his practices could be enhanced through other methods such as observations (and the accounts of others), we focus upon this individual narrative here as it provided particularly salient insights into one teacher's understandings of the nature of trust in relation to teachers' professional learning as policy enactment—the primary focus of this article. An individual narrative also enables much deeper analysis of such a perspective. Also, understanding the meanings an individual negotiates is itself intrinsically important, as the narratives developed through interaction produce a version of reality specific to both the individual and their context (Bamberg 1997).

This understanding of the relationship between an individual and their learning context is particularly important in terms of the enactment of policy. Developing a teachers' learning capacity is both an individual and collective undertaking. For a teacher to engage in professional learning requires a belief in both their own and the collective ability to make a difference in their teaching and the learning of their students; trust is central to help build such a sense of community and a key construct for professional cultural development (Huffman et al. 2016). The strategies administrators choose to enact policy and the way in which those strategies were conducted are important. For teachers to engage in professional learning, a sense of community is required. The extent to which a teacher experiences this sense of community is reflective of the structure of the community and is based on four factors: membership, influence, integration and need fulfillment and emotional commitment (Huffman et al. 2016). Trust is foundational to this sense of belonging (Sergiovanni 2005). Consequently, seeking to flag experiences of the teacher as an individual focuses attention upon individual trusting relations in community and the extent to which the individual feels included, influential, integrated and emotionally committed in communion with others.

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews, which allow interviewers to 'explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject' (Patton 2002, p. 343). Such accounts provide rich insights into participants' perspectives, which cannot be gleaned from other methods (e.g., observations). The interview protocols were derived from our earlier work on the relationship between teacher professional learning and policy enactment (see also Author 2013) and included questions about the nature of the professional development practices participants experienced as well as questions to enable them to elaborate specific aspects of these practices in some detail; it is from these elaborations that the 'stories' were elicited. Participants were asked questions about the professional learning experiences they found most useful, and those that seemed less beneficial, and why and how these practices were undertaken. For this article, Alec was interviewed for approximately 80 min at a time of his choosing. While we draw upon this interview alone, his comments were in keeping with insights from earlier research involving Alec. The interview was audio-recorded and was conducted by both authors in the first author's office. Alec was provided with opportunities to review the verbatim transcript and critique the initial drafts of the article. All research activity was conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements of the authors' respective universities and the participant's school district.

To shed light on the nature and significance of trust in Alec's narrative, a theory-informed analysis (Jackson and Mazzei 2017) was adopted. This strategy involved analyzing data in his narrative using concepts 'derived from previous theory…and applied to the data to determine whether instances of these concepts are to be found' (Polkinghorne 1995, p. 13). The concept of trust and whether and how trust was expressed in relation to teacher learning as policy enactment were the key foci of attention. The analysis of the data involved the authors working through Alec's narrative to identify salient themes in light of relevant theorizing in relation to trust, policy enactment and teachers' learning.

5 Findings: a question of trust

Alec's narrative reveals three important themes regarding how trust impacted his understanding and enactment of the *Growing Success* policy. These themes developed from two parallel professional learning opportunities—the PLC and the FoS—that ostensibly had the same goals of 'student success,' but that were enacted in very different ways. The first theme explores how, while he understood the general objectives of the policy, that understanding was thoroughly grounded in collaborative questioning of classroom practice among trusted colleagues. The second theme reveals how the processes of teacher accountability associated with the PLC were poorly regarded and tended to mitigate against trusting relations and inhibit subsequent learning in relation to the policy. The third theme elaborates how the FoS was construed as a 'trust-rich' site that was productive for teacher learning about the policy reform. We explicate each of these themes below. The themes are important as they reaffirm the centrality of trust to professional learning (Cerna 2014) and extend our understanding of the importance of context to professional learning opportunities around policy enactment.

5.1 Understanding the policy: trust as grounded in practice and collaborative learning

Alec knew about the *Growing Success* policy, but had never spent time reading the whole document. As he explained, his workload and the perceived rate of change in education

programs and policies did not leave him with sufficient time to work through the policy text. Despite this, he believed he had come to understand the main objectives of the policy:

> It was rolled out two or three years ago, and we all have a copy of it, although I have never looked at it. It's one of those things; you're just exhausted from so many new initiatives coming down…We have actually had sessions with Ministry of Education officials, where they will say quite proudly to the group that they are committed to 'continuous change.' I don't lose sleep over it, but every now and then somebody will present something on Growing Success, and somehow it came out in the wash.

It appears that Alec's understanding of the policy—'*coming out in the wash*'—occurred somewhat randomly. However, it was through his experiences within the FoS that he came to understand the substance of the policy, particularly the focus upon assessment *for* and *as* learning. It was in relation to issues of classroom practice and in the context of opportunities for teachers to share insights about their work with students with one another that these understandings were developed. This was complex work in which solutions weren't necessarily readily apparent:

> In our [FoS] meetings we have to figure out something, or how to do this better [and] the solutions aren't necessarily found at the meeting…. Ours is very specific to math and we might talk about strategies that would work for students, so teachers might share what they do with students. It's more like the problems are found or discussed in terms of what we can actually do in class to help improve [teaching and learning]. Ultimately it's all about student learning, or student success.

In this sense, learning about *Growing Success* entailed teacher learning in the context of the FoS, and this was understood in relation to student learning. However, this understanding was only made possible through engagement with other teachers in a trusting environment. Alec's narrative lends support to the notion that trust in colleagues, as an emotional and rational decision (Cerna 2014), allows teachers to 'use information from others [and] may promote sharing of new knowledge' (Louis and Murphy 2017, p. 106). The sharing of specific math strategies was emblematic of trusting relations between teachers and oriented toward issues of classroom practice and ultimately student learning.

5.2 Trust, accountability and the PLC

The professional learning that occurred within the department-based PLC in mathematics was driven by a series of 'cycles' of diagnostic testing and teaching that were aimed at improving students' attainment of provincially mandated literacy and numeracy goals. As Alec explained, '*literacy and numeracy [that's] number one, all the way through from J-K [Junior-Kindergarten] to Grade 12*.' Relatedly, the provincial mandated tests were construed as '*a huge job*,' '*a huge burden to fit into a regular class*' and a source of angst: '*We're really under scrutiny*.' Such a response reflects the pervasiveness of broader accountability discourses pertaining to these limited domains of literacy and numeracy and a broader 'trust in numbers' (Porter 1995) associated with such standardized tests.

As Alec also explained, these cycles entailed a series of diagnostic tests and analysis of students' results on these tests. This was a mandatory requirement, and evidence of teachers' engagement in the cycles was demanded by the principal:

> This is required for every teacher in my school, for every subject area and every class. A cycle is where you do diagnostic testing for certain skills, tasks or certain areas of

> the curriculum in your class. You put down the results of this test for every student. Then, as a math department, we discuss the results, bring examples of student work and say, 'Look…they didn't know how to' do something. And then we discuss strategies on to how to improve that. And then you have to teach them according to all these different strategies. And lots of them are given new names, but they're really the same old things that teachers have been doing for generations. But you have to be using multiple strategies, and you have to re-test them on the diagnostic [test] after a number of weeks. You have to do this multiple times and record it all. These things are going to be demanded by the principal, and we have to submit them.

Through his story about how the 'cycles' were enacted, Alec explained that the overarching policy direction originated from the Ministry of Education, but that the cycles were a district initiative that had been specifically adopted by the principal, and that there was significant pressure to conform to these requirements. This was also a school in which new reforms were typically embraced:

> There's so much of this stuff coming down at us from the Ministry that we can't keep up. I mean every time you turn around, there's some new initiative coming at you! [The 'cycles' are] a Board-wide initiative, but we're leading it, which is fairly usual for us. But no one else is presently doing it, as far as I could tell. We were told about it by the principal in our first staff meeting, and we've been like push, push, push! I feel it's been a certain amount of pressure, actually.

Alec clearly understood that the purposes of the policy were to '*improve student learning and use a variety of strategies to reach every student, as some students learn better using this strategy versus that. It is absolutely about student learning*.' Despite this understanding, he retained a concern that some students would not constantly improve through the 'cycles,' but administrators would not accept that:

> I actually brought that up today at my PLC. Some of my students are so weak, they are at level 1 [the lowest level of achievement] and they'll be a level 1 at the end [of the unit]. I mean that's the reality of it, but whether the administrator wants to see that…

His main concern with the work of the PLC was the perception that the 'cycles' were primarily about accountability to the principal rather than being used to identify areas where teaching and learning should be focused for the benefit of student learning. This mistrust in the work of the PLC, reflecting tensions in administrator-initiated PLCs when trust was lacking (Louis 2006), can be construed as a reaction against the 'immediate, instrumental "use" of a particular type of information' that might otherwise be used to improve teaching and learning (Louis and Murphy 2017, p. 108). Such tensions about the nature of the PLC and the cycles revealed mistrust between the teachers and school administrators. This reading of the situation is supported by Alec having no problem with diagnostic assessments as long as they were tied to improving teaching and learning:

> Within our department, we would have done a bunch of diagnostic assessments, and used them to determine if students had any weaknesses…that's just a department resource. I would certainly hope that every department has them…it has its benefits. I've been teaching a long time, I think I'm a fantastic teacher, but this…is something quite different.

By 'different,' Alec was expressing three concerns. The first was that the requirement to submit the results for each 'cycle' to the principal was coercive, and teachers were 'forced' to respond:

> Well there is a common feeling that it is all top down. Somebody has said, 'Those teachers are going to be doing that.' So we actually have no choice as to what we are doing; it's all dictated, and so that's a source of frustration for a lot of people. A lot of teachers aren't that keen on the whole thing because it's under threat basically…I haven't experienced that ever in my teaching—that forced aspect of it.

The second concern was that an apparent one-size-fits-all approach to diagnostic testing was inappropriate across a range of subjects: '*Some subject areas like Physical Education don't really lend themselves as well to that as math does*.'

Finally, he saw how teachers who taught across subject areas or in smaller subjects could find the increased workload problematic and the quality of professional learning degraded. This was evident in his narrative/account about how he had to work across multiple departments and how this meant he missed out on the opportunity to engage in detailed discussions within subject PLCs:

> I'm in multiple departments, so I'm not going to the other subject PLCs, so I am missing out on the conversations…at some point the principal might be demanding my data. So I'll have to whip something up. Also, there's no other person doing Grade 9 computers, so I have to develop these diagnostics all by myself; the math ones are easy as we have department ones—but I have to develop all these things or find them, and so that is a ton of work.

In all of these ways, there was evidence of much less trusting relations between teachers and the administrators within the school. This contrasted strongly with the trust that was evident and fostered among colleagues within the Family of Schools. The department-based PLCs were portrayed by Alec as vehicles for accountability to the principal rather than as a strategy for professional learning that would seek to improve teaching and learning. For Alec, there was a trust in the objectives of the policy, which he saw as supporting student success, but less trust in the PLC strategy by which the school sought to enact the policy.

5.3 The family of schools (FoS) as a 'trust-rich' site

In contrast to the PLCs, and as a parallel professional learning opportunity, Alec found the FoS a professional context in which he could place his trust and to which he could commit. For Alec, the FoS comprised a significant site for collaborative learning. These meetings comprised Grade 7 and 8 elementary math teachers from local elementary schools, secondary math teachers and a math lead teacher—an experienced math teacher who was employed by the district to facilitate improvements to math teaching and learning. The value and benefits of the FoS were evident in Alec's account/story about the nature of engaging with teachers as part of this initiative:

> So there will be about six or eight of us, and that's actually extremely valuable. Anthea facilitates the meetings, helps us identify the issues, visits us in our classrooms, and contacts whoever needs to be contacted. It was a real eye-opener for us, that's for darn sure. I mean the Board is doing a lot, quite honestly; they're doing more than I've ever experienced in my career.

At the same time as there appeared to be a level of trust in the work of the Board more generally vis-à-vis the FoS, there was significant trust placed in Anthea, the math lead teacher (and Alec's former department chair). Her competence, credibility and the authenticity of her work in relation to teachers' needs and practices were explicitly recognized. Alec's appreciation of Anthea's capacities was clearly evident in his account of her teaching and facilitation practices:

> She's a top math teacher, recognized provincially. She's been teaching math for decades, and her department is a provincial leader. She gets to decide what we do, and with the help and advice from chairs and real teachers who are in class every day. What we get from her is real, and valuable, and you can actually use it. The more specific the learning is to your particular needs or class, the more important it is. The credibility and the experience of the person delivering it [the learning] is, I think key, I think that's actually number one.

The occupational professionalism evinced by the math lead gave confidence to Alec that his learning needs would indeed be addressed. This contrasted with professional learning opportunities led by others not perceived to possess these qualities, which could be more easily dismissed: '*If they're trying to tell you what to do in the classroom, and you think it's not going to work, yeah, you don't take it as seriously*.' Trust-rich environments were those in which substantive collaborative learning of the kind associated with the FoS, led by a capable and trusted practitioner, was able to flourish. Alec was willing to be open and vulnerable to the work occurring within the FoS because he perceived those involved with this work as 'benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open' (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 1999, p. 189).

6 Discussion

The aim of our research is to reveal the extent to which teachers' learning enables policy enactment, particularly the role of trust in fostering teacher professional learning as a form of policy enactment. Based on our analysis of the data, we argue that contexts characterized by rich conceptions of trust are central to policy enactment as a form of teacher professional learning.

Alec was exposed to two parallel professional learning opportunities, and the importance of trust is clearly evident in how he came to enact the policy. In working across these two very different 'communities,' Alec demonstrated the impact of context on the process of trust and how trust can shape perceptions of a policy as either more disciplinary or developmental (Ball et al. 2011a). He also revealed that it is not only the policy but also the context in which the policy is enacted that is crucial; trust was central to help build a productive sense of community and a key construct for professional cultural development (Huffman et al. 2016). The two modes of professional learning—the subject-centered, school-based PLCs and the more multi-grade, cross-school but still subject-oriented FoS—were two very different learning environments and cultivated quite different understandings of the *Growing Success* policy. In this case, policy enactment was not just about teacher learning, but also about teacher learning influenced by very different conceptions of professional trust in situ.

Alec freely admitted that, even as he possessed a copy of the policy, he had not read it but that he still had some understanding of it. Even as he was unaware of the details of the policy, the objectives of the policy, with their focus on student learning, were evident from

how he described his practice. For Alec, the focus of his work was '*ultimately…all about student learning*,' so the emphasis upon student success within the policy had resonated with him and given him an understanding of at least some aspects of the policy. These resonances, however, were clearly linked to the contexts in which he had experienced the policy.

In the PLC, Alec expressed limited expectations as to the efficacy of his professional learning in relation to the policy for improving his teaching: '*But they're really the same old things that teachers have been doing for generations.*' Furthermore, the emphasis seemed to be upon compliance with a broader accountability agenda: '*[Y]ou have to do this multiple times and record it all.*' He was unconvinced about the sincerity of administrators in ensuring *all* students attained success—an objective of the policy. Referring to his weakest students, he knew that they would not meet the expectations of the administrators: '*That's the reality of it*.' The sense of mistrust between administrators and the teachers appears to stem from a belief that the administrators were looking to use the PLC to solve a specific problem rather than working incrementally to improve teaching and learning. The relative lack of engagement with the PLC reflected not only a lack of productive cultural development (Huffman et al. 2016), but also a lack of mutual obligation between teachers that should characterize networks of shared practice (Sergiovanni 2005). While there was collaboration between teachers in the PLCs, the ends to which this collaboration was oriented appeared fraught and mitigated against more productive outcomes.

This mistrust in the expectations of the work of the PLC limited Alec's intentionality in enacting the policy: '*I think I'm a fantastic teacher, but this [is] all dictated, and so that's a source of frustration for a lot of people*.' While he worked through the 'cycles' with his colleagues and reiterated his belief in assessments that aided student learning, his insights conveyed mistrust in the purposes of the work with which the PLC had been tasked and a relative lack of trust in relation to the administrators. In this context where trusting relations were absent in relation to administrator-initiated reform, it is perhaps not surprising that productive change also seemed to be missing (Louis 2006).

In the past, the department had productively used diagnostic assessments to assist with students' learning, but Alec had little sense that that was the case in relation to the work of the PLCs. His mistrust in the use of the 'cycles' for accountability purposes reflects O'Neill's (2013) statement that 'Teachers…may respond to such systems of accountability in ways that undermine the very performance that is ostensibly being measured or assessed' (p. 5). In terms of policy enactment, the mistrust of the PLC structure reduced the process to a transaction in which the 'policy must be seen to be done, that is reported as done and accounted for' (Ball et al. 2011b, p. 629). Beyond such superficial engagement, nothing more seemed to be required (at least 'externally'). This finding strongly suggests that administrators need to be careful not to co-opt PLCs to the pursuit of disciplinary and performative policies (cf. Louis 2006). To do so would appear to undermine trust in the PLC as a process, with a consequent loss of commitment to the work: '*A lot of teachers aren't that keen on the whole thing*.'

In contrast to the PLC, the FoS provided an environment in which a much more substantive conception of trust appeared to be evident. Alec's expectations for professional learning in the FoS were genuine, expansive and grounded in practice: '*The more specific the learning is to your particular needs or class, the more important it is*.' In terms of policy enactment, this professional learning context fostered an understanding of the policy, even as he was unsure of its provenance: '*I'm not certain it's policy driven from the Ministry of Education. It's more on a practical level…ultimately it's all about student learning, or student success*.' This positive expectation in the importance of the work enabled Alec to be vulnerable in order to learn (Cerna 2014). Evidence of this 'willingness to be vulnerable' (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 1999, p. 189) was demonstrated in a number of ways. He was prepared to share and

question extant practice: '*Teachers might share what they do with students. It's more like the problems are found or discussed in terms of what we can actually do in class to help improve [student learning]*.' In this sense, much more trusting relations were evident and had been developed within the FoS. Arguably, such relations served to mediate the leadership and shared vision that characterized the FoS and that appeared to be promulgated through Anthea's work; collective learning was enabled through trust relationships and collegiality that helped foster shared understandings (Chen et al. 2016). As a consequence, there was also a willingness to engage others into the classroom and to deal with ambiguity: '*The solutions aren't necessarily found at the meeting*.' This level of collaboration is essential to building, testing and refining professional knowledge in relation to practice (Reiser 2013). While there was some limited trust in relation to the work of the PLC, Alec's account of the FoS was far more specific in identifying substantive, respected professional learning opportunities. He described the work of the FoS as '*extremely valuable*,' while the PLC appeared to be more of a compulsory undertaking—more 'directive' in nature: '*We've been like push, push, push! I feel it's been a certain amount of pressure actually*.' This preparedness to share, to be vulnerable and to collaborate on substantive issues pertaining to students' learning serves as a useful example of effective professional collaborative learning that was only possible through necessary trust between teachers and administrators. Essentially, trust appeared to 'emerge' as vital to success, and the conditions that appeared conductive to such emergence—to supporting trust—seemed to include a greater sense of autonomy, a deeper sense of relevance of the work at hand, greater commitment to more substantive teaching and learning, and internal professional responsibility rather than external pressure to 'perform.' Again, collective learning was enabled through trusting relations and collegiality, which enabled shared understandings about how to enhance practice (Chen et al. 2016).

In this way, the research reveals exposure to the workings of the FoS among school administrators could serve as a vehicle to 'reorient' the PLCs and develop more trusting relations between teachers and administrators. Feeling he could place his trust in the professional learning associated with the FoS and its facilitator, Alec enacted the policy, with real and productive effects in the classroom: '*What you get from her [FoS facilitator] is real, and valuable, and you can actually use it*.' In doing so, he adopted the role of 'policy enthusiast,' one who was open to the possibilities associated with the policy, and how they relate to 'real' situations (Ball et al. 2011b)—in this case, in his classroom. In this way, he revealed how trust was imperative to this work. For administrators, these understandings may lead to a reorientation in how administrators look to enact policy through the development of trust *before* seeking to cultivate learning opportunities. A 'trust first' strategy relies on 'open communication on who we are and what we believe' (Sergiovanni 2005, p. 119). While such a strategy does not ensure complete agreement with a policy, it does work to support the capacity of teachers to successfully enact policy.

7 Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to highlight the primacy of trust in relation to teacher learning as a form of policy enactment. In particular, we argue that issues of trust should be given much more attention in policy enactment research, particularly whether and how the individual teacher who is so often the 'object' of professional learning initiatives 'trusts' various learning initiatives associated with such reform. The pursuit of accountability in the PLC described here, seemingly for its own sake, cultivated a sense of mistrust for the teacher. This

was in stark contrast to more intelligent forms of accountability (O'Neill 2013) associated with the FoS, with the latter initiative characterized by more substantive, trusting relations. The way in which teachers engage with educational policy reform reflects the nature of the particular policy conditions that come to predominate, including the role of trust in cultivating the teacher learning that transpires. Different kinds of policies produce different kinds of policy responses, with more restrictive professionalism associated with more disciplinary policies. However, policies themselves can also be construed in more developmental ways, depending upon the particular conditions under which they are enacted. In more disciplinary approaches, there is little space for teachers' interpretation of the policy, little space for teachers to be intelligently accountable for the policy, and enactment is reduced to the 'disciplines of necessity' (Ball et al. 2011a, p. 612). Relying on bureaucratic power, such enactment reflects an environment of low trust (Tschannen-Moran 2009). Without developing professional learning contexts characterized by trust, it would appear that teachers may not be able to move beyond the role of policy 'transactor' to the more professionally fulfilling role of policy 'enthusiast' (Ball et al. 2011b). In contrast, more developmental approaches '*can* enable an active policy subject' (Ball et al. 2011a, p. 615; emphasis original). The meaningful enactment of policy requires professional judgment and open opportunities for teachers' sense making in relation to the policy; this requires trusting relations among those involved.

To promote these qualities, schools and districts need to emphasize the more developmental aspects of policies and downplay the more disciplinary aspects, particularly as these are understood by the individual teacher. A more professional orientation, demonstrating a greater level of trust in teachers as policy actors, is essential. Our first-hand narrative approach to research indicates that a single policy may be interpreted as either disciplinary or developmental for the individual teacher, depending on the nature of the trust relations that are evident through the professional learning opportunities that attend its enactment in more localized contexts. Cultivating the conditions for trusting relations between teachers and those who engage with them in support of their professional learning seems essential for providing opportunities for teachers to learn how to enact policy more productively. Such 'trust-rich' environments challenge more accountability oriented logics. However, cultivating such trust-rich approaches is not easy and needs to be a long-term project supported at all levels within education systems. This support includes distributing leadership among those who engender trust among others and ensuring consistent messaging within and across schools about the substantive purposes of particular policies. Such support demands professional learning opportunities that are firmly grounded in trust and constant vigilance to the effects of such initiatives upon individual teachers as learners.

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