DEPARTMENT CHAIR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AT INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

_____

A Capstone Project

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

_____

by

Jaime Osborne

B.A. University of Virginia

M.T. University of Virginia

December 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Department chairs can serve as crucial connections to teaching practice, and yet their role as intermediaries is typically not used effectively for improving instruction. The literature on independent schools suggests that understanding how the capacity of department chairs develop as instructional leaders is a need, given that independent schools exist in a competitive environment (Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019; Orem, 2017; Torres, 2013; Torres, 2017). In this capstone project, I researched the ways in which school-level leaders and department chairs understand the role of department chair as instructional leader among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the position. The independent schools in my study are located within an approximately 100-mile radius of Washington, DC and are similar in terms of enrollment and grade levels. Through my research, I identify the ways in which school-level leaders and department chairs perceive that the role of department chair is constituted (i.e. department chair leadership practices), enacted (i.e. internal conditions that support and facilitate the role of department chair as instructional leader), and developed (i.e. practices used by school-level leaders that develop the cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills needed for department chair leadership).

I reviewed the literature on department chairs and independent schools, as well as research that examines how principals support instructional leadership capacity of teacher-leaders. My review of the literature indicated that department chair instructional leadership capacity is the result of effective school leadership practices, and my study aimed to offer insights that would enable independent schools that seek to focus the role of department chair as instructional leader to define the role, provide support, and develop the capacity of those who serve in the role.

The conceptual framework for my study hypothesizes that the role of department chair as instructional leader is comprised of three elements: constitution, enactment, and development. The demand environment (Greenfield, 1995) compels school-level leaders to enact leadership and re-focus the role of department chair as instructional leader. Moreover, my conceptual framework posits that school-level leaders implement "pillar practices" (Drago-Severson, 2007) to develop the internal capacities of department chairs and build capacity for instructional leadership.

I collected data in the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019 using a qualitative multiple case-study design. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the school-level leader identified by the head of school at each school as working most closely with department chairs. In addition, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three department chairs from each school in my study. In total, I interviewed four school-level leaders and twelve department chairs at four independent schools.

Findings from the independent schools in this study showed alignment with the elements identified in my conceptual framework: constitution, enactment, and development. There were differences, however, between school-level leaders' and department chairs' understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader.

School-level leaders espoused the role of department chair as one that sets directions and builds relationships and develops people in order to fulfill mission alignment. They perceived department chair instructional leadership is supported by time and they explained that department chairs develop in their role by use of mentoring and teaming. Department chairs understood the constitution of the role in a similar way to school-level leaders, but expressed a need to also secure accountability in order to achieve mission alignment. Due to their perception of teacher autonomy within each of their schools, they perceived department chair instructional leadership is supported by school-level leaders standing behind them as they make decisions from a middle-management standpoint. Furthermore, they perceived that department chair capacity is primarily

developed through leadership opportunities and mentoring, and they expressed a desire for collegial inquiry.

I propose the following recommendations based on my research findings.

1. Dialogue with department chairs to gain insight on the challenges they face as they carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader and consider how to best support and develop them.

2. Reduce the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader to highlight leadership practices, especially setting directions and building relationships and developing people.

3. Ensure a solid support structure for the role of department chair – namely by elevating the status of the role to faculty and guaranteeing course release.

4. Develop the capacity of department chairs through the use of mentoring and provision of leadership opportunities.

5. Incorporate opportunities for department chairs to have collegial inquiry, including during department chair meetings.

Jaime Osborne
Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, "Department Chair Instructional Leadership at Independent Schools," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

_____
(David Eddy Spicer, Ed.D.) Capstone Chair

_____
(Pamela Tucker, Ed. D.) Committee Member

_____
(Sara Dexter, Ed.D.) Committee Member

<div align="right">

November 12, 2019
Date of Defense

</div>

DEDICATION

To my grandparents, who instilled in me perseverance, self-reliance, and a love of knowledge and

learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot express enough gratitude to my capstone chair, Dr. David Eddy Spicer, for the immense amount of time he put into meticulously editing and providing detailed feedback on the many drafts I have shared with him over the past three years. Your dedication to the students under your tutelage is an inspiration to me.

I would also like to thank Dr. Sara Dexter and Dr. Pamela Tucker for being a part of my committee and helping guide me through this program; I have learned so much from you – and all my professors in this program, including Dr. Dennise Berry, Dr. Daniel Duke, Dr. David Eddy Spicer, and Dr. Michelle Young. Thank you for providing a rigorous learning environment, establishing high expectations, and pushing my thinking each class.

In addition, I am indebted to the heads of school, school-level leaders, and department chairs who helped to make this study possible. Thank you for being generous with your time, as well as open and honest about your experience.

Finally, I am grateful for having been a part of Cohort Three. Thank you to Chris, Christina, Craig, Crystal, Eileen, Jennifer, Mark, Nick, Pamela, Sue, and Staci. I admire each of you for your compassion, intellect, and commitment to improving education. This program was exceptional in part because of each of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

It's the fourth Tuesday of the month in February nearing three o'clock. Social studies

teachers at Marseille School[1], an independent school, begin to congregate in Room 201 for their

monthly department meeting. As teachers walk in the room, they see Rachel Dubois the

department chair, standing at the front of the room. As she begins, Rebecca Laurent, the director

of teaching and learning, walks into the room to observe. Rebecca is the school-level leader who

works closely with department chairs in a manner similar to the principal in public high schools.

Lately, she has been working with the department chairs to re-focus their role to be on

instructional leadership. However, the director of teaching and learning is dismayed to observe

that Rachel is focusing her department meeting on nuts and bolts instead of what Rebecca has

been emphasizing: connecting the goals of the department to the goals of the school, helping

teachers to understand how their classroom work contributes to the department and school goals,

and/or supporting teachers in a variety of professional learning aimed at broadening and

deepening their skills and knowledge, thereby building department capacity. Rebecca has also

noticed that Rachel, like other department chairs, struggles with fostering a climate for

improvement which encourages teachers to change existing practice, and she wonders what she

could do to empower Rachel and other department chairs to develop the intrapersonal,

interpersonal, affective, and cognitive skills to effectively deal with complex issues that face the

school and require changes in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, and approaches to work. From

---

[1] Pseudonyms have been used to protect confidentiality for personal and place names used in my
research.

the perspective of the director of teaching and learning, an instructional leadership role for department chairs is especially important given that many of the teachers at independent schools may be subject-area experts, having come from non-traditional teaching backgrounds and lacking knowledge of best teaching practice. Since independent schools are facing increasing competition from other independent schools, as well as student attrition, she and other school-level leaders are keen on empowering department chairs to share in distributed instructional leadership as a way to help teachers improve curriculum and instruction, especially among teachers who lack a background in pedagogy. Additionally, a lack of knowledge of best practices among teachers makes it difficult to implement school-wide initiatives. Therefore, as Rebecca sees it, re-defining the role of department chair to be focused on instructional leadership is paramount for her school to be successful in a highly competitive environment.

Problem of Practice

In both public and independent schools, department chairs are crucial connections to teaching practice, and yet their role as intermediaries is typically not used effectively for improving instruction. Often, department chairs focus on managing their departments instead of assisting school-level leaders to improve teachers' instructional practice and/or translating the mission of the school to specific student achievement goals within the department.

Since there is a lack of literature about the role of department chair in independent schools, I am relying on the literature that exists about public schools. Anecdotal data suggests that conditions in independent schools mirror those reported by research in public school settings and it offers reasons as to why department chairs act as managers instead of instructional leaders. First, they tend to lack a job description (Weller, 2001; Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007) or if there is a job description, the nature of the role is equivocal and causes role ambiguity (Bliss, Fahrney, & Steffy, 1996; Peacock, 2014; Weller, 2001). As department chairs often have many administrative tasks to attend to, they perceive their role as managerial (Bliss et al., 1996; Feeney,

2009; Weller, 2001). For instance, Feeney (2009) found that department chairs referred to their roles using terms that highlighted the task-oriented nature of their job. Furthermore, Feeney (2009) found that department chairs did not stress the importance of engendering and sustaining a dialogue among teachers about instruction and assessment, but instead emphasized the need to complete tasks.

There is evidence, however, that department chairs have the potential to enact an instructional leadership role. For instance, teachers report that they would like to have department chairs provide assistance regarding instruction and assessment (Bliss et al., 1996). Likewise, some evidence indicates that department chairs would prefer that their role is defined to focus on instructional leadership (Bliss et al., 1996; Weller, 2001). In addition, research supports the finding that department chairs can be effective as instructional leaders when they are supported by school-level leaders (Peacock, 2014) and the ability of department chairs to fulfill the role of instructional leader is important. In a meta-analysis, Leithwood (2016) found that the influence of the department chair on student learning was greater than the influence of the school or school-level leader. Leithwood (2016) stated, "Departments are more suitable units for improving teaching and learning than are secondary schools as a whole and the value of department-head leadership likely outweighs (but does not replace) the value of principal leadership for improving teaching and learning" (p. 124).

Moreover, departments at the secondary level have strong subcultures, as originally explored by Siskin (1991). Teachers within a department share common subject expertise, which results in the development of shared structures, processes, and language within their unit (Siskin, 1991). Therefore, departments can become difficult to penetrate by an outsider (Siskin, 1997), and the department chair may be a more natural choice for teachers within a department to rely on as instructional leader in comparison to the principal who lacks shared subject expertise (Siskin, 1991; Wettersten, 1992).

A number of studies indicate that school-level leaders prefer department chairs to focus more on visioning and providing instructional support to the teachers in their departments (Brent, DeAngelis, & Surash, 2014; Wettersten, 1992). Many public school-level leaders, however, do not effectively utilize teacher leaders to share responsibility in instructional leadership (Bierly, Doyle, & Smith, 2016; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2012; Weller, 2001). Instead, instructional leadership is usually the task of the principal and assistant principals (Bierly et al., 2016). Yet, distributed leadership may serve as a form of job-embedded leadership training, while also lessening the workload of formal leaders (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007). Sharing this role among informal leaders seems to be a more pragmatic option than requiring formal leaders to be the primary instructional leaders (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007; Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009, as cited in Leithwood, 2016).

I corroborated the findings reported above with informal conversations that I conducted between August and October 2017 with various individuals affiliated with independent schools. These conversations led me to understand that despite different governance contexts and school organizational structures, the role and responsibilities of the department chair are broadly similar between independent and public schools. [2]

As a result of these informal conversations (see Appendix A), I learned that few independent schools have redefined the role of department chair to focus on instructional leadership. Furthermore, very few independent schools are supporting and developing the instructional leadership capacity of department chairs. Among schools that have taken the initial steps to redefine the role of department chair on instructional leadership, however, some key

_____

[2] From August to October 2017, I conducted 22 informal interviews with a variety of individuals affiliated with independent schools, including consultants, department chairs, heads of school, assistant heads of school, division heads, academic deans, and executive directors of regional organizations (see Appendix A). This was done in an effort to learn about the role of department chair in independent schools and how school-level leaders are developing their capacity as instructional leaders. These informal interviews ranged from 20-40 minutes and provided me with personal insight into how the department chair role is constituted, supported, and developed.

conditions exist. First, it is not always the principal, known as division head, that is working with

department chairs to build their capacity; it may be the director of teaching and learning, for

example, or a similar variation of this title. Additionally, these school-level leaders are clear

about the rationale behind the change, and they are also in many cases eager to better learn how

to systematically support and develop capacity of their chairs to be effective instructional leaders.

Some even voiced frustration that the change to focus the role of department chairs on

instructional leadership is not occurring fast enough and/or there is not a network of school-level

leaders among independent schools in a similar geographic area that are convened to share ideas

related to this topic. One individual also expressed concern that the role of department chair as

instructional leader is complicated because school-level leaders (in this case, the individual

acknowledged himself included) do not provide the necessary supports to allow department chairs

to authentically share in distributed instructional leadership. Furthermore, some school-level

leaders may have suggested that technical skill is not enough to perform instructional leadership.

In other words, a few school-level leaders seemed perplexed that even though their department

chairs were master teachers, they were still slow and/or unsuccessful at translating what they

knew about best practices to the teachers in their departments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate the ways in which the role of

department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional

leaders in independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role

of department chair. This contributes to the existing literature base given that anecdotal evidence

gleaned from informal interviews I conducted with a variety of individuals affiliated with

independent schools suggested that the problem of practice in public schools as reported in the

literature is similar to that which occurs in independent school settings (see Appendix A). In both

public and independent schools, it is common for department chairs to have a traditional role in

that they focus on tasks such as procuring resources instead of providing feedback to teachers on instruction. Furthermore, there is not any research that exists about the role of department chair in independent schools, and Klar (2012a) noted that there is a dearth of research on how principals can develop the capacity of department chairs to share in an instructional leadership role alongside school-level leaders.

Additionally, a review of the literature reveals that the majority of the research on the department chair as instructional leader focuses on the barriers to performing this role (Leithwood, 2016). While the understanding of barriers is essential, it is also important to understand how school-level leaders support and develop department chairs to effectively share in the role of instructional leader. Examining the ways in which department chairs are viewed and supported as instructional leaders among independent schools that are taking an active interest in re-defining their role to focus on instructional leadership may help to uncover the leadership practices that can best support and develop the capacity of department chairs.

Furthermore, while there is some research that has been conducted to study how the department chair role could be expanded to encompass instructional leadership, most of these studies have taken place in public schools (Bredeson, 2013; Kelley & Salisbury, 2013; Klar, 2012a; Klar 2012b) or internationally (Harris & Jamieson, 1995; Harris, 2001). There is not any research to suggest to what extent this problem is similar or different among independent schools in the United States. As there seems to be a gap in the literature in terms of not only supporting department chair instructional leadership capacity, but also how the role of department chair as instructional leader is conceptualized at independent schools, this type of educational setting was the focus of analysis for this study.

While the role of department chair as instructional leader may be broadly similar between public and independent schools, the environmental dynamics that compel school-level leaders to focus on this are distinct. Therefore, this is a significant leadership issue because independent schools exist in an era of rising tuition costs and student attrition ("Enrollment Trends in

6

Independent Schools," n.d.; Fish & Wolking, 2019). As a result, they are under pressure to articulate their worth (Cooper, 2017; Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019; McManus, 2012). For example, when I inquired about why independent schools would want to develop instructional leadership capacity among department chairs, one school-level leader responded:

> Why would [parents] pay to put [their] kids [in an independent school]? What are they getting for that? Because public schools - I'm going to be honest, I came from a really good public school; they've upped their game. I think we cannot rest on our laurels. It worked a hundred years ago [to have teachers who were merely subject-area experts]. We really need to be upping our game.

Consequently, these schools are relying less on their history and traditions to attract prospective students, and more on innovations aligned to their mission that will help students develop the skills and competencies to be successful in the 21st century (Cooper, 2017; Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019).

Therefore, in order for innovations to be successful, it would seem to be imperative to ensure that department chairs' role is focused on instructional leadership within a distributed leadership framework, and that leadership practices could be used to develop their internal capacities. Consequently, both department chairs and the school itself may be better equipped, and therefore empowered, to deal with challenges particular to the independent school environment. Hence, understanding how department chairs are viewed, supported, and developed as instructional leaders at independent schools in a similar geographic area may reveal both the leadership practices that are already being used to support their capacity and how these practices could be improved upon to engender transformational learning, or development of internal capacities, as a means to effectively deal with challenges.

Research Questions

I am interested to know the ways that school-level leaders and department chairs understand the role of department chair as instructional leader. To explore this I will investigate the primary research question: *Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair, in what ways is the role of department chair defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders?* The guiding and relevant questions are:

Research Question 1: How do school-level leaders understand the role of department chair?

- SQ1.1: In what ways, do school-level leaders espouse the role as one of instructional leadership?

- SQ1.2: In what ways do school-level leaders perceive that department chair instructional leadership is supported and facilitated?

- SQ1.3: How do school-level leaders explain that department chairs develop in their role?

Research Question 2: How do department chairs understand and enact the role of department chair?

- SQ2.1: In what ways, if any, do department chairs enact the role as one of instructional leadership?

- SQ2.2: In what ways do department chairs perceive that their role as instructional leaders is supported and facilitated?

- SQ2.3: How do department chairs explain that they develop in their role?

Methodology

Conceptual framework. The components that make up my conceptual framework emanate from the literature and include the following: instructional leadership (Leithwood, 2012b), distributed leadership (Harris, 2003), and Drago-Severson's (2007) pillar practices. As previously stated, the problem of practice focuses on how department chairs are crucial

connections to teaching practice, and yet their role as intermediaries is typically not used effectively for improving instruction. In both public and private schools, department chairs exist in an era of adaptive challenge – whether that is the achievement gap in public schools or attrition and related challenges among independent schools.

According to Heifetz (2006) an adaptive challenge is a type of challenge that is complex and ambiguous, and both the problem and the solution necessitate learning. In fact, individuals tend to learn by trial and error (Heifetz, 2006). Particularly difficult for a leader is the fact that an adaptive challenge also tends to "generate resistance" in others because it requires members of the organization to shed their obsolete ways of thinking and operating, which "means to experience loss – [including] loss of competence" (Heifetz, 2006, p. 79). In contrast to adaptive challenge, there is technical challenge (Heifetz, 2006). This type of challenge requires technical skill. According to Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009), issues are often a combination of both the simple and the complex, and not having the appropriate technical or adaptive skills to address the challenge will lead to problems. However, it is more common to overlook the adaptive aspects of a problem due its complexity (Heifetz et al., 2009). According to Heifetz, that is because "leadership [for adaptive challenge] requires keeping people in the game over time for a sustained period of disequilibrium" (University of Minnesota, 2011, 1:45).

Greenfield (1995) identified three conditions that create a "demand environment" for school administrators and thereby necessitate that these administrators exert leadership instead of management. These conditions included: the ethical aspect of schools, the independent nature of teachers' work, and threats to the school (Greenfield, 1995). Due to the fact that the independent school environment and related issues represent an adaptive challenge (Evans, 2013), this "demand environment" requires that school leadership position department chairs' role to be focused on instructional leadership within a distributed leadership framework, and that leadership practices are used to develop their capacity as instructional leaders.

The framework conceptualizes how the role of the department chair consists of three components: constitution, enactment, and development. Constitution refers to the leadership practices that school-level leaders assign to the role of department chair as instructional leader. Specifically, the Ontario Leadership Framework is a model of instructional leadership that draws on a wide range of literature based on substantial evidence from others' research. It consists of five domains, which include: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, improving the instructional program, and securing accountability (Leithwood, 2012b). Enactment refers to the internal conditions that school-level leaders provide for department chairs to carry out their role as instructional leader in a distributed leadership framework. Finally, development refers to the methods that school-level leaders employ to engender transformative learning among department chairs and build their capacity.

Mezirow (1997) described transformative learning as "the essence of adult education" because it engenders autonomous thinking (p. 11). Specifically, he defined it as the process by which "frames of reference" are altered to become "more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 112). Frames of reference are essentially the values and beliefs that an individual holds (Mezirow, 1997). According to Mezirow (1997) our frames of references change through "critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind are based" (p. 7).

To build capacity for instructional leadership among department chairs, I hypothesize that school-level leaders use "pillar practices" (Drago-Severson, 2007). Drago-Severson's (2007) four pillars of adult learning include teaming, collegial inquiry, mentoring, and providing opportunities for leadership.[3] Based on a review of the literature, teaming and collegial inquiry

---

[3] Drago-Severson's (2007) pillar practices for adult learning are based on constructive-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2009), which posits that recognizing and attending to the developmental diversity among adult learners can support transformational learning. These pillar practices relate specifically to Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2009) theories of adult development,

are likely the primary means by which school-level leaders support transformational learning, and thereby instructional leadership capacity. School-level leaders could also provide emotional support to the department chairs via mentoring as they grow into their new role. Furthermore, school-level leaders could provide leadership opportunities for department chairs to share influence and ideas within the school community.

The increased capacity of department chairs to share in the instructional leadership role with school leadership means that the department chair, and therefore the school, would be better able to translate school-wide initiatives implemented at the macro level of the school to the department level, which would positively affect student learning. The conceptual framework is addressed fully in the methodology section of this capstone.

Methods. I used a qualitative, multiple case-study design to collect data on how school-level leaders and department chairs understand the role of department chair as instructional leader.

Site selection and participants. To support the design of this study, I identified independent schools that shared similar features within the same geographic area. Next, I conducted informal interviews with school-level leaders from fifteen independent schools to discern if they have an interest in expanding the role of department chair to focus on instructional leadership. As a result of those informal conversations, I deduced that seven of the fifteen independent schools have an interest in re-focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader. I contacted the head of school for each of the seven independent schools in hopes of recruiting at least three independent schools to participate in my study. Four independent schools in Virginia and the District of Columbia agreed to partake in my research. These schools included the following: Grasse School, Le Cannet School, Arles School, and Avignon School.[4]

---

not Mezirow (1997), but they serve as a useful analytic tool to focus attention on the school-level processes that hold the most promise for supporting and sustaining transformational learning.
[4] Pseudonyms have been used to protect confidentiality for personal and place names used in my research.

Data sources. I conducted semi-structured interviews with department chairs and the school-level leader who was identified by the head of school at each independent school as working mostly closely with department chairs. In total, I conducted twenty interviews. Per school, this included two rounds of semi-structured interviews with the school-level leader and one round of semi-structured interviews with three department chairs who were selected based on their leadership of a core-subject area: English, history, mathematics or science.

Data analysis. Resulting data from the interview transcripts was analyzed using deductive coding based on my conceptual framework. I also deductively coded for emergent themes and alternative understandings of aspects that may not have been uncovered by my initial code list. Once the data was coded, I composed analytic memos (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008) and created matrices to compare and contrast key findings within each school, as well as across schools, in relation to my research questions. Finally, I examined the data in comparison to the literature and my conceptual framework.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This study explored how the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop instructional leadership capacity. Given that there is not any existing literature on this topic as it pertains to independent schools, and sparse research on the role of department chair, this study presents limitations. First, while this is a multi-site case study, it represents a very small sample. Another limitation is that the literature cited in regard to instructional leadership applies specifically to principals and not to department chairs so the existing research does not offer a foundational understanding of this topic. Finally, self-report data is a limitation, as data from both principals and department chairs was gleaned from the use of semi-structured interviews.

In addition to those limitations, I recognize the following delimitations. I did not evaluate department chair efficacy. While this study examined the ways in which department

12

chairs develop in the role of department chair as instructional leader, I did not assess their developmental stages.

My premise is that independent schools are facing a crisis due to a competitive environment. Therefore, in order to be successful in effectively dealing with this crisis, school-level leaders need to re-define the role of department chair to be focused on instructional leadership within a distributed leadership framework. Additionally, school-level leaders need to develop department chairs' instructional leadership capacity. Hence, I conducted an exploratory study to learn about the role of the department chair as instructional leader, and my conceptual framework suggests that the role involves three main components: constitution, enactment, and development.

Study Overview

This capstone project explored the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair. Specifically, I investigated the espoused versus enacted role of department chairs as instructional leaders and determined in what ways, if any, teaming, collegial inquiry, mentoring, and providing leadership opportunities are being used to develop department chairs' instructional leadership capacity. I interviewed school-level leaders and department chairs at four independent schools. I evaluated the findings against research on department chairs, literature that examines how principals support instructional leadership capacity of teacher leaders, and research on characteristics of independent schools. Finally, I made recommendations for how school-level leaders might understand the role of department chair as instructional leader to match empirical research.

This section provided an introduction and overview of my capstone research. The next section of this capstone discusses relevant literature on department chairs, principal leadership

practices that support instructional leadership capacity among formal teacher leaders, and

independent schools. In subsequent sections of this capstone, the methodology, research design

and conceptual framework are discussed, and finally, the findings, discussion, recommendations,

and action communications are shared.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of practice addressed in this capstone focuses on the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders in independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair. Therefore, this literature review examines several pertinent areas related to the problem of practice. First, I explore the literature regarding the roles and responsibilities of department chairs, as well as studies that support their potential to enact instructional leadership. Additionally, I examine what could be meant by an instructional leadership role for department chairs, and how this role might be supported and facilitated in a distributed leadership framework. Most importantly, in examining the methods that principals use to support and develop instructional leadership capacity, I analyze the literature surrounding how principals accomplish this task among formal teacher-leaders, as the literature base on department chairs is sparse. Finally, as this problem of practice is situated within independent schools, I examine the literature about independent school characteristics, as well as issues concerning reforms and challenges, as relevant to the problem of practice.

In conducting a review of the research, I used Hallinger's (2014) five guiding questions to develop the literature review (as cited in Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 7).

Table 1

Hallinger's (2014) Five Guiding Questions

Hallinger's questions	How questions are addressed in the review
What are the central topics of interest, guiding questions, and goals?	The central topics of the review include current department chair roles and responsibilities, empirical research that supports their leadership potential, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, the role of the principal in supporting and developing instructional leadership capacity among formal teacher leaders, and contextual features of independent schools. Guiding questions include: *What is the enacted role of the department chair? What evidence is there that highlights department chairs' leadership potential? What does the literature point to in terms of the key components of instructional leadership? What does the research show regarding how principals support and develop instructional leadership capacity among formal teacher leaders, including department chairs? What about the independent school environment necessitates the development of instructional leadership capacity among department chairs?*
What conceptual perspective guides the review's selection, evaluation, and interpretation of the studies?	This review explores that department chairs can implement instructional leadership and they are in a unique position to influence teacher practice in their department. Additionally, principals can utilize leadership practices to support and develop this capacity. Thus, studies were chosen to provide evidence to support this line of reasoning.
What are the sources and types of data employed in the review?	I reviewed studies highlighting department chair leadership; studies on the nature of instructional and distributed leadership; studies on the principal's role in supporting and developing instructional leadership capacity among formal teacher leaders, including department chairs; and literature describing issues and concerns facing independent schools.
What is the nature of the data evaluation and analysis employed in the review?	Sources include empirical and theoretical studies from peer-reviewed journals. In addition, a study was selected for review if I had noticed that several other studies had identified it in their reference list. For independent schools, I also used magazine articles from relevant sources.
What the major results of the review?	Specific principal leadership practices to support and develop instructional leadership capacity among teacher leaders, including department chairs. Additionally, independent schools need department chairs who are instructional leaders, and the fact that departments are "subcultures" make the chair the ideal person to help teachers improve their practice.

Empirical and theoretical studies, and in some cases, as it relates to independent schools, magazine articles, were obtained from electronic databases, specifically the EBSCO education databases via the University of Virginia Library System, as well as Google Scholar, and ProQuest. The following search terms were used to locate studies on department chairs: high school department heads, middle management or middle managers and secondary education or high school. For research on instructional leadership, the following search terms were used: school supervision and instructional leadership. Distributed leadership and principal were the sole terms used to search for literature on this concept. For research on the practices that principals use to support and develop instructional leadership capacity in others, the following search terms were used: instructional leadership, teacher leaders, and role of principal; educational leadership, teacher leaders, and role of principal; and instructional leadership, middle management or middle managers, and role of principal. Finally, research regarding leadership in independent schools was located using the following search terms: independent school or private school and educational leadership.

In the first section of the literature review, I review literature on the role of the department chair and the unsupported potential they have to be instructional leaders. Next, I go over the concept of both instructional and distributed leadership, and how principal leadership practices serve to develop instructional leadership in formal teacher leaders, including department chairs. Finally, I review the literature on independent schools regarding the issues and concerns they face in developing instructional leadership capacity among department chairs.

Department Chairs

Siskin (1991) commented that despite the fact that high schools are typically organized by departments, very little is understood about them. Furthermore, relatively little is known about the role of department chair (Brent, DeAngelis, & Surash, 2014; DeAngelis, 2013). While there is a lot of research on principals and teachers, there is considerably less so on those who

occupy middle management positions and how they can influence teacher practice (Hansen &
Larusdottir, 2015). Among middle management, the literature on department chairs is thin. The
literature that does exist on department chairs is situated in public school settings, and primarily
focuses on characteristics of individuals who fulfill this position, and enacted roles and
responsibilities.

   Roles and responsibilities. Across the literature, the role of the department chair is ill-
defined (Bliss et al., 1996; Peacock, 2014; Sergiovanni, 1984; Weller, 2001). In fact, many
department chairs state that their position lacks a job description (Weller, 2001; Zepeda &
Krushkamp, 2007). For this reason and the fact that department chairs are often asked to carry
out a multiplicity of tasks, these individuals often face role ambiguity (Weller, 2001; Zepeda &
Krushkamp, 2007). Among the tasks that department chairs carry out, many of the tasks focus on
administrative matters (Bliss et al., 1996; Feeney, 2009; Klar, 2012b; Wahlstrom, 2012; Zepeda
& Krushkamp, 2007). This includes purchasing supplies, general problem-solving, and
advocating for the teachers in their department (Feeney, 2009). In fact, to describe their role,
department chairs used the following terms: "liaison, manager, supplier, fixer, department
representative, advocate, communicator, and mediator" (Feeney, 2009, p. 215). Furthermore, in
one study, department chairs revealed that they perceived leadership "as a series of activities to
accomplish tasks" (Feeney, 2009, p. 215). These activities were done for teachers and school
leaders, as opposed to in collaboration with them (Feeney, 2009, p. 215).

   Because of the various administrative tasks they must attend to and the lack of time to do
it, department chairs often regard instructional leadership as an afterthought (Zepeda &
Krushkamp, 2007). Furthermore, department chairs often still have teaching duties associated
with their primary role, which rarely allow adequate time to engage in instructional leadership
activities (Peacock, 2014; Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007). Additional barriers that department
chairs have cited as limiting their effectiveness to be leaders include lack of formal authority
(Feeney, 2009; Weller, 2001) and a voice in school-wide decisions (Weller, 2001). In fact,

Feeney (2009) noted department chairs have a "semblance of authority, but no formal power" (p. 213). Instead of focusing on curriculum and student learning, department chairs focus their time working as a taskmaster rather than "engaging in leadership activities that would generate collaboration and mutual learning" (Feeney, 2009, p. 216). Moreover, almost two-thirds of the department chairs indicated they did not implement any staff development for their teachers (Weller, 2001).

While this section identified features of the department chair's enacted role, the next section highlights evidence that supports their espoused role.

Unsupported potential as instructional leaders. A recent meta-analysis suggested that the influence of departments and department heads on student learning is greater than the influence of schools and school-level leaders (Leithwood, 2016). Yet, department heads provide "little to no instructional leadership" (Wahlstrom, 2012, p. 83). Furthermore, while evidence emphasizes the department over the school due to "structure, sources of leadership expertise, and teachers' identity and culture" (Leithwood, 2016, p. 123), there is little research focused on how principals can develop the capabilities of teacher leaders, such as department chairs, to engage in models of distributed leadership (Klar, 2012b, p. 366). Nonetheless, there is evidence that when chairs are provided with adequate resources, professional development, and support, they can effectively implement instructional leadership (Peacock, 2014), though few receive any leadership training prior to accepting their position (DeAngelis, 2013; Weller, 2001).

Research highlighting department chair leadership. There are empirical studies that highlight the impact that department chairs can have on teachers in their departments. For example, Printy (2008) conducted a quantitative study to analyze the impact of school leaders and department chairs on mathematics and science teachers' use of communities of practice in addition to their instructional skills. Practices that department chairs implemented and analyzed included: establishing goals, procuring resources, implementing plans, promoting innovation, and encouraging teacher engagement. Based on this study, Printy (2008) concluded:

19

Departmental leadership is the most influential factor in determining the quality of

teachers' participation in communities of practice. The extent of mathematics and

science teachers' participation in productive communities of practice is, on average, more

strongly related to the strength of the department chair's leadership than to subject

differences…This is an important finding, one that highlights the important role that

chairs play in shaping the agenda for learning, brokering knowledge, and learning

opportunities, and motivating teachers for learning work. (pp. 214-215)

Another empirical study conducted by Harris and Jamieson (1995) examined factors that

engendered departmental effectiveness in a small cluster of schools in England. The researchers

used semi-structured interviews to gauge participants' perspectives as to the key factors that

contributed to departmental efficacy. The study found that all departments were similar in that

the department chair advocated a "clear and shared sense of vision" (Harris & Jamieson, 1995, p.

287). Furthermore, these department chairs' "strong vision of what good teaching looked like in

their field largely determined whether an innovation was considered and subsequently adopted"

(p. 287). Additionally, Harris and Jamieson (1995) noted that effective departments were led by

department chairs who adopted "collegiate styles of management" (p. 287). This meant that there

was a regular dialogue among teachers about professional matters. At least one department chair

also regularly incorporated professional development into department meetings (Harris &

Jamieson, 1995, p. 287). Finally, it is noteworthy that school leaders emphasized that the

effectiveness of the departments, which broadly defined included maintaining a focus on teaching

and learning, was the result of the leadership of the department chair (Harris & Jamieson, 1995).

For instance, they stated, "indeed the [school leaders] thought that part of the skill of the heads of

department had been in creating an effective department out of a traditional mix of teachers"

(Harris & Jamieson, 1995, p. 290).

This section reviewed literature that supports the notion that department chairs have the

potential to do more than manage administrative tasks. The next section explains how

departments are their own unique community. Consequently, the department chair therefore is well suited to positively affect change regarding teacher practice.

      Departments as subcultures. Siskin (1991) stated a department "constitutes a distinct community with a distinctive culture" (p. 138). She conducted a qualitative case study of a school in which she examined the workings of two departments in depth. In a follow-up study, she analyzed various departments across 25 high schools. She found that while teachers may not spend a lot of time interacting with the wider community of the school, they spend a lot of time interacting with members of their own department (Siskin, 1991). For example, she noted how departments "share specialized knowledge, references, and language of their subject matter" (Siskin, 1991, p. 155). Thus, she stated, "Departments form intimately interconnected subgroups within the school, and it is at the department level that the potential for collegiality, for collaboration, for shared goals within a high school seems most possible" (Siskin, 1991, p. 155). Furthermore, she stated that given teachers are divided into departments which have unique objectives, department chairs are perceived as having specialized knowledge and they are perceived by teachers as the primary instructional leader (Siskin, 1991; Wettersten, 1992). For these reasons, Siskin (1997) stated the challenge the principal faces in enacting a shared school vision is the "fragmented, departmentalized context of the high school" (p. 612).

      This section identified characteristics of departments that prime the department chair to take an active role in instructional leadership. The next section discusses school leadership's conceptualization of the department chair role, which focuses on instructional leadership within a distributed leadership framework as a foundation to develop instructional leadership capacity using specific leadership practices.

The Role of Department Chair as Instructional Leader

      As a preliminary step to developing instructional leadership capacity among department chairs, school-level leaders first re-define the role of department chairs to be focused on

instructional leadership within a distributed leadership framework. The following section discusses what is meant by instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership. The Ontario Leadership Framework is a model of instructional leadership that draws on a wide range of literature based on substantial evidence from others' research. It consists of five domains, which include: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, improving the instructional program, and securing accountability (Leithwood, 2012b). The current version of the Ontario Leadership Framework, published in 2012, focuses on practices that are linked to student achievement (Leithwood, 2012b). The domains and affiliated practices are identified in the following paragraphs.

Setting directions. This domain incorporates four practices, including the following: building a shared vision, identifying specific short-term goals, creating high performance expectations, and communicating the vision and goals (Leithwood, 2012). Collectively, the goal of this domain is to make sure that faculty is focusing on shared goals (Leithwood, 2012b).

Building relationships and developing people. This domain incorporates five practices, including the following: providing support and demonstrating consideration for individual and staff members, stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff, modeling the school's values and practices, building trusting relationships with and among staff, students, and parents; and establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives (Leithwood, 2012b). The aim of this domain is to build capacity among faculty in terms of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have a positive effect on student learning (Leithwood, 2012b).

Developing the organization to support desired practices. This domain incorporates six practices, including the following: building collaborative cultures and distributing leadership, structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration, building productive relationship with families and communities, connecting the school to its wider environment, maintaining a safe and

healthy school environment, and allocating resources in support of the school's vision and goals (Leithwood, 2012b). According to Leithwood (2012b), the focus of this domain is to create the organizational structures that best facilitate achievement of the shared goals.

   Improving the instructional program. This domain incorporates four practices, including the following: staffing the instructional program, providing instructional support, monitoring student learning and school improvement program, and buffering staff from distractions to their work (Leithwood, 2012b). The goal of this domain is to fine-tune the technology for teaching and learning (Leithwood, 2012b).

   Securing accountability. This domain incorporates two practices, including the following: building staff members' sense of internal accountability and meeting the demands for external accountability (Leithwood, 2012b). According to Leithwood (2012b), the aim of this domain is to engender a sense of personal responsibility among staff to achieve student learning goals, while also making sure that external standards of goal achievement are also met.

   The next section examines how the role of department chair focused on instructional leadership is supported within a distributed leadership framework.

   Distributed leadership. In this section, I define distributed leadership as the support school-level leaders provide to department chairs to enable them to effectively share in an instructional leadership role. For instance, Harris (2008) highlighted, "many people will have the potential to exercise leadership…but the key to success will be the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated, and supported" (Harris, 2008, p. 173). Harris (2003) noted that formal leaders must create the internal conditions in their organization for informal leaders to be able to offer their expertise. These internal conditions are defined as time for teacher-leaders to plan and discuss matters related to instructional leadership, opportunities for professional development, and the enhancement of teacher-leaders' self-confidence to enact leadership (Harris, 2003).

   Time. First, Harris (2003) identified time as an internal condition that supports teacher leaders. A recommendation in the literature suggests that principals may offer support by

structuring time for teacher leaders so that they can attend to instructional leadership tasks (Heineke & Polnick, 2012; Jacobson, Johnson, Gurr, & Drysdale, 2013; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). This includes reducing or eliminating the administrative tasks that a teacher leader is asked to complete. Heineke and Polnick (2012) noted, "[they] have seen [instructional] coaches asked to run copies, laminate materials, and prepare materials for centers, [which]… take the coach away from his or her professional learning role" (p. 50).

A number of empirical studies highlighted this recommendation (Bredeson, 2013; Kelley & Salisbury, 2013; Klar, 2012a; Klar, 2012b; Mangin, 2007). For example, Kelley and Salisbury (2013) conducted a multi-site case study using six high schools in two urban districts. Data was collected using interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis. The aim of the study was to analyze the process by which these schools redefined the role of department chair to focus on instructional leadership. Kelley and Salisbury (2013) concluded, "the role of the principal was critical to advancing the instructional leadership reforms" (p. 311). In fact, Kelley and Salisbury (2013) emphasized that department chairs' administrative duties, across school settings, were reduced "to allow their work to be re-centered on instructional leadership practices" (p. 310).

Another study that relates to the recommendation for principals to support teacher leaders so that they can attend to instructional leadership tasks includes Klar (2012a). He conducted a multi-site case study in three high schools in the same urban district using semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analyses (Klar, 2012a). Klar (2012a) found that principals supported instructional leadership capacity among department chairs using various methods, including the creation of a common definition for "distributed instructional leadership" (Klar, 2012a, p. 184). Furthermore, principals structured time to keep meetings consistently focused on instructional leadership and they incorporated sufficient time into the schedule to allow department chairs to plan for events involving teaching and learning (Klar, 2012a). This included planning for a data-wall project six months in advance, as well as helping department

24

chairs to prepare for working with their departments in the fall during the previous spring (Klar, 2012a).

Professional development. Harris (2003) identified professional development as an internal condition that formal leaders need to provide to support teacher leaders. She suggested that professional development for teacher leaders should encompass technical and leadership skills (Harris, 2003). Smylie and Eckert (2018) discussed the difference between training and development. Training, such as workshops, provides technical expertise for "known" or "closed" problems, whereas development involves growing capacity for "unknown" or "open" problems (Smylie & Eckert, 2018, p. 565). Smylie and Eckert (2018) affirmed that training to build technical expertise in regard to leadership skills is necessary, but must be given to teacher leaders in coordination with "opportunities to apply this knowledge in job-embedded activities under the watchful eye of a formal or informal coach" (p. 566).

Enhancement of self-confidence. Harris (2003) stated that formal leaders need to enhance teacher leaders' self-confidence "to act as leaders in their schools" (p. 320). Not only does this serve to develop their leadership skills and give them a voice in school-wide decisions, but also it demonstrates to the faculty that the teacher leader is a legitimate leader and not a manager. For example, Muijs and Harris (2003) noted:

> Interviews made it clear that the principal can make or break the role of teacher leader. It was not enough for the principal to be a passive supporter…Rather, he or she needed to anticipate the resistance that teacher leaders might encounter from colleagues and help them broker the relationships they would need to do their work. (p. 13)

Additionally, principals can also acknowledge, elevate, and make significant the role of the teacher leader to help them share influence (Barth, 2001; Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Muijs & Harris, 2003). For instance, Muijs and Harris (2003) relayed how one science curriculum coordinator for two schools in a district found it difficult to "gain access to classrooms and team meetings" because teachers were ignorant about her role (pp. 11-12).

Matsumara (2009) had a similar finding related to helping teacher leaders share influence within the school community in a mixed-method study using 29 randomly selected schools in the same district. Data for this study was collected using interviews and surveys. While this study did rely on self-reports, the authors carefully explained how a second individual validated the coding of the interviews, with 88% accuracy on a third of the transcriptions set as the bar for accuracy (Matsumara et al., 2009). The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between principal leadership and teachers' participation in a literacy coaching program. Matsumara et al. (2009) found the principal practice of including the coach in "school wide leadership activities" was associated with teachers' participation in classroom observations (p. 675). In addition, coaches reported that being "publicly identified as a resource," as well as explaining the literacy program to faculty was a principal leadership practice that coaches stated was supportive (Matsumara et al., 2009, p. 681).

Therefore, the role of department chair as instructional leader in a distributed leadership framework means that school-level leaders provide department chairs with the necessary internal working conditions to enact change (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Harris, 2008).

This section examined the ways in which principals can support department chairs in enacting the role of instructional leader. The next section discusses the leadership practices that have the most potential to develop instructional leadership capacity among department chairs.

Development of instructional leadership. According to Barth (2001), "ample evidence suggests that effective principals don't work harder than less effective principals: they work smarter. Principals who encourage and enlist teacher leadership leverage their own" (p. 445). This section examines the specific leadership practices that principals can use purposefully to develop instructional leadership capacity. Various recommendations for developing instructional leadership capacity, as gleaned from the literature, are discussed in the following paragraphs. Additionally, empirical studies that highlighted these recommendations are identified to show where there is overlap between recommendations and principal leadership practice.

26

To structure my synthesis of the literature, I have used Drago-Severson's (2007) four pillar practices as a heuristic. These pillar practices include teaming, collegial inquiry, mentoring, and providing leadership opportunities. According to Drago-Severson (2007), these practices offer developmental potential, meaning they provide opportunities for reflective practice, and hence, develop the cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills needed for leadership. These leadership practices, when used to engender reflection, have the most potential to enable department chairs to develop instructional leadership capacity.

Teaming. One recommendation is to schedule leadership team meetings (Jacobson et al., 2013; Lambert, 2002; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Supovitz, 2015; Wilhelm, 2013). This allows teacher leaders the opportunity to deliberate and make sense of instructional matters, as well as offer professional support to each other, especially when release time or retreats are not an option. Wilhelm (2013) explained, "Meeting weekly or biweekly…can provide comparable support and learning, helping teacher leaders acquire a growing repertoire of skills" (p. 64). Furthermore, he stated, "teachers grow as leaders as they incrementally learn new skills together in a safe environment encouraged by the principal and then apply these skills in their course-alike or grade-level team collaborations" (Wilhelm, 2013, p. 63).

First, the use of teaming can be used to develop technical skills. This is also related to the second recommendation, which includes fostering instructional skills (Danielson, 2007; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Wilhelm, 2013) to be effective instructional leaders. For example, Wilhelm (2013) stated, "simply…asking them to collaborate in these new ways reminds me of putting students into groups and expecting cooperative learning to occur like spontaneous combustion" (p. 63). In fact, he recommended the following skills be developed: "facilitating group discussions about improved instructional practices and leading colleagues in analyzing student work and achievement data" (Wilhelm, 2013, p. 63). Similarly, Danielson (2007) emphasized:

Administrators' commitment to cultivating teacher leaders plays an essential role in their

development. Administrators must be proactive in helping teachers acquire the skills

they need to take advantage of opportunities for leadership (data analysis, etc.). (p. 18)

Various empirical studies highlighted this recommendation (Klar, 2012a; Kelley &

Salisbury, 2013). For example, Klar (2012a) found that "each principal used…[teaming] to

provide department chairs with the information and skill development the chairs themselves had

requested through self-assessment and feedback forms" (p. 185).

Second, teaming can be used to provide general professional support. For example, Klar

(2012a) found that principals regularly assessed department chairs' needs and used this

information to modify the intensity of their efforts. Additionally, principals used various methods

to collect feedback from department chairs, including evaluations and informal conversations

(Klar, 2012a). In at least two instances, this took the form of providing direct support to

department chairs who were having trouble regarding uncooperative teachers in their departments

(Klar, 2012a). Hence, teaming used in this way "opens communication [and] decreases

isolation" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

Additionally, school-level leaders can also support and facilitate distributed instructional

leadership capacity by ensuring "buy-in" or an understanding of the need and importance for the

teacher-leader's emerging instructional leadership role (Wilhelm, 2013). For example, one of the

principals in Klar's (2012a) study used teaming to present student achievement data "to

continually reinforce and clarify the need for change" (p. 184). While only one empirical study

mentioned this strategy, it was used by at least two principals to develop instructional leadership

capacity among teacher leaders (Bredeson, 2013; Klar, 2012a). For example, principals

developed ethical knowledge by "[using] readings…to present local school data…to create

awareness, understanding, and a sense of urgency about existing achievement gaps" (Bredeson,

2013, p. 376). Therefore, teaming used in this manner helps department chairs to "overcome

adults' resistance to change" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

Lastly, Bredeson (2013) claimed that principals "channeled and reinvigorated" department chairs' capacity to be instructional leaders because of "professional development opportunities, collaboration, and joint work" (p. 382). Teaming used in this manner can provide "a safe place for adults to share perspectives and challenge each other's thinking" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

Collegial inquiry. Another recommendation is to teach leadership skills (Barth, 2001; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Supovitz, 2015; Wilhelm, 2013). Numerous empirical studies highlighted this strategy (Bredeson, 2013; Kelley & Salisbury, 2013; Klar, 2012a; Klar 2012b; Youngs & King, 2002). For instance, Klar (2012a) found that principals transformed the function of the leadership team meetings to be less focused on acquiring relevant information and more focused on meaningful dialogue and a model for the type of community that principals hoped would form in the chairs' respective departments.

Interestingly, Klar (2012b) conducted a follow-up study in which he examined how principals developed instructional leadership capacity among department chairs through "professional communities" (p. 365). His conceptual framework for the study was that learning happens because of interaction with others, and principals can foster an engaging environment that serves to nurture instructional leadership capacity (Klar, 2012b). Using this framework, Klar (2012b) argued that "cognitive apprenticeships" in the form of leadership team meetings served as a model of collegial inquiry that principals hoped department chairs would emulate in their own department meetings with teachers (p. 376). Additionally, principals endeavored to keep all leadership team meetings focused on the "learning needs" of department chairs (Klar, 2012b, p. 376). Principals also provided various opportunities for department chairs to reflect on the many new terms associated with instructional leadership.

Another study by Bredeson (2013) highlighted collegial inquiry. He conducted a two-year study using six high schools in two urban districts via interviews, observations, and document analysis (Bredeson, 2013). The aim of the study was to investigate how professional

development engenders distributed instructional leadership. The conceptual framework underpinning this study was professional development for instructional leadership requires specific content and "moral purpose" that principals and department chairs need to implement "within highly dynamic, interactive social contexts" (Bredeson, 2013, p. 367). Bredeson (2013) found that principals used professional development to allow the instructional leadership team, including department chairs, to acquire ethical, propositional, procedural, and pragmatic knowledge – and this was accomplished through sustained, interactive dialogue between department chairs and principals, as opposed to discussion.

Finally, Youngs and King (2002) conducted a multi-site case study using nine urban elementary schools. Data was collected using observations, interviews, and document analyses. The aim of the study was to explore the ways principal leadership for professional development develops school capacity. Youngs and King (2002) found that principals enhanced school capacity by creating structures for teachers, including teacher leaders, "to collaborate and reflect on their practice" (p. 667). For example, at one of the schools, the principal structured daily common planning time for grade teams and monthly team leader meetings (Youngs & King, 2002).

Hence, all of the above instances highlight opportunities for development of instructional leadership capacity because they "create situations for adults to regularly think and talk about practice [in a way] that encourages self-analysis and can improve individual and school or system wide practices" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

Mentoring.   In addition to professional support provided during the use of teaming, principals need to provide emotional support to develop instructional capacity – and mentoring can be the means to achieve this goal. In comparison to teaming and collegial inquiry, there are less studies that highlight the use of this pillar practice.

Mentoring includes conversations to help provide emotional support (Muijs & Harris, 2003). Various empirical studies highlighted this recommendation (Bredeson, 2013; Klar, 2012a;

Mangin, 2007).   For example, Bredeson (2013) found that as principals developed propositional knowledge about the definition of instructional leadership, they also provided department chairs with "emotional support…as they struggled with issues of legitimacy in their new roles as instructional leaders" (p. 378). For instance, one principal noted how department chairs relayed to him, "I shouldn't be put in this position. I shouldn't be the person who has to tell [teachers] this, and I shouldn't be the person who has to deliver this news. I'm not an administrator" (Bredeson, 2013, p. 378). According to Drago-Severson (2008), "mentoring creates an opportunity for broadening perspectives, examining assumptions, and sharing expertise and leadership" (p. 63).

Leadership opportunities. A final way principals can develop instructional leadership capacity among teacher leaders is to provide them with leadership opportunities. For example, they can allow teacher leaders to participate in leadership tasks within the school (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Wilhelm, 2013).

First, Klar (2012a) found that principals provided department chairs with leadership prospects. Various methods included requiring department chairs to deliver a presentation about their departments to the school community, including department chairs in the creation of the school improvement plan, and asking department chairs to interview new teachers for their departments (Klar, 2012a). Hence, providing leadership opportunities in this manner helps department chairs to "uncover their assumptions and test out new ways of working as professionals" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

Second, Klar et al. (2016) used qualitative methods to investigate the leadership practices that were used by six high school principals to support 18 teacher leaders across their schools. Snowball sampling was used to identify the high school principals who were to be part of the study. Next, research teams conducted semi-structured interviews with six high school principals and three teacher-leaders at each school. The interviews with the principals focused on exploring the specific actions that principals used to develop leadership capacity in others, while the

31

interviews with teacher-leaders focused on examining the teacher-leaders' perceptions of those

actions. Two cycles of coding subsequently occurred to identify themes. Researchers found that

principals across schools used similar methods to foster capacity of teacher-leaders, including:

identifying potential leaders, creating leadership opportunities, facilitating role transition, and

providing continuous support (Klar et al., 2016). For instance, principals identified teacher-

leaders for various roles and then created leadership opportunities to foster their capacity (Klar et

al., 2016). These leadership opportunities provided various experiences for teacher-leaders

including supervising events after school or coordinating grants for a department. One teacher

leader explained how the leadership role he was given provided opportunities to "supervise,

coordinate, and create various projects in the school" (p. 124). While some teacher-leaders were

excited for such leadership opportunities, the researchers found that principals sometimes had to

forcefully encourage teacher-leaders to take on extra responsibility "beyond the supervision and

coordination of activities" (Klar et al., 2016, p. 124). For example, one high school principal

described the resistance he faced in persuading a physical education department chair to enact

leadership for change (Klar et al., 2016). As a result, the high school principal had to push the

department chair to take ownership of the problem and enact meaningful change (Klar et al.,

2016). Hence, these leadership opportunities, while sometimes unpleasant for the teacher leaders,

provided ways to "test out new ways of working as professionals" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

This section reviewed practices that principals employed to develop instructional

leadership capacity among teacher leaders, including department chairs. In summary, principals

perceived the work of the teacher leaders as focused on teaching and learning, the essence of

instructional leadership. Using a distributed leadership framework, they provided the internal

conditions to enable department chairs to enact change as instructional leaders. To develop

instructional leadership capacity, school-level leaders implemented the use of teaming, collegial

inquiry, mentoring, and the provision of leadership opportunities. In general, these leadership

practices provided opportunities for individuals to develop the internal capacities needed to be effective leaders.

The next section examines features of independent schools, so that an understanding of the context of this educational setting is imparted. This explicates why department chair instructional leadership is necessary and important in this context.

Independent Schools

According to the National Association of Private Schools (NAIS), independent schools "are close-knit communities that provide students with individualized attention" ("What are Independent Private Schools," 2017). As that definition can describe many other types of schools, NAIS further clarifies that independent schools are independent in the sense that they are "driven by a unique mission" and they are "governed by an independent board of trustees and each is primarily supported through tuition payments and charitable contributions" ("What are Independent Schools," 2017, para. 3).

Characteristics. Kane (1991) explained that there is a lot of variety in terms of structure and mission among independent schools. Nevertheless, he stated that while independent schools are incredibly diverse, they share six common characteristics: self-governance, self-support, self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small size (Kane, 1991, p. 397). A few of these characteristics, as relevant, are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Self-support. Independent schools raise funds through tuition fees and special gifts from the school community, namely alumni. Because these schools receive very little or no assistance from the local, state, and/or federal authorities, they have wide latitude to set their own agenda without interference from government officials (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Kane, 1991).

Self-governance. Independent schools are different from parochial schools in the sense that while some schools may have a religious affiliation, the presence of a board allows the school to be independent from outside control (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Kane, 1991).

Consequently, self-governance means that independent schools have the freedom to tailor their schools in a way public schools cannot (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Evans; 2013; Kane, 1991). Furthermore, Kane explained how independence from regulations permits school-level leaders to have complete discretion in the organizational design of their schools. This has resulted in a "fluid organization where roles of administrators and teachers are less rigidly prescribed" (Kane, 1991, p. 399). This comment means that teachers in independent schools can transition into administrative roles without certification or training.

     Self-defined curriculum. Kane (1991) discussed how independent schools, free from government oversight, are also able to choose a curriculum that aligns with the mission and vision of their school. According to Kane (1991) the chosen curriculum is often intellectually demanding. Teachers are granted autonomy to select individual texts for their classes, and department heads are encouraged to continually review the courses their departments provide for students (Kane, 1992). A study conducted by the United States Department of Education to compare teacher working conditions in public and private schools found that private school teachers have significant autonomy in choosing the curriculum to be taught versus their public school counterparts (Forster & D'Andrea, 2009).

     Self-selected faculty. In contrast to public schools, independent schools have broad discretion regarding hiring, and teachers who elect to teach in independent schools are not required to have teaching certification (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Evans, 2013; Kane, 1991). Additionally, Kane (1991) stated that independent schools prefer to hire individuals who have undergraduate and graduate degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, and who have graduated from selective colleges and universities. Furthermore, he noted that independent schools perceive education courses as inferior to subject-area courses (Kane, 1991). Therefore, it is common for independent schools to believe that the art of teaching can be learned on the job, and "young teachers learn the ropes informally from other teachers or by trial and error" (Kane, 1991, p. 401).

Moreover, many independent schools fail to implement a system of teacher evaluation (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Evans, 2013).

This section reviewed the characteristics of independent schools as relevant to the problem of practice. The next section examines the context in which independent schools exist.

Competitive environment. Independent schools exist in an era of increasing competition (Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019; Orem, 2017; Torres, 2013; Torres, 2017). Due to the independent school characteristic of self-support, schools are having to increase the tuition costs to students in order to compensate the additional administrative positions that have been created over the last few years (Mitchell, 2016). In face of rising tuition costs, parents and/or school boards are putting pressure on independent schools to identify and deliver upon the value-added effect that a given school can provide to students (Cooper, 2017; Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019; McManus, 2012). A study conducted by NAIS found that "managing enrollment/keeping the school affordable" and "marketing/branding the school" were of significance to nearly 70 percent of heads of schools (Torres, 2013). To be clear, this predicament does not pertain to the most elite institutions, such as "Andover, Sidwell Friends, or Trinity," whose success masks the predicament of less selective schools (Finn, 2013).

As a result of the competitive independent school environment, independent schools are relying less on their traditions and history and more on embracing innovations aligned to their mission as a means to stay competitive and relevant (Cooper, 2017; Evans, 2013). According to Feild Baker (2017):

> Innovation in education is not about the acquisition of high-tech equipment or creating new add-ons such as maker spaces or design labs. Rather, it's the thinking process that results in taking action to better prepare students and fulfill the school mission. (para.1)

Informal interviews conducted between August and October 2017 with various individuals affiliated with independent schools, including consultants, department chairs, heads of school, assistant heads of school, division heads, academic deans, and executive directors of

35

regional organizations (see Appendix A) provided support to corroborate that independent

schools currently exist in this type of competitive environment.

This section provides an understanding of the context in which independent schools exist.

The next section outlines a few challenges and areas of reform as perceived by individuals closely

associated with independent schools.

Challenges. A review of the literature on independent schools suggests that independent

schools face internal challenges. First, some individuals perceive that teachers' lack of

familiarity with best practices is an area of concern (Basset, 2009; Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking,

2019). For example, Jorgenson (2006) cited former NAIS president Bassett who claimed, "Fierce

teacher autonomy, wide-ranging academic freedom, and long-held traditions that richly

characterize independent schools, are accompanied in some private schools by a comparatively

limited familiarity with best-practice trends that inundate public school certification and in-

service training" (p. 268). This comment reflects that while independent schools have areas of

strength, they are lagging behind public schools in terms of knowledge and understanding of

approaches to achieve positive changes in student attitudes and academic performance.

Second, Hoerr (2009) touched on another challenge when he identified the need for

distributed leadership among school leaders and faculty. He stated:

> The demands of the job will increase, and school leaders, even the best ones, will be far
>
> less able to go it alone. The leaders who are successful will succeed because they are able
>
> to develop and to draw from those around them. (p. 96)

This comment shows that a challenge that independent school level leaders face is empowering

others within the school to share leadership, as well as to develop their capacities to lead.

Finally, there is a need for school-level leaders to nurture a "professional culture" among

teachers in independent schools (Bassett, 2011). This term refers to professional standards such

as cooperation, collaboration, and accountability that are common across most other industries

(Bassett, 2011). Private school teachers report that autonomy is a primary reason for positive job

satisfaction (D'Ercole, 2019). Independent schools, however, often have strong traditions of teacher autonomy that may act as a barrier to improvement (Bassett, 2011; Evans, 2013). Hence, Bassett (2011) stated, "[School leadership] can let teachers know that changing the culture of the school is a shared responsibility" (Bassett, 2011, para. 15). This comment means that the faculty must come to understand that the support of shared goals is necessary for school improvement.

Therefore, independent schools face challenges in terms of having teachers implement best practices, distributing leadership, and nurturing a culture of teamwork and collaboration around common objectives.

Summary

Although the role of department chair is traditionally focused on management, empirical research suggests that department chairs can help share in the task of being instructional leaders alongside school-level leaders. Additionally, due to the departmentalized nature of secondary schools, department chairs may be able to have a greater influence than even the school principal. While there are relatively few studies that explicate how principals can support instructional leadership capacity in chairs, the literature that examines how principals support instructional leadership among formal teacher leaders suggests it would involve the use of teaming, collegial inquiry, and providing emotional support through the use of mentoring. In addition, these individuals would need opportunities to be legitimate leaders in the eyes of the school community. Finally, the literature reviewed on independent schools suggests that understanding how the capacity of the role of department chair as instructional leader is developed is a need, given that independent schools exist in a competitive environment, which influences them to adopt innovations aligned to their mission as a way to stay competitive and relevant.

Finally, individuals with a systemic understanding of the context in which independent schools operate emphasize the need for reforms, such as teacher use of best practices and the

school-wide implementation of distributed leadership, to help overcome challenges and ensure

that these schools thrive in the 21st century.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

This capstone project examined the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair. In this section of the capstone, I explain the conceptual framework that undergirds my research. Second, I explain the research methods I used and the rationale behind them. Additionally, I include a description of how the independent schools and participants were selected and why. This section concludes with an explanation of how the data was collected and analyzed. I also discuss research ethics, researcher bias, and methods that were used to achieve rigor and credibility.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study hypothesizes that the role of department chair as instructional leader involves three parts: constitution, enactment, and development. Constitution refers to how school-level leaders define the role of department chair as an instructional leader. Enactment refers to the fact that the role of the department chair as instructional leader exists in a distributed leadership framework that provides the internal conditions needed for department chairs to carry out their role. Development refers to school leadership's implementation of specific leadership practices to develop department chair capacity. It is grounded in the theoretical and empirical research on school principal leadership practices that support and develop instructional leadership capacity among formal teacher leaders, including department

chairs, and specifically draws upon Drago-Severson's (2007) four pillars for adult learning,

developed from Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2009) constructive developmental theory, as well as

literature on both instructional (Leithwood, 2012b) and distributed leadership (Harris, 2003).

Support for this conceptual framework derives from relevant literature, as well as from

informal conversations I conducted with various individuals affiliated with independent schools,

including consultants, department chairs, heads of school, assistant heads of school, division

heads, academic deans, and executive directors of regional organizations (see Appendix A).

The next section examines the context of the independent school environment and how

the type of challenge that exists in this environment may influence the role of department chair.

Independent school environment. The competitive independent school environment

may cause school leadership to take action as a means to stay viable. This environment

represents an adaptive challenge, and in turn, may influence the ways in which school-level

leaders define and support the role of department chair and how they develop department chairs'

instructional leadership capacity.

Adaptive challenge. An adaptive challenge is a type of challenge that is complex and

ambiguous, and both the problem and the solution require learning (Heifetz, 2006). Individuals

tend to learn by trial and error (Heifetz, 2006). Particularly difficult for a leader is the fact that

adaptive challenge also tends to "generate resistance" in others because it requires members of

the organization to shed their obsolete ways of thinking and operating, which "means to

experience loss – [including] loss of competence" (Heifetz, 2006, p. 79).

Researchers who have studied the type of learning that is best suited to effectively deal

with adaptive challenge identify transformational learning as key (Drago-Severson, 2004a).

Transformational learning is learning that results in the growth of internal capacities, including

cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal abilities (Kegan, 2009). In contrast to an

adaptive challenge, there is a technical challenge (Heifetz, 2006). This type of challenge requires

technical skill. If one does not have the technical skills required, he or she can learn them from

an expert (Heifetz, 2006). The type of learning that is best suited to deal with technical challenge is informational learning, which increases an individual's knowledge and skills, but is not adequate to deal with the complexity and ambiguity that are inherent to adaptive challenges (Heifetz, 2006).

As a result of informal conversations that I conducted with various individuals affiliated with independent schools (see Appendix A), I learned that an example of an adaptive challenge relates to the common struggle among independent schools to persuade teachers to use best practices. It is common among independent schools to employ teachers who are content experts, but lack training in pedagogy. The challenge that department chairs face is to provide feedback to teachers about how to improve instruction among teachers who are inured to a teacher-centered classroom and/or used to teaching content instead of concepts and skills such as is emphasized in the International Baccalaureate (IB). Moreover, it becomes difficult to effectively implement school wide initiatives, such the IB in classrooms where teachers are accustomed to such an approach (Gow, 2010). These initiatives represent further ways in which independent school attempt to vie for students in a competitive market. As both these changes require a change in mindset among teachers, and often lead to resistance, it requires the department chair to fulfill the role of instructional leader.

Similarly, Heifetz et al. (2009) explained how a financial services firm had experienced many years of profitable growth. Yet, senior executives at the firm were privy to the fact that competition in the coming years would be robust for various reasons. Given these challenges, the firm realized that it lacked employees with the requisite skills to effectively compete. Additionally, the firm "understood that tackling any one of those problems alone would avoid the deeper, broader issue, namely, the organization had to develop the capacity to adapt…" (p. 341). Similar to the organization in this anecdote, this statement suggest that school-level leaders need to re-define the role of the department chair to adapt in a competitive environment.

Role of department chair. The competitive school environment may influence the ways in which school-level leaders define and support the role of department chair and develop department chairs' instructional leadership capacity. School-level leaders who believe that the work of the department chair should be focused on instructional leadership, or teaching and learning, may define their role to focus on these tasks. Additionally, school-level leaders may create internal conditions to support department chairs to share in an instructional leadership role (Harris, 2003). For example, school-level leaders may help to structure time to allow department chairs to conduct tasks related to their instructional leadership role (Klar, 2012a). However, support may not be enough. It may also be necessary to develop department chairs' instructional leadership capacity to enable them, and thereby the school, to attend to adaptive challenges.

The next section discusses how the unique nature of the independent school environment compels school-level leaders to re-define the role of department chair as instructional leader, ensure they are sufficiently supported in their role, and develop their capacity to effectively lead teachers in their department.

Conceptualizing the role of department chair as instructional leader. Greenfield (1995) discussed the notion of a "demand environment" to explain why school administrators must be leaders as opposed to managers in their school communities. Specifically, he identified the characteristics of the ethical nature of schools, the independence of teachers, and internal and external threats as constituting the demand environment in which school administrators work. Similarly, the competitive nature of independent schools constitutes a demand environment that creates conditions encouraging school level leaders to define the role of department chair as instructional leader within a distributed leadership framework and develop their instructional leadership capacity.

Constitution. The Ontario Leadership Framework is a model of instructional leadership that consists of five domains (Leithwood, 2012b). As discussed in Chapter 2, these domains include: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the

organization to support desired practices, improving the instructional program, and securing accountability (Leithwood, 2012b). Each domain consists of various practices that are linked to student achievement (Leithwood, 2012b).

   Enactment. The role of department chair as instructional leader is enacted within a distributed leadership framework. Harris (2003) noted that formal leaders must create the internal conditions in their organization for informal leaders to be able to offer their expertise. These internal conditions are defined as time for teacher-leaders to plan and discuss matters related to instructional leadership, opportunities for professional development, and the enhancement of teacher-leaders' self-confidence to act as leaders within their schools (Harris, 2003).

   Development. Mezirow (1997) described transformative learning as "the essence of adult education" because it engenders autonomous thinking (p. 11). Specifically, he defined it as the process by which "frames of reference" are altered to become "more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 112). Kegan (2009) built upon Mezirow's transformative learning theory by explaining precisely what changes when an individual's perspective becomes better able to deal with complexity.[5]

   According to Mezirow (1997) our frames of references change through "critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind are based" (p. 7). Additionally, Mezirow (1997) noted that is important for educators to help individuals learn to critically reflect on their own and others' assumptions. Moreover, he highlighted the value that educators can bring by teaching others how to effectively participate in "discourse" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). He identified various characteristics of effective discourse including the following: access to information, freedom from coercion, participatory, inclusive of

---

[5] According to Kegan (2009), transformational learning is more of a change in mindset than it is a change in actions or amount of information one comes to know. This increase in quantity of knowledge, by which Kegan (2009) refers, is informational learning and does not lead adults to a new "way of knowing." Rather, transformational learning is defined as learning that results in growth of an individual's internal capacities, including cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal abilities (Kegan, 2009).

divergent perspectives, and empathetic (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow (2009) emphasized that

autonomous thinking, which is supported by an ability to effectively discourse, is a necessary

competency to deal with complex and ambiguous situations in the 21st century.

The way in which school leadership conceptualizes the role of department chair as

focused on instructional leadership within a distributed leadership framework has the potential to

serve as a foundation by which school-level leaders support transformational learning, and

thereby instructional leadership capacity among department chairs in independent schools.

Drago-Severson (2007) conducted a qualitative study involving 25 principals from

across the nation and a diverse range of educational settings. Data was collected using semi-

structured interviews, document analysis, and observations. The aim of the study was to

investigate how principals used practices to support teacher learning (Drago-Severson, 2007).

Drago-Severson (2007) found that principals utilized four common pillar practices to support

adult learning. These pillar practices included: teaming, collegial inquiry, mentoring, and

leadership opportunities. Furthermore, she applied adult constructive developmental theory to

each of the four pillar practices to demonstrate how principals could engender transformational

learning among teachers (Drago-Severson, 2007).

Teaming. This pillar practice was used by almost principals and includes working

collaboratively on any number of educational issues (Drago-Severson, 2008). According to

principals, working in teams, adults questioned their own and other people's beliefs about

assessment practices, imparted their educational philosophies, and dialogued about relevant

instructional issues (Drago-Severson, 2008). When used purposefully, teaming engenders a

secure context for adults to collaborate, test assumptions, and thereby develop leadership capacity

(Drago-Severson, 2008)

Collegial inquiry. This pillar practice "is shared dialogue with the purpose of helping

people becoming more aware of their assumptions, beliefs, and convictions about their work and

those of colleagues" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).   Examples of this pillar practice include

reflection through writing or dialogue (Drago-Severson, 2007). Principals use collegial inquiry to

foster learning about the components of key educational issues, as well as to also engage others in

inquiry about these issues (Drago-Severson, 2008). Hence, collegial inquiry allows adults to

broaden their horizons about educational issues as a result of exposure to and critical examination

of varied perspectives (Drago-Severson, 2008).

     Leadership opportunities.   According to Drago-Severson (2008), providing leadership

opportunities involves allowing others to participate in leadership tasks within the organization.

Examples of this pillar practice include: sharing knowledge and expertise and participating in

decision making in the school (Drago-Severson, 2007). When used purposefully, leadership

opportunities allow adults to respond and adapt to critical examination of their beliefs and ideas

(Drago-Severson, 2008).

     Mentoring. This pillar practice provides an intimate context to provide emotional

support (Drago-Severson, 2008). Examples of this pillar practice could include the principal or

another experienced person consulting individually with the teacher-leader (Drago-Severson,

2008). When used purposefully, mentoring creates an opportunity for critical examination of

beliefs in a personalized setting (Drago-Severson, 2008).

     When used with developmental intentionality, these four pillar practices can support

transformational learning. Below is a visual representation of the conceptual framework through

which the problem of practice was explored (see Figure 2).
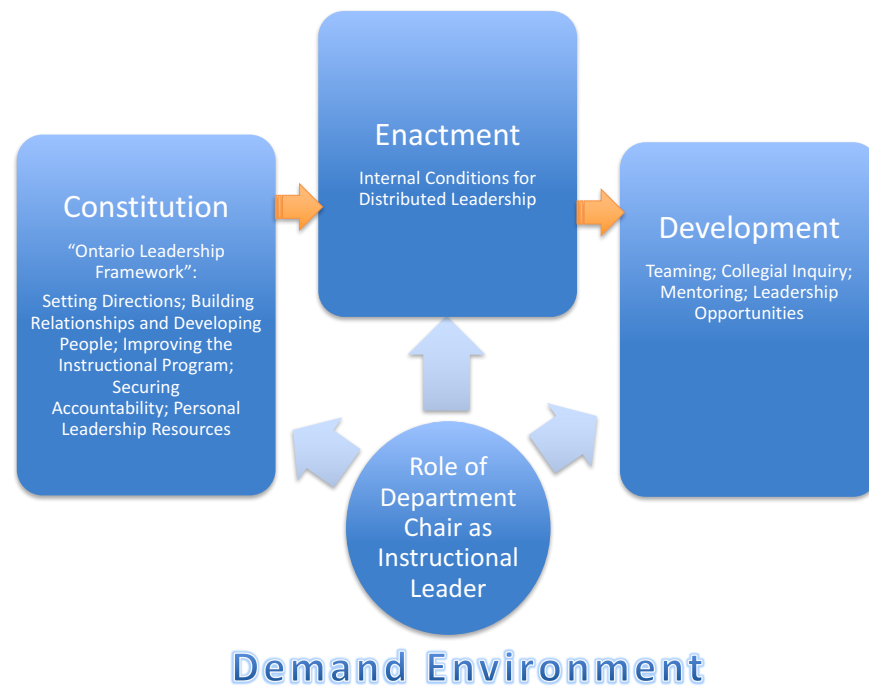
Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the role of department chair as instructional leader

The conceptual framework of this study hypothesizes that the role of department chair as instructional leader is comprised of three elements: constitution, enactment, and development. In other words, due to the "demand environment" (Greenfield, 1995), school-level leaders are compelled to define the role of department chair as instructional leader as opposed to department manager or liaison – and provide the necessary internal conditions to enable department chairs to share in an instructional leadership role alongside the principal. Additionally, school level leaders use specific leadership practices to support transformational learning. This equips department chairs with the requisite skills to effectively deal with adaptive challenge. While the exact relationship among the three elements is unknown, I hypothesize that school level leaders first define the role of department chair as instructional leader. Next, they provide the requisite support to bolster department chairs as instructional leaders. Third, they develop their instructional leadership capacity.

Research Design

This exploratory study was conducted using a qualitative multi-site case study design. This design was selected because informal interviews conducted with various individuals affiliated with independent schools helped to target school-level leaders that were enthusiastic about re-defining the role of department chairs to be focused on instructional leadership and supporting their capacity. Furthermore, since my research purpose was to explore the ways that the role of department chair as instructional leader is defined and supported and how department chairs are developed, a qualitative multi-site case study was appropriate given that little research exists about this topic and the role of department chair as instructional leader in independent schools has not been examined (Butin, 2010). Semi-structured interviews with the department chairs and the school-level leader who was identified as working most closely with department chairs allowed me to compare the enacted versus the espoused understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader in rich detail.

Research Questions

As discussed in the introduction, this capstone examined the ways in which leadership and department chairs themselves define the role of department chair and the ways in which that role is supported and developed as instructional leaders at various independent schools in a similar geographic area. Using semi-structured interviews, I collected data to answer the primary research question: *Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair, in what ways is the role of department chair defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders?* The guiding and relevant questions were:

Research Question 1: How do school-level leaders understand the role of department chair?

- SQ1.1: In what ways, do school-level leaders espouse the role as one of instructional leadership?

47

- SQ1.2: In what ways do school-level leaders perceive that department chair instructional leadership is supported and facilitated?

- SQ1.3: How do school-level leaders explain that department chairs develop in their role?

Research Question 2: How do department chairs understand and enact the role of department chair?

- SQ2.1: In what ways, if any, do department chairs enact the role as one of instructional leadership?

- SQ2.2: In what ways do department chairs perceive that their role as instructional leaders is supported and facilitated?

- SQ2.3: How do department chairs explain that they develop in their role?

The primary research question provided a general framework for understanding the ways in which department chairs are defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair. Therefore, the first question examined how school-level leaders characterize the role of department chair as an instructional leader in a distributed leadership framework and also explored how individuals in this role develop instructional leadership capacity. In other words, this question explored in what ways school-level leaders define and support the role of department chairs as instructional leader and how department chairs develop in their role. Conversely, the second question examined the enacted role of department chair as instructional leader in a distributed leadership framework as reported by the department chair. This question also explored how department chairs perceive that they develop as instructional leaders, if at all. Both questions also indirectly probed the rationale behind the promotion of an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair through examining the ways in which the role of department chair is defined. Table 2 on the next page provides the rationale for each sub-question and the data source.

Table 2

Research Questions and Methods

Overarching Research Question: Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair, in what ways is the role of department chair defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders?

Research Question	Rationale	Data Source
Question 1: How do school-level leaders understand the role of department chair?		
SQ1.1: In what ways, do school-level leaders espouse the role as one of instructional leadership?	Explores how role is constituted; Explores rationale for re-focusing department chair role on instructional leadership	Semi-structured interview
SQ1.2: In what ways do school-level leaders perceive that department chair instructional leadership is supported and facilitated?	Explores the ways in which the role exists in a distributed leadership framework	Semi-structured interview
SQ1.3: How do school-level leaders explain that department chairs develop in their role?	Explores how school-level leaders perceive that department chairs develop instructional leadership capacity	Semi-structured interview
Question 2: How do department chairs understand the role of department chair?		
SQ2.1: In what ways, if any, do department chairs enact the role as one of instructional leadership?	Explores how role is constituted; Explores rationale for re-focusing department chair role on instructional leadership	Semi-structured interview
SQ2.2: In what ways do department chairs perceive that their role as instructional leaders is supported and facilitated?	Explores the ways in which the role exists in a distributed leadership framework	Semi-structured interview
SQ2.3: How do department chairs explain that they develop in their role?	Explores how department chairs perceive that they develop instructional leadership capacity	Semi-structured interview

Site Selection and Participants

  Site selection. This study focused on independent schools in a similar geographic area

that had already taken the step to re-define the role of department chair to be focused on

instructional leadership. Independent schools were purposively sampled. This is a form of non-

probability sampling in which participants are selected for certain characteristics they possess

(Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). I utilized the directory feature on the website of the

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) to ensure that all schools had certain

features. For example, the advantage of using the NAIS directory is that all of the independent

schools that are members of NAIS have the same governance model. According to NAIS, "the

"corporate model" of a self-perpetuating board is what NAIS advocates, where the board chooses

itself and its successors and is focused largely on the strategic future of the school" ("Governance

Models," n.d., para. 1).

  Using this directory, I selected schools that had the following features:

- Located within approximately 100 miles of the Washington, DC metropolitan
  area

- Included elementary and secondary grade levels

- 500+ student population

These selection criteria were chosen because I wanted to examine schools of a similar

size in the same geographic area. Additionally, I chose to include independent schools that

included elementary and secondary grades, as opposed to just high school grade levels, to allow

for consistency in terms of the department chair's responsibility. For example, when I was a

department chair at both an independent and an international K-12 school, I had to collaborate

with others to ensure vertical alignment of the curriculum for my subject area across divisions.

Furthermore, from a logistical standpoint, there are more schools within the geographic area I

chose to examine that are grades K-12 or 3-12 than there are grades 9-12. This was significant to me because I was researching an obscure topic.

Using these selection criteria, the NAIS directory identified 38 independent schools. Next, I emailed the head of school for each of these independent schools to arrange to informally interview him/her via telephone. Occasionally, these informal conversations resulted in suggestions for new contacts who then provided additional leads to individuals with knowledge and expertise related to my topic. These individuals included educational consultants and employees and executive directors of regional educational organizations. These informal conversations served as a form of networking to ascertain if school-level leaders have provided an instructional leadership role for department chairs at their respective schools. This is important because while the NAIS directory may have identified 38 schools, not all of the schools had school-level leaders who were seeking to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair.

As a result of conducting these informal conversations, I identified seven independent schools that indicated that the role of department chair focused on instructional leadership (see Appendix A). I emailed the head of school for each of the seven schools an initial electronic correspondence asking him/her to participate in the study (see Appendix B). This is aligned to the methodology recommended by Edwards and Holland (2013) who stated:

> You will not necessarily start with your sample set in stone, but will modify it and seek further cases in the light of your ongoing analysis of data and theoretical development emerging from your study. This emerging sample will be both theoretical and purposive, selecting particular exemplary cases for the needs of your study. (p. 6)

This statement reflects my selection process because I chose exemplary cases of independent schools to be part of my sample, and this was the result of informal conversations that I had with school-level leaders who in each case indicated to me that school leadership was very enthusiastic about re-focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader.

51

Participants. Of those seven independent schools I selected to be part of my sample, four independent schools in Virginia and the District of Columbia agreed to partake in the study by responding affirmatively to my electronic request. These schools included the following: Grasse School, Le Cannet School, Arles School, and Avignon School. Three heads of school chose not participate for various reasons. For instance, two heads of school stated that they wanted to protect their faculty from the time required to participate in the study, and one head of school did not respond to my electronic request after two attempts.

Once the head of school at each independent school consented to participate in the study, he directed me to contact the school-level leader who was identified as working most closely with department chairs at the school. In total, I interviewed four school-level leaders at four independent schools in Virginia and Washington, DC. Their positions and schools included the following: the executive director of teaching and learning at Grasse School, the director of curriculum at Le Cannet School, the dean of faculty at Arles School, and the academic dean at Avignon School.

I asked the school-level leader to provide a date to me that would be convenient for a 40-minute interview and to also review an informed consent form (see Appendix C). I also asked them to provide the name, position, and contact information of each department chair at their school (see Appendix C). From this list, I selected three core-subject area department chairs per school to participate in the study. This ensured that their participation in the study was confidential. In total, I interviewed twelve department chairs.

Next, I sent to the selected department chairs of these schools an initial electronic correspondence requesting them to participate in the study (see Appendix D). Department chairs who consented to participate in the study were asked to identify a date that would be convenient for a 40-minute interview and to review an informed consent form (see Appendix E).

For the purpose of this study, it was sufficient to interview the school-level leader who had primary responsibility supporting department chairs as instructional leaders, as well as three

department chairs from each independent school. As this was an initial study about a sparsely

researched topic, this served to compare and contrast their perspectives in regard to the espoused

versus enacted role of department chair as instructional leader.

Data Sources

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school-level leader at each school

who was tasked with supporting instructional leadership capacity among department chairs, and

three department chairs in each school (see Appendices F, G, and H). Semi-structured interviews

were chosen as a means to collect data because it reflected the exploratory nature of this study,

especially given that there is sparse research that exists about this particular topic. This form of

interview was used because it allowed me to address a list of questions, but I was also able to

follow trajectories in the conversation that strayed from the guide when I believed this was

appropriate. While it is sometimes the case that more than one person is directly responsible for

developing instructional leadership capacity among department chairs, the head of school at each

of the four independent schools in my study identified only one school-level leader as being the

primary contact. Typically, there is a department chair for each subject area in independent

schools, including non-core subjects. For this study, I was interested in conducting semi-

structured interviews with department chairs who were responsible for core subjects, including

English, history and social studies, science, and mathematics. This is because it enabled me to

make comparisons across departments. I invited school-level leaders and department chairs to

take part in semi-structured interviews as a way to probe for a richer understanding of the

research questions. In all, there were five semi-structured interviews per independent school for a

total of 20 semi-structured interviews. This included a 40-minute initial round of semi-structured

interviews with the school-level leader at each independent school who was identified as working

most closely with supporting the instructional leadership capacity of department chairs (see

Appendix F), a 40-minute round of individual semi-structured interviews with each department

chair at each school (see Appendix G), and approximately 15-minute final round of semi-structured interviews with the school-level leader to check with him/her about my emerging understanding of the role of department chairs as instructional leaders within their school, as well as across research settings (see Appendix H).

Data Collection Process

Data was collected in three phases. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between December 2018 and April 2019.

Semi-structured interview timeline. These semi-structured interviews were used to provide a rich array of qualitative data about the research questions, and therefore probe more deeply into the ways in which independent school-level leaders define and support the role of department chair as instructional leader and how they develop department chair instructional leadership capacity. Three rounds of semi-structured interviews were required to compare and contrast the perspectives of school-level leaders and department chairs, as well as to conduct a follow-up session with school-level leaders about the types of things I heard from department chairs across schools. All participants consented to audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews. The recordings took place using a recording application on an iPad. These semi-structured interviews were subsequently transcribed using an on-line transcription service.

First round of semi-structured interviews. During the first round of interviews, I interviewed the school-level leader at each independent school who was identified as working most closely with department chairs to support their instructional leadership capacity (see Appendix F). This round of semi-structured interviews comprised the first phase of my research study.

Second round of semi-structured interviews. During the second round of interviews, I interviewed three department chairs at each independent school (see Appendix G). These department chairs were similar in that they were responsible for core subject areas. This was

necessary to make comparisons across departments. This round of semi-structured interviews

comprised the second phase of my research study.

   Third round of semi-structured interviews. During the third phase of interviews, I

interviewed again the school-level leader at each independent school who interviewed in the first

round of interviews (see Appendix H). This round of interviews served to check with them about

my emerging understanding of the role of department chairs as instructional leaders within their

school, as well as across research settings. This phase of semi-structured interviews was very

important for data triangulation. This round of semi-structured interviews comprised the third

and final phase of my study.

Data Analysis

   Resulting data from the interview transcripts was analyzed using an initial code list based

on my conceptual framework (see Table 3). The initial code list helped me to generate categories

and themes.

Table 3

Initial Code List

Source	Rationale	Examples of Codes
Leithwood (2012b)	Defines role of department as instructional leader	Setting directions Improving the instructional program
Heifetz (2006)	Identifies reason for change in focus of role of department chair as instructional leader	Technical challenge Adaptive challenge
Harris (2003)	Identifies the ways that school-level leaders and department chairs support department chairs in a distributed leadership framework	Internal conditions including time, opportunities for professional development, and enhancement of teacher-leaders' self-confidence to act as leaders in their schools
Drago-Severson (2007)	Identifies the ways that school-level leaders and department chairs explain how department chairs develop as instructional leaders	Teaming Collegial inquiry Mentoring Leadership opportunities

Using the initial code list (see Table 3), I examined the ways in which both school-level leaders and department chairs define the role of department chair as instructional leader within each case study school. I also coded using Leithwood's (2012) Ontario Leadership Framework, which breaks down instructional leadership into five domains and various practices. Additionally, probing for why school-level leaders and department chairs define the role of department chair as instructional leader in a particular way helped to identify the rationale for a change in the department chair role. Hence, I used Heifetz (2006) to code according to whether school-level leaders and department chairs describe a technical and/or adaptive challenge as impetus for change.

Third, to examine the ways in which school-level leaders support department chairs to enact an instructional leadership role, I compared the internal conditions, including time, opportunities for professional development, and enhancement of department chairs' self-confidence, that both school-level leaders and department chairs identified. Using Harris's (2003) notion of distributed leadership, which highlights the support that school-level leaders provide to informal leaders to enact change, I coded based on whether the given data represented structuring time, opportunities for professional development, or enhancement of department chairs' self-confidence to act as leaders in their schools. The means of supporting department chairs as instructional leaders were slightly different among independent schools, and school-levels leaders may benefit from knowing the various ways school-levels leaders are aiding department chairs as instructional leaders.

Fourth, I examined how both school-level leaders and department chairs explain the manner by which department chairs develop instructional leadership capacity. In other words, I probed for understanding how department chairs get better at what they are being asked to do: instructional leadership. For instance, I looked to see if they identified Drago-Severson's (2007) pillar practices such as teaming, collegial inquiry, mentoring, and/or opportunities for leadership. Additionally, as per Mezirow's (1997) definition of transformative learning, I asked for specific

56

examples of how these pillar practices offered opportunities for department chairs to "become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions…recognize frames of reference, [use] their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective, …and participate effectively in discourse" (p. 10).

In addition to the a priori codes identified above, I also deductively coded for emergent themes and alternative understandings of the different things that may not have been uncovered by my initial code list.

Once the data was coded, I took subsequent steps to analyze it. This included the following:

- Composed analytic memos (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008) based on analysis of data from each school comparing and contrasting within-school information.

- Developed analytic memos that addressed each sub-question, examining within and across school data in relation to those questions (see Table 3).

- Generated tables to compare key within-school findings between the school-level leader and department chairs at each school.

- Created matrices to compare and contrast key within-school findings across schools (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013).[6]

Finally, I examined the data in comparison to the literature. For example, I used the discussion section of my capstone to elaborate how Drago-Severson's (2007) pillar practices have been used in study schools and may be used to support transformational learning, oriented towards developing instructional leadership capacity. For instance, I discussed how principals have used pillar practices to individually offer supports and challenges to department chairs with

---

[6] To demonstrate emphasis of a finding within a table, I used a hashtag symbol. For school-level leaders, emphasis was determined if they repeated a response to an interview question or used a lot of detail to describe it (see Table 9). For department chairs, emphasis was determined if more than one chair mentioned a response to an interview question or used a lot of detail to describe it (see Table 10).

different ways of knowing as a means to promote development of instructional leadership

capacity and how this use corresponds or not with effective uses as described in the literature.

Research Ethics

I conducted this study in an ethical manner based on established principles. Informed

consent was used for all semi-structured interviews to minimize the risk and harm to participants.

Before conducting interviews, I asked participants for their informed and written consent (see

Appendices I and J). Additionally, an information leaflet (see Appendices I and J) was provided

to participants to inform them of the purpose of the study, selection criteria, procedure, risks

and/or benefits, as well as an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, and their right to

withdraw (Edwards & Holland, 2013). I also asked for permission and requested written consent

for the interviews to be recorded, as well as provided them with the interview questions in

advance. To protect confidentiality, all confidential data for participants and the schools in which

they work was coded with pseudonyms and stored on a password-protected device accessible

only to the researcher. Finally, results were reported in aggregate and any individual data was

attributed pseudonymously to maintain confidentiality.

Researcher Bias

Previously, I worked as a department chair in an international school and I saw my own

transformational learning occur as a result of the leadership practices my principal employed.

Similarly, I worked in an independent school where the school principal provided opportunities

for teaming, but did not structure this practice in a way that asked department chairs to reflect on

their beliefs or challenge their own and others' assumptions. Instead, teaming was used to just

exchange information between school-level leaders and department chairs. Consequently, these

department chairs seemed stifled in their ability to deal with challenge and hence grow as

instructional leaders. I have also worked in public school settings where there seemed to be no

effort by the principal to support or develop the instructional leadership capacity among

department chairs, and the role of the department chair was regulated to administering management duties within the department. As a result of these experiences, I have developed a belief that department chair instructional leadership capacity is the result of effective school leadership practices.

In order to control for this bias, I have used a research design that acknowledges bias while limiting its impact on analysis and writing up findings. Clark Pope (2017) explained how qualitative research cannot rely on traditional quantitative methods to assess validity. However, various strategies can be utilized to achieve rigor and credibility. These strategies include triangulation, negative case sampling, and use of a subjectivity audit (Clark Pope, 2017). Therefore, to protect against researcher bias, I used multiple sources to triangulate data. This included interviewing at least three department chairs per school plus the school-level leader who is identified as working most closely with them to support and/or develop their capacity. Additionally, I used negative case sampling by looking for data that may be telling a different story than I expect to see. In terms of conducting a subjectivity audit, I also asked that someone else help to double-check how I code my data to ensure reliability.

Summary

This capstone examined the ways in the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair. Data collected and analyzed during this study was meant to provide an understanding of how department chairs are viewed as instructional leaders, as well as leadership practices that can be used to support transformational learning, and build their instructional leadership capacity.

SECTION FOUR: POSITION PAPER

This study investigated the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders in independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair. My review of the literature, as cited in Section Two, indicated that department chair instructional leadership capacity is the result of effective school leadership practices, and my study aimed to offer insights that would enable independent schools that seek to focus the role of department chair as instructional leader to define the role, provide support, and develop the capacity of those who serve in the role. In this section of my capstone, I present and analyze the data collected, discuss my findings in relation to the literature and my conceptual framework, and recommend future actions based on my analysis.

Findings

As described in the preceding section, findings reported here are based on semi-structured interviews that I conducted with school-level leaders and department chairs in independent schools in Virginia and Washington, DC. My research questions examined how both school-level leaders and department chairs understood the role of department chair in terms of how it is constituted, supported, and developed.

In reporting the findings of the research question one and two, I next present school-level leaders' and department chairs' understanding of the role of department chair from the four independent schools in my study. For each school, I report on school-level leaders' and department chairs' understanding of the constitution of the role of department chair. This

60

includes their rationale for re-focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader, as well as their descriptions of the key duties of the role in each of their schools.   Additionally, I report on school-level leaders' and department chairs' perceptions of how the role of department chair is enacted. Enactment refers to the internal conditions that school-level leaders provide for department chairs to perform their role as instructional leader in a distributed leadership framework. Finally, I present school-level leaders' and department chairs' perceptions of the ways that department chairs develop as instructional leaders in their schools.

Below, I show how school-level leaders and department chairs understood the role of department chair in each school. Following that section, I present a cross-school comparison of both the school-level leaders' and the department chairs' understanding of the role of department chair.

Grasse School

Grasse School is a co-educational, independent day school located in Washington, DC with approximately 1,000 students. I interviewed the executive director for teaching and learning and three department chairs who were responsible for mathematics, English, and science. This school was unique in comparison to the other four schools in my study because the school-level leader and department chairs were most discrepant in terms of their understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader. The school-level leader articulated a bold vision for the role of department chair as instructional leader that included tirelessly working to create buy-in among teachers for the school's goals and priorities. Department chairs were aware of the new complexity of their role and largely understood it was tied to the school mission, but didn't seem comfortable or equipped to embody the bold approach cited by the school-level leader. In comparison to the other schools in my study, this school provided the least number of developmental opportunities as perceived by department chairs.

Constitution. The school-level leader was emphatic that the need for instructional leadership was mission alignment (i.e. the connection of the school's overarching goals and

values to classroom application) as a result of a competitive independent school environment. She was open and honest, however, about teachers' lack of pedagogical training. She noted that department chairs should boldly set direction and be relentless in regard to developing teachers' understanding about how all of their practices support the department vision. Hence, she saw the department chair's ability to establish meaningful relationships with teachers as key to achieving that endeavor. Department chairs acknowledged the school-level leader's perception of the role, but were less articulate about why their role has changed. They sensed it had to do with the school's recent decision to remove the Advanced Placement (AP) program and they emphasized that their job has become much more complex due to their attentiveness to the school mission. In addition, they highlighted a strong sense of teacher autonomy at the school, and for that reason, they seemed less comfortable with enacting the role as the school-level leader had described – and more content to carry out the role of department chair in a traditional sense in order to avoid "stepping on anyone's toes."

Need for instructional leadership. In explaining the need for instructional leadership, the school-level leader at Grasse School stated that "mission alignment is huge for us." This comment reflects the importance of translating the school's core values into practices on the part of every teacher. Department chairs suggested that they understood that the need for instructional leadership was related to the school mission – and they described it in the same way as the school-level leader. For instance, in responding to a question about the types of challenges that department chairs face as they carry out the role of instructional leader, one department chair remarked:

> I'm teaching English in a school whose mission is focused on diversity, equity, inclusion,
> and social justice, and so, we're not teaching commas and similes and five paragraph
> essays, and so, my job description feels almost nothing like the job of my peer
> department chairs, and when I actually reach out to other English department chairs at
> other schools who don't have the same mission component, my job feels totally different.

This comment reflects the department chair's understanding that her school has a mission based on distinct values that makes the role of department chair as instructional leader complex. In fact, she indicated that the need to be attentive to the school's mission isolates her from department chairs at other schools.

External pressure. Both the school-level leader and department chairs perceived that competition was an external pressure affecting the need for instructional leadership at their school. For instance, the school-level leader stated that the competitive environment in which independent schools exist is an external pressure for the re-focusing of the role of department chair as instructional leader. In discussing independent schools, she stated that "the increased tuition makes a landscape that's a little more competitive on our end." This comment signifies that the school-level leader perceived a need to re-define the role of department chair as instructional leader due to the rising tuition costs among independent schools. Comparably, department chairs discussed competition as an external pressure. For instance, one department chair, stated:

> Well, I mean I think all teachers in independent schools are in a crisis right
> now…with…the traditional model of the school and industrial approach to teaching that
> is really being turned on its head right now.

This comment highlights the department chair's perception that there is a societal belief that independent schools employ an outdated mode of schooling. Furthermore, she indicated that this external pressure is responsible for her school's desire to implement a 21st century classroom initiative.

Internal pressures. Additionally, the school-level leader and department chairs perceived internal pressures that affect the need for instructional leadership. For example, the school-level leader commented on teachers' lack of background in education:

> We have, as in the case of many independent schools, a lot of discipline-specific trained
> teachers, but they don't necessarily have education pedagogy training, so a lot of our

work centers around being able to develop that part of their capacity in terms of what good instruction looks like.

This comment reveals that while the school has faculty who are highly educated in their respective subject-areas, they do not have familiarity with best practices in terms of teaching and learning. She explained that department chairs work with teachers to build their capacity. While department chairs did not mention teachers' lack of pedagogical training, they did note the school's recent decision to retract the Advanced Placement (AP) program as a factor affecting the need for instructional leadership. For instance, one department chair noted:

I think that we are in a place of transition as a school right now in terms of how we are teaching because we are getting rid of the AP curriculum and…the role of the department chair is being challenged right now because…the autonomy that teachers have had is now a little bit in question.

This comment demonstrates the department chairs' perception that the AP program has provided teachers guidance in terms of curriculum and instruction. Now, with the removal of the AP program, the department chair perceived that the department chair's role in setting directions has become important, yet contentious.

Duties. In addition to exploring the rationale for re-focusing the department chair role on instructional leadership, I also probed the school-level leader and department chairs about specific duties that the department chair enacts in order to further unpack how they understand the role of department chair. The school-level leader highlighted that the department chair should be able to boldly set a vision for the department aligned to the mission of the school and then have both the technical and interpersonal skills to scaffold teachers' development. For instance, when asked what she looks for when she appoints department chairs, she affirmed:

Someone that is an exceptional teacher themselves, and that is a factor we look at. It's not the only one because you have to be able to identify with others and have real, meaningful, and trusting relationships with people, as well.

64

This means that the school-level leader not only seeks to appoint a master teacher to the role of department chair, but she also prefers someone who is empathetic and has strong interpersonal skills. She explained that this is necessary in order to create buy-in for change and develop teachers' capacity, which requires tenacity. For example, she remarked:

> [Department chairs] need to be able to get buy-in among their team in creating [a] vision and then help the team understand how what they do every day either supports the vision or is some distance away from it and then understand where each person is in relation to that direction, and have the skill to bring them back in.

Hence, this comment demonstrates that she perceived department chairs must take a multi-step approach to enact change, which includes articulating a vision, creating buy-in, and challenging teachers to re-examine the extent to which their practices contribute to supporting shared goals.

Department chairs expressed that they understood that the role of department chair as instructional leader had changed, but weren't comfortable with the bold approach described by the school-level leader. For instance, one department chair noted, "I think that I am doing a lot more vision setting…because…we're… transitioning away from the AP and that's exciting, but I'm not sure that that's what my job started out as." This comment shows that the department chair perceived setting directions as a large part of her role, which is a difference from what the role of department chair used to entail. In contrast to the school-level leader, however, who emphasized department chair leadership and the relentless pursuit of buy-in for the school's goals and priorities, some department chairs expressed inertia. For example, one department chair commented:

> But I also want to point out that the department chair in no department is handing down from above. You know, they're not saying this is what or how you will teach; they're not the boss of that.

This comment indicates that the department chair may be uncomfortable with asserting a vision for the department, and understood the role of department chair as promoting a participatory

process – even if it may veer from the school's goals and priorities. For example, when I asked the same department chair if the department's consensus on what to teach in the department had to be aligned to the school mission, the department chair replied, "Well, it's always on our mind. You know, I've certainly started several department meetings this year with, "And remember the mission!" So, we try to do that. Is the conversation always focused on that? Probably not."

Additionally, though department chairs acknowledged that the department chair is supposed to help "a teacher who is struggling in a certain area of teaching," they suggested that this would be done only if requested by the teacher and did not emphasize the need to challenge teachers to re-examine the extent to which their practices contribute to shared goals.

Lastly, unique to this school, the school-level leader also highlighted department chairs' duty to formally secure accountability, as department chairs not only coach their department members, but they also evaluate them. Department chairs acknowledged that they have power to secure accountability in terms of evaluating teachers, but they expressed unease with this task. Not only did they express that the responsibility of coaching and evaluating were at odds, but they also didn't have support from school leadership to fulfill this responsibility. For instance, one department chair noted, "I'm managing people, but like with my arms cut off." When I probed about what she meant by this comment, she stated the technical aspect of evaluation was easy, but the lack of time and interpersonal aspects of evaluation made this responsibility difficult.

Challenges. Both the school-level leader and department chairs perceived that teacher autonomy presented a challenge to the role of department chair as instructional leader. For example, when I inquired with the school-level leader as to whether department chairs face any resistance from teachers as they enact the role of instructional leader, she responded, "Sure, absolutely…I think for a long time certain behaviors were accepted because people were strong classroom teachers." This comment indicates that teachers at Grasse School used to have a high degree of autonomy in the classroom, and teachers at the school were considered to be strong

66

teachers if they taught their content well. According to the school-level leader, teachers are now expected to align curriculum and instruction to the school mission. This is challenging because she noted that the teachers are not used to receiving feedback. Similarly, department chairs commented on the strong sense of teacher autonomy and resistance to change that exists at the school. For instance, in response to a question about the types of challenges that department chairs face in their role, one department chair stated, "I think philosophically the school is behind the idea of experiential learning…but I think there's also a lot of autonomy that they give teachers." This comment shows that a strong sense of teacher autonomy at the school is an impediment to the role of department chair as instructional leader.

Enactment. Department chairs at Grasse School perceived that they are supported by opportunities for professional development. The school-level leader discussed in detail the professional development workshops on aspects of leadership that are provided to department chairs. Department chairs, in contrast, did not mention these workshops, but did highlight off-campus professional development sponsored by the school as helpful. These were workshops on aspects of leadership training.

In general, however, department chairs expressed frustration with the lack of time and support to do their jobs. For instance, one department chair felt strongly that "school leadership is not giving me anything other than just throwing me straight into the fray [to] learn by doing." In fact, she felt inspired to propose a plan to help manage the transition for the department chair that comes after her. She stated:

> One of the things I might want to do as department chair…is manage the transition from one leader to another leader – like if I do nothing else, I don't want to put the person who comes after me into the position I felt like I was put in.

This comment signifies that this department chair felt that the school-level leader is not doing enough to provide the internal conditions that are needed to be effective. In fact, she felt so alone that she wanted to preclude others from experiencing the same predicament.

Furthermore, while the school-level leader stated that she provides support to department chairs regarding enhancement of self-confidence to act as leaders in their school, department chairs seemed stymied in their ability to carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader. For instance, the school-level leader asserted, "I've been articulating and messaging over and over again that [department chairs] are the instructional leaders of the school." This example reflects that the school-level leader communicates to the faculty that department chairs are not managers, but instructional leaders who have been designated to help fulfill mission alignment. Yet, department chairs were perplexed about how the role of department chair as instructional leader could be enacted in a school where teachers have had significant autonomy for many years. Moreover, they reiterated the need to build consensus among teachers in their department, but also acknowledged that it was an impossible task and rarely happens in independent schools given the professional independence of teachers.

Lastly, the school-level leader said that time in the form of course release is a support to the role of department chair as instructional leaders – although she also acknowledged that it may not be enough time. Department chairs concurred that they are not provided with enough course release to fulfill all of their instructional leadership activities. For reference, the standard load is four or five classes; department chairs teach three out of four classes.

Development. The school-level leader and department chairs both stated that mentoring develops department chair leadership capacity. For example, the school-level leader explained, "Developing voice – a lot of that comes through those one-on-one conversations with someone else who has more administrative experience and then getting feedback and affirmation on how they're doing." This comment means she perceived that regular interaction with school-level leaders helps to provide a safe space in which department chairs can grow their instructional leadership capacity, especially in terms of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Similarly, one department chair stated:

You got to have the experiences in order to grow from them…difficult conversations

with teachers help me grow with support from administration and sort of reflection time

with someone [afterwards].

Hence, while she acknowledged that being placed in challenging situations stretches her capacity in a positive way, she explained that one-on-one conversations are needed to help her reflect on the situation. Department chairs, however, in some cases expressed that they needed more one-on-one time with school-level leaders. One department chair stated, "I do not feel like I have enough contact with [school leadership] - the people above me who in theory would be coaching me to support my people. I feel very alone." This comment signifies that this department chair felt abandoned by school leadership and she was eager for more mentoring opportunities to develop the capacity to support the teachers in her department.

Both the school-level leader and the department chairs discussed the use of an informal evaluation process for department chairs, in which a survey is given to teachers in each department. The school-level leader summarizes the feedback and provides it to the department chair and a mentoring conversation ensues between the school-level leader and department chair regarding goals for improvement. Department chairs, however, stated the process has been handled inconsistently in recent years, as feedback has been collected, but no debriefing session has occurred.

It is important to note that department chairs at Grasse School expressed the desire for more opportunities for collegial inquiry. One department chair remarked, "I frankly wish there was more specific discussion around how we are chairing…and I think it doesn't necessarily have to come from top-down, but from other chairs." This comment demonstrates that department chairs would appreciate opportunities to dialogue with other department chairs about leadership practice. While there are opportunities to talk about curriculum and instruction during department chair meetings, department chairs also want time to reflect on basic leadership skills with each other.

Summary

   While department chairs evinced that they understood the need for instructional

leadership, they expressed that school-leadership needed to be more clear in how they were

supposed to carry out their role given the strong sense of teacher autonomy that persists at the

school. Department chairs communicated an awareness of all the dimensions of the instructional

leadership practices they are supposed to do, but they expressed them differently than the school-

level leader and they felt uncomfortable and ill-equipped to do whatever is necessary to make the

school's goals clear to all teachers. Hence, department chairs at Grasse School indicated that they

are eager for additional support and means of development as they carry out the role of

department chair as instructional leader. Table 4 on the next page presents a comparison of the

understanding of the role of department chair at Grasse School by the school-level leader and

department chairs.

Table 4

Comparison of Understanding of Role of Department Chair at Grasse

		Alignment between School-Level Leader's and Department Chairs' Interview Responses
Constitution	Department Chair Instructional Leadership Practices	--
	Rationale for Re-Focusing Role of Department Chair on Instructional Leadership	+
Enactment	Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties	--
	Professional Development for Leadership	+
	Enhancement of Department Chairs' Self-Confidence to Act as Leaders in their Schools	--
Development	Use of Teaming to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Provision of Leadership Roles to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Opportunities for Collegial Inquiry to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Opportunities for Mentoring to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+

Note. + = Alignment, -- = Misalignment

Le Cannet School

Le Cannet School is a co-educational, independent day school located in Northern Virginia with approximately 1,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten-12. I interviewed the director of curriculum and three department chairs who were responsible for mathematics, English, and science. This school was noteworthy in that both the school-level leader and the

department chairs emphasized the importance of enacting a bold vision, yet exuding a moderate presence that emphasized change over time. Additionally, this school is unique in that it provides significant course release to department chairs to conduct their instructional leadership duties. Department chairs also cited the opportunities for collegial inquiry that occur as a result of a shared office space for department chairs, which allows them to regularly discuss aspects of instructional leadership amongst each other.

Constitution. The school-level leader and department chairs both perceived the need for instructional leadership as mission alignment as a result of external and internal pressures, namely competition from high-quality public schools in the area and service to students with special needs. Furthermore, they cited a high degree of teacher autonomy at the school, which department chairs especially experienced as a challenge. Both the school-level leader and department chairs emphasized the need to be bold in regard to setting directions for the department – including radically re-thinking the curriculum, but using a moderate approach that incorporated a realistic timeline for action and the development of meaningful, trusting relationships with teachers.

Need for instructional leadership. The school-level leader at Le Cannet School suggested that the need for instructional leadership is the school mission. In discussing the factors that are considered when appointing someone as department chair, she specified, "If you're not seen as an instructional leader aligned with our philosophy, you aren't able to be department chair." This comment signifies the importance of the school mission in terms appointing department chairs who will align curriculum and instruction to it within their departments.   Similarly, department chairs at Le Cannet School explained the need for instructional leadership as related to the school mission. For example, one department chair stated:

> Our school has a different mission than other schools. We want to be a very experiential
> learning system. The school has recognized the need for a lot of racial equity work. All

the department chairs [try] to make sure that the teachers value that and are taking that

seriously.

Hence, this shows that department chairs perceive that they are responsible for ensuring that

teachers attend to the overarching school goals outlined in the school's mission statement as they

teach their courses.

    External pressures. The school-level leader and department chairs both perceived

competition from high-quality public schools as an external pressure related to the need for

instructional leadership, but department chairs were much more expressive about it and cited

other external pressures, as well. For instance, one department chair explained:

    There's an internal desire by the administration, and that's the case, I think in an

    independent school, when you're dealing with tuition – you want to make sure that

    parents perceive the value at all levels of the education.

This comment demonstrates that the department chair perceived that the school must demonstrate

to parents that the education it provides to their children is worth their money. Furthermore, he

stated, "We have to be on par or above the public schools, so if programs come out – if things

happen inside the county, we have to listen to that…because otherwise there's no value." This

comment means that the department chair recognized that the school faces external pressure from

innovative public schools in the area, which he thinks makes Le Cannet School's focus on the

school mission very important.

    Department chairs also cited other external pressures affecting the need for instructional

leadership. For instance, when I inquired about these factors, one department chair stated:

    Well, just to be honest, our current political environment. Teachers, you know, need to

    teach certain things…better than they have ever been taught before. I mentioned equity

    and diversity, but also the importance of argument, the importance of using facts to back

    up your argument, being able to analyze the media critically and sort of skeptically.

This comment reveals that the department chair perceived that the current political environment is another reason for the focus on the school mission. He felt that the era in which we live begets that teachers emphasize skill development in the classroom – and this requires a re-focusing of the role of department chair as instructional leader.

Internal pressures. The school-level leader and department chairs mentioned internal pressures that affect the need for instructional leadership at their school. For example, both the school-level leader and department chairs noted that the focus on the mission is rooted in the student population. For instance, the school-level leader stated, "about a third of the students have an identified learning difference," which she explained necessitates that department chairs consider the best way to teach a given subject in order to ensure student needs are being met. This is important given that the school's mission includes a focus on the learner.

Duties. In addition to exploring the rationale for re-focusing the department chair role on instructional leadership, I also probed the school-level leader and department chairs about specific duties that the department chair enacts in order to further describe how they understand the role of department chair. The school-level leader and department chairs at Le Cannet School were tightly aligned in terms of their emphasis on setting a bold direction for the department and radically re-designing the curriculum – all using a moderate presence that focused on change over time. For example, in discussing a department chair's proposal to change the science curriculum, the school-level leader recounted:

> He told me we should be doing biology with this constructivist approach, and I was like, "That's a really progressive idea!" This class where you were like maybe 10 years ago memorizing a wall and [now] moving to a model where you're going to put it in kids' hands to develop the theory and system themselves to construct their knowledge, which is very much aligned with what we want to do.

Hence, this comment highlights the school-level leader's desire for department chairs to set directions for their department in a way that supports the school mission. Similarly, department

74

chairs expressed the importance of setting directions. One department chair stated his job was "to try to make the instruction match the values that you have at the school" signifying that he understood that his role as department chair necessitates translating the school mission into practice for teachers in his department.   The school-level leader alluded to a challenge in regard to setting directions. For instance, she noted that in the past, school leadership appointed department chairs that were "true disruptors," which resulted in negative consequences. She explained:

> It turned out that those [department chairs], how to say it? Like, they were great instructional leaders, you know, like showing a vision – [but] we lost a lot of precious trust with people because it was like they were too far away from where their people were.

This comment indicates that in the past radical vision setting has caused resistance among teachers because it required a change in their values, relationships, and approaches to work that the department chair did not skillfully manage. Hence, while school leadership encourages innovation, they also realize it is necessary for department chairs to be balanced and have the requisite interpersonal skills to effectively manage resistance from teachers in regard to change. Hence, the school-level leader emphasized the ability to build relationships and develop people as critical component to create a shared vision for instruction. For instance, in discussing the qualities the school-level leader looks for when appointing a department chair, she stated:

> I saw his deep relationship, as well as his openness to looking at newer progressive ideas, but not being a disruptor. Like, he wasn't like, "I'm going to blow this all up and like the world!" He was sort of a moderate presence that has a deep relationship to be able to like take his department to the next step.

This comment evinces the school-level leader's desire for department chairs to take a balanced approach to initiating curricular changes that included fostering relationships as a key component of the change process. Department chairs also stressed the need to build relationships and

develop people as they create and execute a vision. A department chair noted, "What makes [a department chair] effective is not change, but thinking about change as a three-year process down the road." This comment demonstrates that department chairs understood the need to be moderate in regard to change in order to manage teacher resistance. Another department chair remarked in a similar fashion, "I don't think when I got to be department chair I was the most innovative of the teachers that applied. I think I was the most level – emotionally and kind of critically." This comment reveals that the department chair's interpersonal skills are a key component of facilitating change. In order to improve the instructional program, the school-level leader affirmed that any type of instructional shift would require department chairs to observe in classrooms and give constructive feedback that is useful to teachers. Additionally, all department chairs at Le Cannet School referred to themselves as "coaches" and highlighted their responsibility to observe in classrooms to provide teachers with useful feedback about their instruction.

Finally, while department chairs at Le Cannet School do not have evaluative power, they described a role in securing accountability. One department chair stated, "It's important to be in the classroom, making sure that it's not all just, you know, multiple choice quizzes and tests all day long – that there's a constant re-think policy among the school [faculty]." This comment means that department chairs understand their role as verifying that there is a change in teachers' values and approaches to work in the classroom.

Challenges. The school-level leader and department chairs agreed that teachers' sense of autonomy and lack of a growth mindset presented a challenge to the role of department chair as instructional leader. Department chairs, however, highlighted these issues to a greater extent. For example, department chairs discussed teachers' sense of autonomy as an obstacle to mission alignment. For example, a department chair commented:

The most challenging thing about instructional leadership in an independent school is the

word "independent" because teachers sometimes think that it's the chance for the teacher

to do things independently of whatever they want.

This statement means that department chairs are challenged by teachers who do not match their

instruction to the school mission. Moreover, in discussing steps put in place to achieve the

mission, one department chair remarked:

When I started pursuing the agenda that we are doing instructionally, there were a lot of

problems. Some people left the school, some fought it and then gave up and just

followed it, and some people are quietly, subversively fighting it at this moment.

This comment reflects resistance to change by teachers in regard to implementing the school

mission into classroom practices.

Enactment. In terms of support and facilitation, the school-level leader and department

chairs both emphasized time in the form of course release.   At Le Cannet School, department

chairs are provided with course release that amounts to 50% of their day. One department chair

noted, "When I see schools that have a chair that has four classes, I'm like, "Oh, yeah, that chair –

they're basically admin for the department!" This comment signifies that the department chair

perceived that time is a crucial means of support in order to fulfill instructional leadership duties,

and lack of time signifies department chairs can only take care of managerial duties. Department

chairs also alluded to enhancement of self-confidences as a means of support. One department

chair noted, "You have to have administrative support because, you know, nobody can lead

teachers unless someone behind him is willing to take a stand with that." This comment shows

that department chairs face a challenge being a middle manager, and enacting a departmental

vision takes courage and necessitates that the administration supports the department chairs'

endeavors.

In contrast, the school-level leader and department chairs disagreed about the support that

the job description for the role of department chair provided. Whereas the school-level leader

intimated that that the job description for the role of department chair acted as a support because it clearly communicates the responsibilities for the job, department chairs did not perceive the job description for the role of department chair to be valuable. They expressed that there is still too much "management stuff" on it to be supportive and that it did not emphasize the leadership of the department.

Development. The school-level leader and department chairs both noted that mentoring was an important way to develop department chair leadership capacity. Mentoring typically occurs at Le Cannet School through an informal evaluation process for department chairs, in which the school-level leader provides constructive feedback based on observations and department surveys and helps department chairs to set personal goals. These conversations occur on a monthly basis, and also include a mid-year review and end-of-year summary written by the school-level leader. For example, in regard to developing a department chair's leadership capacity when he was experiencing a problem in his department, the school-level leader noted:

> We were able to give him some feedback after a couple of incidents to kind of say, you know, we need you be a good advocate for them because [teachers] need to feel like you're on their side, you know?

This comment reflects that school leadership desires that department chairs have a keen ability to build relationships and develop people as they embark on creating a vision for their department that is aligned to the school mission. In this case, the school leadership used one-on-one conversations to help the department chair understand how to improve in this area. Department chairs also mentioned various examples of mentoring that helped the department chairs prepare or reflect on difficult conversations with teachers. All department chairs felt that these one-on-one conversations helped them to develop their leadership capacity. In addition, the school-level leader and department chairs suggested that the provision of leadership opportunities allowed them to grow, as well. These leadership opportunities often came in the form of the administration's willingness and encouragement to allow department chairs to try new things and

"honor creativity" in regard to re-thinking curriculum in a given subject area. Finally, department

chairs also explained how opportunities for collegial inquiry among department chairs develops

their capacity. For example, one department chair described the area in which department chairs

meet. He stated, "We have an office where all the chairs sit, and we sit there and we'll often just

stop what we're doing and ask each other questions and talk to each to discuss strategy." This

comment reveals that department chairs appreciated the fact that they have a physical space to

regularly think about and discuss instructional leadership, which encourages inquiry and

reflection, and supports department chair cohesion.

Summary

The school-level leader and department chairs both perceived the need for instructional

leadership as mission alignment resulting from competition from surrounding schools and the

specific student population that the school serves. Furthermore, they highlighted the ability of the

department chair to set directions using a moderate presence that established trust among teachers

and emphasized change over time. Department chairs, especially, perceived that there is required

change needed in terms of teachers' values, relationships, and approaches to work – and that there

is teacher resistance to this change. In general, department chairs felt supported to enact the role

of department chair as instructional leader due to the generous allotment of course release

provided to them by their school and the fact that school leadership enhances their confidence to

carry out instructional leadership by standing behind the changes they enact in their departments.

Both the school-level leader and department chairs perceived that mentoring and leadership

opportunities develop department chair capacity. Table 5 on the next page presents a comparison

of the understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader at Le Cannet School

by the school-level leader and department chairs.

Table 5

Comparison of Understanding of Role of Department Chair at Le Cannet

		Alignment between School-Level Leader's and Department Chairs' Interview Responses
Constitution	Department Chair Instructional Leadership Practices	+
	Rationale for Re-Focusing Role of Department Chair on Instructional Leadership	+
Enactment	Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties	+
	Professional Development for Leadership	--
	Enhancement of Department Chairs' Self-Confidence to Act as Leaders in their Schools	--
Development	Use of Teaming to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Provision of Leadership Roles to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+
	Opportunities for Collegial Inquiry to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Opportunities for Mentoring to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+

Note. + = Alignment, -- = Misalignment

Arles School

Arles School is a co-educational, independent boarding and day school located in central Virginia with approximately 1,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten-12. I interviewed the dean of faculty and three department chairs who were responsible for mathematics, humanities, and science. This school was noteworthy in that department chairs were fiercely protective about upholding the values of the school. As a result, they understood their role of department chair as

not only providing feedback to individual teachers, but also developing the organization to support desired practices. Moreover, they evinced that they had significant power to secure accountability in regard to ensuring there is mission alignment among teachers in their department. In general, department chairs felt supported and developed to act as leaders in their school.

Constitution. Both the school level leader and the department chairs expressed that the overarching goals and values of the school are the need for instructional leadership at the school. Additionally, they perceived external pressures, namely competition, from surrounding public schools as a rationale for the re-focusing of the role of department chair as instructional leader. The school-level leader and department chairs were in agreement that the role of department chair as instructional leader means department chairs should facilitate understanding about the school's goals to teachers and develop them to support desired practices. In contrast to the school-level leader, department chairs expressed a heightened need to create buy-in among stakeholders for the school's goals due to a strong sense of autonomy among the faculty.

Need for instructional leadership. In analyzing the interview with the school-level leader at Arles School, she evinced that the need for instructional leadership is at the heart of the strategic plan. For instance, she explained how the school's strategic plan requires that teachers infuse creativity into every assessment. In discussing the role of department chair in relation to this endeavor, she explained, "I think that as instructional leaders, [department chairs] have to provide examples [and] …create [an] agenda for their meetings that prioritize collaboration around this initiative." This comment reflects the school-level leader's desire for department chairs to support the school mission by helping teachers deconstruct how aspects of the strategic plan apply to the practices that they implement in the classroom. Similarly, department chairs at Arles School explained that the need for instructional leadership is related to the school's mission. For example, one department chair described how the curriculum has been affected by it. He remarked:

81

So, going to…differentiated instruction [and] differentiated assessment, which was not

part of the school's tradition. [It] has required a bit of instructional leadership in [figuring

out] how [to] teach an honors class and a non-honors class in the same room.

While he noted that best practices in terms of teaching and learning have only been instituted at

the school recently, this comment also demonstrates how the courses for one department were de-

tracked to achieve equity for students, a tenet of the school's statement on diversity and inclusion.

External pressures. The school-level leader and department chairs had varying

perceptions of the external pressures related to the need for instructional leadership at their

school, although they both agreed that competition from surrounding public schools is a factor.

When I probed the school-level leader as to whether there is anything happening external to the

school that might make the role of department chair as instructional leader necessary, she

responded that she thought the "nationwide conversation" about the value or lack of value of the

Advanced Placement (AP) program was an external pressure. Conversely, department chairs

discussed the school's reputation as an external pressure. One department chair noted, "We have

a community reputation for being a little bit elite. So, I think there's always a sense of kind of

watching our backs to make sure that we're attending to everybody." Hence, this comment

indicates that the school is aware of the surrounding community's view that the school caters to

honors students. The school's statement on diversity and inclusion, however, begets that all

students are provided with opportunities to reach their potential. As a result, the school has made

changes to the curriculum to ensure all students have opportunities to succeed.

Ensuring that the curriculum and instruction are more equitable to students is important

given that the school-level leader and department chairs also mentioned another external factor

related to the need for instructional leadership: competition from the surrounding public schools.

For instance, a department chair stated, "So, in this [town], it's very hard to be a private school

because we have really good public schools and so, we have to differentiate ourselves." This

comment shows that the department chair understood that his school exists within a high-quality

school district, and this therefore requires that his school innovate. He explained that alignment of the curriculum to the school's philosophy is important to show parents that there is value to the education they pay tuition for.

Internal pressure. Furthermore, one department chair cited the fact that there have been conversations about equity at the school in regard to the school's specific student population. For instance, the department chair stated that the school has a percentage of international students who have not integrated academically with the rest of the student body. He explained that these international students excel at content-recall, but struggle with real-world application. In contrast, the non-international students are able to think divergently, but may not have the same content knowledge as the international students. The school has ruminated about how to create a situation that would allow these students to learn from each other. As a consequence, the department chair sought to create an integrated mathematics curriculum, which eliminates the usual high school mathematics sequence: Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, and calculus. He remarked, "[Students] can all be in the same place and benefit from each other. That is in agreement with our school's philosophy. That does fit our mission." This comment reveals the department chair is trying to de-track the mathematics curriculum in order to create a curriculum that will expose all students to the five major areas of mathematics. He argues that this change will create equity for students and is therefore aligned to the school's mission.

Duties. In addition to exploring the rationale for re-focusing the department chair role on instructional leadership, I also probed the school-level leader and department chairs about specific duties that the department chair enacts in order to further unpack how they understand the role of department chair. The school–level leader and department chairs both highlighted the need for the department chair to create an awareness among teachers about the school's mission and develop teachers to support desired practices using a moderate approach. For instance, in discussing the mission and strategic plan of the school, one department chair explained:

The department chair's role is to make the teacher aware that all of these documents exist

and say, "Okay, if this is our mission and vision as articulated in these different places,

what does that mean in terms of how you teach a class?"

Hence, department chairs enact the role of department chair as instructional leader by ensuring teachers are implementing practices that are aligned to the school's mission. In describing an example of an exemplar department chair, the school-level leader remarked:

She would listen first and then share a thought again, synthesizing things and would

maybe question in a way that brought us to another level of thinking around the

challenge. I could see evidence of collaboration and not a loud style of leadership, but a

quiet and thoughtful style of leadership.

This comment shows a desire by the school-level leader to appoint department chairs who are a source of new ideas for staff learning and take a balanced approach to leadership. Similarly, department chairs also described a moderate approach to the process of change. For example, one department chair recalled, "The first year or two, I was pretty cautious and I spent a lot of time observing… and…learning the culture… So, … [my department] knew I wasn't just going to come and just change for change's sake." This comment suggests that department chairs perceived it as important to take time to observe and build relationships among teachers in order to establish a foundation of trust from which they can enact change.

Unique to this school, the school-level leader and department chairs emphasized developing the organization to support desired practices. For instance, the school-level leader described how the faculty use rubrics to evaluate department chairs on whether norms were followed during department meetings throughout the year. Department chairs also described situations that demonstrated developing the organization to support desired practices. For instance, one department chair discussed a time when she facilitated organizational learning within her department using a calibration protocol for scoring student work. She explained, "you can use it within a department meeting and veteran teachers might think, "Oh, this is for the new

teacher" and I'm thinking it's for everybody." This comment demonstrates the use of table

grading to build capacity among all department members, including veteran teachers as a way to

promote and uphold the values of the school.

Finally, department chairs uniformly described themselves as a "senior" or "presiding"

colleague to emphasize that they still think of themselves as on the same level as their teachers, as

opposed to being supervisors. While department chairs do not have evaluative power, they

evinced, however, that their role as department chair entails securing accountability. For

example, one teacher recalled how she discovered a teacher reading from the teacher guide to

students during a class, which is considered a taboo. In regard to this teacher, she explained how

the administration would prefer that she handle the problem because otherwise it will lead to

disciplinary action against the teacher. She stated:

> So, it's better to treat it within the department and say, "Look, I can support you as long
>
> as I can, but to support you as a member of the department, I need you to get on board!"

This comment reflects that teachers at Arles School are expected to design their own curriculum,

which is something department chairs felt differentiates their school from other schools in the

area. Hence, department chairs are responsible for ensuring that practices aligned to the mission

of the school are enacted in the classroom. This comment also shows that though department

chairs do not perceive their role as supervisory, they do have significant power to secure

accountability.

Challenges. Faculty resistance, however, poses an obstacle to mission alignment and the

role of department chair as instructional leader. For example, in regard to the creation of the

integrated math curriculum that I described in this school's section about internal pressures, a

department chair lamented:

> The problem is that…there's this push…to get to calculus as fast as possible. So, our
>
> college counseling office knows that if someone can get to calculus as a junior, then
>
> they're going to have a much better profile for college.

This comment reveals that the counseling department at Arles School felt that students will be disadvantaged during the college application process if they do not have calculus on their transcript. Moreover, changes to the curriculum have also provoked unease among teachers. For instance, in describing the challenges that department chairs face, one department chair recalled:

> Uncertainty and concern from faculty about changes that are taking place, and you know, the balance of maintaining a positive and good collegial relationship…but, also bringing them through that process – knowing that in many ways that the changes that we're looking at implementing are not truly optional.

Hence, this comment indicates that given there is low-grade resistance to change at Arles School, department chairs understood that their role is to bring about changes in teachers' values and approaches to work. In fact, department chairs at Arles School all noted the "tradition of significant autonomy among our faculty." This comment implies that department chairs are aware that the process of change may be onerous as teachers are accustomed to a traditional curriculum.

It is important to note that the school-level leader, however, did not cite resistance by faculty. While she noted that there have been instances of teachers not implementing practices aligned to the school mission, she didn't think it was a widespread problem.

Enactment. Department chairs perceived that they are primarily supported and facilitated by enhancement of self-confidence to act as leaders in their school. Not only did they receive clarity from school leadership about where they are headed as a school and a program, but they also felt that they are trusted and treated as professionals. One department member explained:

> If someone has an issue and went to the head of the upper school, [he] would address it [and] would be supportive. He would recite the same thing – the same research that we've done and then he would explain why it's important; we would be supported. And

then if they still weren't satisfied, they would go to [the head of school], and [he] would

just say, "If you don't like it, you don't have to stay here."

Hence, this comment signifies that department chairs felt confident as middle managers to go out

in front of faculty and explain what they want to do to improve the curriculum in their

departments. They know that school leadership will reiterate the same facts and logic to teachers

as they did, which makes them feel supported.

The school-level leader and department chairs were at odds in terms of the perceived

benefit of time in the form of course release and the job description for the role of department

chair. At Arles School, she stated that department chairs teach four out of six periods, leaving

two periods for instructional leadership duties. Department chairs, however, did not feel

supported by course release because the time is not seen as sufficient – and as one department

chair noted, it is not always guaranteed. Additionally, while the school-level leader suggested

that the job description for the role of department chair is a support because it highlights

important responsibilities, department chairs disagreed. One department chair stated that it is

"about 70 bullets long" and focuses too much on the "nuts and bolts" instead of the leadership

aspects of the job.

Development. In analyzing the interviews with the school-level leader and department

chairs, the provision of leadership opportunities seemed to be a very important way in which

department chairs are developed in their role. For instance, the school-level leader suggested that

she provides leadership opportunities as means of developing department chairs' capacity. She

explained how she allows department chairs to have autonomy to make decisions as it concerns

their department, and that this serves to empower them. Department chairs mentioned how

school leadership gives them wide latitude to "take care of any problem you want to" which

serves to give them many different experiences dealing with challenging situations that stretch

their leadership capacity in a positive way. They also felt that school leadership provided

leadership opportunities in terms of allowing department chairs to be creative. For instance, one

department chair remarked, "Our head of school is really interested in…innovation with a purpose…if something is not working, he's very supportive of just saying, "Hey, how do you want to change it?" Thus, this comment indicates that department chairs perceived that they develop when they are given opportunities to share authority, promote change, and test the limits of their leadership skills.

In addition, the school-level leader and department chairs discussed mentoring as a means of developing chairs' instructional leadership capacity. For instance, the school-level leader stated:

> I look for mentors and I'll say, "You know, I remember when that department chair struggled with a similar issue. I would encourage you to go reach out to them." Some of that networking and linking, and then I think, you know, availability. A lot of times, I'll just listen – practice active listening – kind of echo back what I hear, and some chairs will be like, "That's exactly what I needed!"

This comment indicates that she not only mentors department chairs herself, but she also serves to connect department chairs to other department chairs with more experience as way to engender reflection and growth. Similarly, department chairs at Arles School explained that they develop in their role through mentoring from school-level leaders. For instance, one department chair shared:

> I go to the dean of faculty if there's something going on that just, you know, I want to know how to approach or if I want to make an adjustment to something. I can go and say, "What would be the best way to bring this up?"

This comment shows that department chairs desire mentoring opportunities to broaden their own perspective as they learn leadership skills. In addition, department chairs also discussed how the faculty evaluation process provided opportunities for mentorship. One department chair explained:

I chose to be evaluated as a department chair rather than as a classroom teacher. I chose an administrator as my mentor…and I met with him and we decided on what my goal was. My goal actually turned out to be how to better coach adults – how do you teach teachers?

Therefore, this comment demonstrates that department chairs appreciate that the evaluation process is tailored to provide opportunities for them to think critically about their own development. In this case, it allowed the department chair to set goals related to developing his leadership capacity.

Summary

Both the school-level leader and the department chairs agreed that the need for instructional leadership emanates from the fact that independent schools have strategic plans and the role of department chair as instructional leader is integral to implementation. Reasons for the focus on the school mission include competition from surrounding public schools, as well as the fact that the school is trying to better integrate its' student population. Though the school-level leader stated that department chairs deal with teachers who do not espouse the philosophy of the school in certain instances, she expressed in a follow-up interview that she does not feel that there are problems with faculty lacking a growth mindset. Although teachers are not necessarily resistant about curricular changes taking place, they are uncertain and concerned and department chairs perceived that their role as instructional leaders is to foster a trusting relationship, as they also make clear to them that these changes are obligatory. Department chairs perceived that they are supported in their role as instructional leader by enhancement of self-confidence to act as leaders in their school, and felt that they develop as a result of mentoring and leadership opportunities. Table 6 on the next page presents a comparison of the understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader at Arles School by the school-level leader and department chairs.

Table 6

Comparison of Understanding of Role of Department Chair at Arles

		Alignment between School-Level Leader's and Department Chairs' Interview Responses
Constitution	Department Chair Instructional Leadership Practices	+
	Rationale for Re-Focusing Role of Department Chair on Instructional Leadership	+
Enactment	Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties	--
	Professional Development for Leadership	--
	Enhancement of Department Chairs' Self-Confidence to Act as Leaders in their Schools	--
Development	Use of Teaming to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Provision of Leadership Roles to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+
	Opportunities for Collegial Inquiry to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Opportunities for Mentoring to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+

Note. + = Alignment, -- = Misalignment

Avignon School

Avignon School is a co-educational, independent day school located in Northern Virginia with approximately 500 students in grades pre-kindergarten-12. I interviewed the academic dean and three department chairs who were responsible for history, English, and science. Similar to Le Cannet and Arles School, the school-level leader at this school empowers department chairs to act

as leaders in the school and also provides department chairs with real-world opportunities to share leadership that allow them to develop their capacity to lead teachers.

Constitution. The school-level leader and the department chairs perceived the need for instructional leadership to be related to the school mission, but the school-level leader did not emphasize it to the same extent as the department chairs. Both saw competition as an external pressure affecting the need for instructional leadership. Department chairs highlighted teacher autonomy and the fact that many teachers are career switchers as internal pressures that present a challenge to department chairs. Additionally, both the school-level leader and the department chairs emphasized the need to set directions, develop people, and secure accountability within departments.

Need for instructional leadership. In the initial interview with the school-level leader, she explained the need for instructional leadership "is that schools are about instruction, so you have to make sure that people are paying attention to what is being taught and what the outcomes are." In a follow-up interview, however, she agreed about the importance of mission-alignment, but did not elaborate. All three department chairs, however, highlighted the need for instructional leadership as mission alignment. For instance, one department chair stated:

> I think ideally the administration would like for the department chairs each to run
> departments…that serve the school's mission, and for example…having learning goals
> and large overarching goals for students, and ideally everybody is working towards those
> goals.

This comment indicates that the department chair perceived the role of department chair as instructional leader as someone who can translate the school mission into departmental practices that serve to support and uphold the mission of the school.

External pressures. The school-level leader and department chairs had varying perceptions about the external pressures related to the need for instructional leadership, but they both agreed that competition played a factor. While the school-level leader indicated that the

91

need is rooted in conversations about teaching and learning that are currently happening among educators around the world, department chairs cited the current political environment as an external factor. The department chair stated:

> I think the world is changing. The one thing I'm thinking of specifically for us as a department is how to teach kids how to handle facts and how to handle research…kids need to be able to make their own decisions without being told what to think.

This comment means that the department chair believes that disinformation in the media is a reason to emphasize skills over content within the curriculum. Nevertheless, both the school-level leader and department chairs identified competition as an external factor, although department chairs highlighted it to a greater extent. For instance, one department chair explained:

> The school leadership is really interested and highly motivated about being able to defend anything that goes on in a department to parents because, let's just be honest, an independent school is basically a business and the parents are the customers.

This comment shows that fact that the department chair is aware of the competition that independent schools face, and therefore, he understood that the role of department chair as instructional leader is to oversee the department and make sure there is alignment.

Internal pressures. Department chairs at Avignon School discussed that an internal threat to stability at the school is the fact that many of the teachers come from out of industry. For instance, in discussing the need for instructional leadership, a department chair remarked, "It's an independent school, and a lot of teachers come to the job from outside of teaching – like not everybody has a background in teaching." This comment reveals that many teachers at Avignon School are career-switchers and lack classroom experience. The school-level leader acknowledged teachers' lack of formal training in education in independent schools, but she did not emphasize it.

Duties. In addition to exploring the rationale for re-focusing the department chair role on instructional leadership, I also probed the school-level leader and department chairs about

92

specific duties that the department chair enacts in order to further describe how they understand the role of department chair. The school-level leader and department chairs both expressed the need for the department chair to establish a vision for the department, develop teachers' capacity, and ensure that teachers are promoting skill development in the classroom. In terms of setting directions, the school-level leader stated that department chairs are responsible for establishing a vision for their department, as well as engendering buy-in from their department members. Similarly, in describing the qualities that school leadership looks for when appointing department chairs, one department chair expressed to me that he thought he was chosen over another candidate because he had a better vision for the department. In response to the same question, the school-level leader remarked, "The department chair showed a willingness to work with colleagues and help them learn how to do something." This comment reflects a desire by the school-level leader to appoint department chairs who have interpersonal skills and are a source of new ideas for staff learning. Likewise, one department explained how department chairs are expected to be "master teachers" and "lead by example" as they develop their teachers' pedagogical skills. Finally, while department chairs do not have evaluative power, they do secure accountability in terms of checking teachers' grade books. The school-level leader explained, "They are checking the grade book so they can see are kids learning [and] what the teachers are teaching, so I consider that to be part of instructional leadership." This comment shows that she shares leadership with department chairs in terms of securing accountability for student achievement. Relatedly, one department chair explained that school leadership has highlighted that teachers should be encouraging critical thinking in the classroom and that she ensures that this is occurring. She stated:

> And so, when I visit my colleagues' classrooms, I listen carefully for the conversation that goes on surrounding the activity – and that's what I feel I should be doing in terms of instructional leadership.

This comment means that department chairs perceive that their role as department chair is to promote collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement.

   Challenges. Department chairs discussed teacher autonomy as a challenge to the role of department chair as instructional leader. For instance, one department chair remarked:

> Younger teachers are more used to getting feedback – more so than older teachers who have been at it a while, and that's especially true in independent schools because for the longest time, your classroom was your kingdom and no one came in or out from the administration, and now, obviously, we're trying to change that because we know that's not the best way to teach.

Hence, this statement indicates that department chairs at Avignon School are trying to incorporate the latest research on teaching and learning into classrooms, but they are challenged because teachers have been accustomed to minimal oversight.

   Enactment. At Avignon School, both the school-level leader and department chairs highlighted enhancement of self-confidence to act as leaders in the school as a means of support for the department chair. For instance, the school-level leader remarked:

> I think I do a good job of elevating them. So, I make sure that teachers understand the importance of the department chair and the work that the chair is doing. It would be clear to everybody that the department chair, you know, is a boss. I mean, they answer to that department chair and they can go to that department chair for questions and support. So, I think that helps pave the way for, you know, if [there was] going to be a difficult conversation.

This comment means that the school-level leader clearly explains to the faculty that the department chair is a leader, and not just a middle-manager who liaisons between administration and teachers in the department. It also suggests that supporting the department chair in this way facilitates his or her ability to broach issues of concern with department members. Similarly, department chairs felt strongly that school leadership enhanced their self-confidence to act as

leaders in the school. For instance, one department chair noted, "I also know [my school-level leader] has my back, right? – which is just super important to know that I have support from the administration." This statement shows that department chairs feel confident in fulfilling their instructional leadership duties, such as setting directions and securing accountability, because they know that school leadership will support the actions they make.

Department chairs also perceived that their role as department chair is supported by professional development. For instance, department chairs highlighted the school's willingness to provide them with the resources to attend outside professional development. One department chair shared:

> If I said there's this conference on instructional leadership that I would like to go to at Location A, the administration would like make every attempt to allow me to go and give me release time, pay for travel, you know, to the extent that they're possible.

This comment demonstrates that department chairs perceive that the school is serious about providing department chairs with the training they need to ensure they are successful.

In addition to course release, the school-level leader also mentioned the job description for the role of department chair as a support, but department chairs, while positive, seemed unconvinced as of yet. The school-level leader suggested that the job description for the role of department chair is a support because it has been recently revised so that department chairs are "all clear about what they're about." Furthermore, she mentioned that the job description outlines many specific duties for department chairs to use their time. Department chairs, however, seemed unsure as to whether the job description for the role of department chair is a support or not. While they acknowledged that the new job description is more focused on instructional leadership, department chairs did not feel that they were supported by course release. At Avignon School, the standard load is five classes and a study hall. Department chairs, however, might have four classes and a study hall or five classes and no study hall.

One department chair remarked:

I would say that in the current configuration of my job duties – it's not a sustainable

model, and you know, I have no idea how much longer I can continue the rate of burn

that I'm experiencing.

This comment highlights the lack of time in the form of course release that department chairs feel

is a constraint to fulfilling their instructional leadership duties.

Development. The school-level leader and department chairs at Avignon School

identified and described various ways in which department chairs develop in their role.

Leadership opportunities, however, seemed to be stand-out way in which department chairs

develop their capacity. The school-level leader described her use of this practice. For instance,

she discussed that the school has grown in size and she relies on department chairs to share in

leadership duties as a "first line of defense." This means she gives them latitude to solve

problems related to the teachers in their department. In addition, she discussed how she

incorporates department chairs into the faculty professional growth program, which provides a

"good training ground" for them given that department chairs must not only observe classes, but

also approve a summary of a teacher's performance, which is co-written by the school-level

leader and department chair. Similarly, department chairs felt they develop as a result of

leadership opportunities, including being forced to conduct difficult conversations. One

department chair explained the school-level leader's use of this practice:

She makes us do it, right? So, it would be easy for her to have difficult conversations

with faculty members, but she's pretty good about saying "No, that's your job; you're

doing it!"

This comment indicates that department chairs welcome real-world opportunities to share

leadership. Moreover, another department chair explained how school leadership provided him

with opportunities to think outside the box and be creative in terms of suggesting solutions to

problems.

Additionally, the school-level leader and department chairs identified mentoring as another way that helps department chairs develop in their role. For instance, department chairs cited mentoring in terms of the feedback they get from the school-level leader during the informal department chair evaluation process that helps them to reflect on their practice. This process includes teachers in each department taking a survey. The school-level leader provides a summary of the feedback to the department chair and a conversation ensues between the school-level leader and the department chair about goals for improvement. Furthermore, the school-level leader stated that her "door is always open" and she welcomes department chairs to come talk to her about any issue or challenge that they face as they continue to grow in their role.

Summary

At Avignon School, the school-level leader and department chairs agreed that mission alignment is important, although the department chairs emphasized it more so than the school level leader. Both the school-level leader and department chairs perceived competition as a rationale for the need for instructional leadership, although they each cited other external pressures, as well. In contrast to the school-level leader, the department chairs highlighted teachers' lack of classroom experience and a sense of teacher autonomy as internal factors that challenge the role of department chair as instructional leader. They both perceived, however, the need for department chairs to enact and create buy-in for a vision, develop teachers' capacity, and hold them accountable for implementing practices aligned to the school's philosophy. Department chairs felt empowered to carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader and they perceived that they develop through the use of mentoring and leadership opportunities. Table 7 on the next page presents a comparison of the role of department chair as instructional leader at Avignon School by the school-level leader and department chairs.

Table 7

Comparison of Understanding of Role of Department Chair at Avignon

		Alignment between School-Level Leader's and Department Chairs' Interview Responses
Constitution	Department Chair Instructional Leadership Practices	+
	Rationale for Re-Focusing Role of Department Chair on Instructional Leadership	+
Enactment	Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties	--
	Professional Development for Leadership	--
	Enhancement of Department Chairs' Self-Confidence to Act as Leaders in their Schools	+
Development	Use of Teaming to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Provision of Leadership Roles to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+
	Opportunities for Collegial Inquiry to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--
	Opportunities for Mentoring to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+

Note. + = Alignment, -- = Misalignment

This section presented the school-level leader's and department chairs' understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader at each of the four independent schools in my study. The next section compares school-level leaders' and department chairs' understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader across the four independent schools.

Cross-School Comparison of School-Level Leaders' Understanding of the Role of

Department Chair

      Constitution.

      Rationale for re-focusing the role of department chair. Research question one in my

study explored how school-level leaders understand the role of department chair in terms of

investigating the rationale for re-focusing the department chair role on instructional leadership.

In all four schools, school-level leaders cited (or acknowledged) the need for instructional

leadership as mission alignment due to external pressures – namely, competition, and often

unique, school-specific internal factors. They differed in terms of whether they discussed it

primarily as a technical problem or an adaptive challenge. School-level leaders at Grasse School

and Le Cannet School described situations that require changes in teachers' values and

approaches to work. They also discussed teacher resistance and the need for department chairs to

approach change incrementally. While school-level leaders at Arles School and Avignon School

also described situations that require changes in teachers' approaches to work, they seemed to

perceive that teachers are generally receptive to feedback and just need the department chair to

show them how to do it.

      Duties. Across all schools, school-level leaders described the department chair as a

master teacher who has deep knowledge of content and pedagogy. They also highlighted an

ability to build relationships and develop people and set directions for the department. School-

level leaders who perceived the task of mission alignment as an adaptive challenge emphasized

the department chair's ability to build meaningful and trusting relationships with teachers,

whereas school-level leaders who perceived the task of mission alignment as a technical problem

emphasized the department chair's ability to be a model or expert for teachers.

      Enactment. School-level leaders tended to perceive that they facilitate the role of

department chair as instructional leader through the use of time. While all school-level leaders

mentioned that department chairs are supported as instructional leaders via additional planning

time, two school-level leaders acknowledged that this time may not be enough. Table 8 below

shows a comparison of department chairs' time to fulfill instructional leadership duties.

Table 8

Comparison of Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties

Independent School	Time
Grasse School	The standard load is four or five classes. Department chairs teach three out of four classes.
Le Cannet School	The standard load is four classes. Department chairs teach two out of four classes.
Arles School	The standard load is five classes. Department chars teach four classes, but it is not guaranteed.
Avignon School	The standard load is five classes and a study hall. Department chairs reduce that by one; they might have four classes and a study hall or they might have five classes and no study hall.

In addition, school-level leaders perceived that the job description for the role of department chair

is a support because it identifies how department chairs should be spending their time. Only one

school-level leader mentioned the use of professional development to support the role of

department chair as instructional leader, and just two school-level leaders emphasized that they

support department chairs by communicating to the faculty that they are the instructional leaders

of the school.

      Development. School-level leaders perceived that department chairs develop in their

role most commonly via mentoring. Across all four schools, school-level leaders discussed the

importance of one-on-one conversations with someone who has more leadership experience to get

feedback on how they are doing or provide emotional support. Typically, these conversations

occur through an informal evaluation process for department chairs, in which department chairs

are provided with feedback from a department survey and then work with the school-level leader

to develop goals for improvement. In addition, all school-level leaders discussed the use of

teaming in the form of department chair meetings to share leadership, manage change, and/or

100

promote organizational learning and capacity building. It was less common for school-level

leaders to describe leadership opportunities or collegial inquiry to support growth. Table 9 on the

next page provides a cross-school comparison of the understanding of the role of department

chair by the school-level leaders.

Table 9

School Level Leaders' Comparison of Understanding of Role of Department Chair

			Grasse	Le Cannet	Arles	Avignon
Constitution	**Leadership Practices**	Setting Directions	#	#	#	#
		Building Relationships and Developing People	#	#	#	#
		Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices	--	--	+	--
		Improving the Instructional Program	+	+	+	+
		Securing Accountability	+	--	--	+
	Need	Adaptive	#	#	+	+
		Technical	+	+	#	#
Enactment		Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties	+	#	#	+
		Professional Development for Leadership	#	--	--	--
		Enhancement of Department Chairs' Self-Confidence to Act as Leaders in their Schools	#	--	--	#
Development		Use of Teaming to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+	+	+	+
		Provision of Leadership Roles to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--	--	#	#
		Use of Collegial Inquiry to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+	--	--	+
		Use of Mentoring to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	#	#	#	+

Note. + = mentioned in interview, -- = not mentioned, # = emphasized

Cross-School Comparison of Department Chairs' Understanding of the Role of Department Chair

     Constitution.

     Rationale for re-focusing the role of department chair. Research question two in my study explored how department chairs understand the role of department chair in terms of investigating the rationale for re-focusing the department chair role on instructional leadership. In all four schools, department chairs explained that the need for instructional leadership is related to the school's mission. Most department chairs explained the focus on the mission as a result of competition from other schools. Similar to the school-level leaders, they perceived that there were unique, school-specific internal factors that also served as an impetus for change. Furthermore, they described the task of mission alignment as an adaptive challenge. This is because they identified characteristics of adaptive challenge including the following: required change in faculty's values, relationships, and approaches to work; resistance, and a moderate process of implementation in regard to the change.

     Duties. Department chairs in this study understood the role of department chair as instructional leader as setting directions, building relationships and developing people, and securing accountability. There were some nuances to this common understanding of the role. For instance, only department chairs at Le Cannet School and Arles School discussed profound changes to the curriculum that were being made to achieve mission alignment. In addition, department chairs at Grasse School challenged the interpretation of these leadership practices – likely due to perceived lack of support by school leadership. Finally, department chairs across all schools performed the role of department chair as instructional leader by securing accountability, although department chairs at Grasse expressed unease with evaluating teachers in their department and department chairs at Arles insisted they were "colleagues" even though they indicated they had significant authority over teachers in their department.

Enactment. Department chairs across most schools identified examples of enhancement of self-confidence as a key way that school leadership facilitates the role of department chair as instructional leader. They described the importance of school leadership standing behind them as they make decisions from a middle management standpoint. While all department chairs perceived that time in the form of course release is a critical way in which school leadership provides support to them, only department chairs at Le Cannet felt that they are supported adequately in this area. Department chairs at other schools felt that they lack sufficient time to fulfill all of their instructional leadership duties. Similarly, professional development is perceived by department chairs as an important, but not a common means of support for the role of department chair as instructional leader. Department chairs across most schools perceived the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader as too managerial to be supportive to them.

Development. Finally, department chairs explained that they develop in their role most commonly through the use of mentoring and the provision of leadership opportunities. Department chairs uniformly discussed the importance of learning by doing, and emphasized the importance of brainstorming strategy or reflection time with someone who has more leadership experience. Similarly, leadership roles provide department chairs with opportunities to test out creative solutions or share leadership with the administration. Very few department chairs cited teaming as means of development unless it provided opportunities for collegial inquiry at the same time. In fact, department chairs expressed a desire for more opportunities to dialogue with other department chairs about basic areas of leadership practice. Table 10 on the next page provides a cross-school comparison of the understanding of the role of department chair by the department chairs.

Table 10

Department Chairs' Comparison of Understanding of Role of Department Chair

		Grasse	Le Cannet	Arles	Avignon
Constitution — Leadership Practices	Setting Directions	+	#	#	#
	Building Relationships and Developing People	+	#	#	#
	Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices	--	--	#	--
	Improving the Instructional Program	+	+	+	+
	Securing Accountability	+	#	#	#
Constitution — Need	Adaptive	#	#	#	#
	Technical	+	+	+	+
Enactment	Time to Fulfill Instructional Leadership Duties	--	#	--	--
	Professional Development for Leadership	+	--	--	+
	Enhancement of Department Chairs' Self-Confidence to Act as Leaders in their Schools	--	#	#	#
Development	Use of Teaming to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--	--	+	+
	Provision of Leadership Roles to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--	#	#	#
	Use of Collegial Inquiry to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	--	+	+	+
	Use of Mentoring to Develop Department Chairs' Capacity	+	#	#	#

Note. + = mentioned, -- = not mentioned, # = emphasized

In summary, school-level leaders and department chairs understood the rationale for re-focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader in a similar way. They both explained that the need for instructional leadership was mission alignment as a result of internal and external factors. School-level leaders espoused the role of department chair as one that sets directions and builds relationships and develops people in order to fulfill mission alignment. They perceived department chair instructional leadership is supported by time and they explained that department chairs develop in their role by use of mentoring and teaming. Department chairs understood the constitution of the role in a similar way to school-level leaders, but expressed a need to also secure accountability in order to achieve mission alignment. Due to their perception of teacher autonomy within each of their schools, they perceived department chair instructional leadership is supported by school-level leaders standing behind them as they make decisions from a middle-management standpoint. Furthermore, they perceived that department chair capacity is primarily developed through leadership opportunities and mentoring, and they expressed a desire for collegial inquiry.

Next, in this section of my capstone, I discuss the results of my study and their connection to the literature and my conceptual framework and I make recommendations for future action. My capstone ends with the action communications section.

Discussion

This discussion examines the findings in relation to my conceptual framework for this capstone. I also compare the findings to my original assumptions drawn from the literature on department chairs, principal support of instructional leadership capacity, and independent schools. My purpose is to identify the main themes that emerged from my research by comparing and contrasting how school-level leaders and department chairs understand the role of department chair.

Demand Environment

The conceptual framework for this study hypothesizes that the role of department chair as instructional leader is comprised of three elements: constitution, enactment, and development. Due to the demand environment (Greenfield, 1995), school-level leaders are compelled to define the role of department chair as instructional leader as opposed to department manager. In all four schools in my study, school-level leaders and department chairs were relatively well-aligned in terms of understanding the need for instructional leadership.

Need for instructional leadership.

School mission. School-level leaders and department chairs both explained the need for instructional leadership as a function of the school mission (see Appendix K). While the school-level leader from Arles School indirectly referred to the school mission by mentioning the strategic plan and the school-level leader from Avignon School acknowledged the importance of the school mission in the follow-up interview, the other two school-level leaders directly referenced the school mission. Similarly, department chairs across schools explained that the school mission establishes the need for instructional leadership.

Greenfield (1995) identified three conditions that create a "demand environment" for school administrators and thereby necessitate that they exert leadership instead of management. These conditions included: the ethical aspect of schools, the independent nature of teachers' work, and internal and external pressures to the school (Greenfield, 1995). Both school-level leaders and department chairs explained the school mission as the need for instructional leadership in a convoluted way – meaning they often first identified threats or pressures affecting the need for instructional leadership.

Internal pressures. School-level leaders and department chairs often identified internal pressures affecting the need for instructional leadership. These internal pressures were common to all four independent schools, yet unique to each school's environment. Table 11 on the next page identifies the internal pressures affecting the need for instructional leadership at each school.

Table 11

Internal Pressures Affecting the Need for Instructional Leadership

Independent School	Internal Pressure
Grasse School	Removal of AP program; Many teachers lack pedagogical knowledge
Le Cannet School	Sizable student population with special needs
Arles School	International students are not academically integrated with the rest of the student body
Avignon School	Many teachers are career-switchers

External pressures. In additional to internal factors, school-level leaders and department chairs identified competition (Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019; Orem, 2017; Torres, 2013; Torres, 2017) as an external factor affecting the need for instructional leadership related to the school mission. This was more commonly discussed as a factor by department chairs than by school-level leaders. In contrast to department chairs who identified competition on their own volition, school-level leaders acknowledged competition as a factor during the follow-up interview when I relayed to them that department chairs across schools had mentioned it as a factor. This was true for all school-level leaders with the exception of the school-level leader at Grasse School. In contrast to the other school-level leaders, she mentioned competition during the initial interview. She stated that she perceived that competition and rising tuition fees are external pressures that compel school leadership to re-focus the role of department chair as instructional leader to help achieve mission alignment. While the other school-level leaders acknowledged that competition is a factor that compels schools to focus on the school mission, they did not elaborate on it. Similar to the school-level leader at Grasse School, department chairs explained that competition and rising tuition fees prompt parents to pressure independent schools to identify and deliver upon the value-added effect that a school can provide to students

(Cooper, 2017; Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019; McManus, 2012). Hence, department chairs explained that there is a renewed focus on the school mission. Additionally, schools are embracing innovations aligned to their mission as a means to stay competitive (Cooper, 2017; Evans, 2013). These innovations are not technological, but represent the "thinking process that results in taking action to better prepare students and fulfill the school mission" (Feild Baker, 2017). For instance, the school-level leader and department chair at Le Cannet School discussed changes to one department's curriculum to emphasize a constructivist approach, while a department chair at Arles Schools explained how the traditional high school mathematics curriculum has given way to an integrated mathematics course that allows students the opportunity to experience all types of math.

Additionally, a couple of school-level leaders – but no department chairs - mentioned a second external pressure for the emphasis on the school mission. They simply explained that there are discussions about teaching and learning happening around the world. In contrast, a couple of department chairs – but no school-level leaders - cited the current political environment as a reason for instructional leadership tied to the school mission; they perceived it is important to emphasize skills in critical analysis of the media.

Summary. My conceptual framework hypothesized that the demand environment (Greenfield, 1995) compels school-level leaders to enact leadership by re-focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader. My assumption had been that competition would be the sole pressure affecting the need for instructional leadership. Yet, school-level leaders and department chairs, also identified internal pressures that had the potential to be a "threat to stability" (Greenfield, 1995, p. 65) and served as an impetus for change. Additionally, I was intrigued to learn that each of the four independent schools in my study had mission statements that encompassed two criteria: helping all students reach their potential and immersing them in an environment that promotes values such as equity, inclusion, and diversity. Therefore, it's possible that school-level leaders are also influenced by what Greenfield (1995) refers to as the

moral aspect of schools. For instance, he stated, "school administrators have a professional duty to be sure that school policies and practices do indeed serve the best educational and developmental interests of children" (p. 64). This means that school policies and practices, including curriculum and instruction, need to be aligned to the values represented in the mission statement.

Constitution

  Challenges. School-level leaders and department chairs both identified teacher autonomy in independent schools (Bassett, 2011; Evans, 2013) as a challenge that department chairs face, although department chairs cited it much more frequently. Whereas only two school-level leaders discussed examples that illustrated teacher autonomy, almost all department chairs discussed it. While school-level leaders and department chairs discussed teacher autonomy in terms of lack of familiarity with feedback, lack of alignment between philosophy and execution, and resistance to change – especially in regard to self-defined curriculum (Forster & D'Andrea, 2009; Kane, 1992), department chairs spoke about these challenges using specific examples, and with much more detail and emotion than school-level leaders. For example, whereas the school-level leader from Grasse School commented that "certain behaviors were accepted because people were strong classroom teachers," the department chair from the same school remarked:

    It's an independent school and so there's a lot of autonomy in the classroom. Teachers

    have a lot of autonomy, so sometimes a decision is just not made…For

    example…sometimes we have discussions about whether kids get to retake a test – and

    there are teachers who do that and teachers who don't; teachers who feel strongly both

    ways!

This comment refers to a specific example that the department chair faced in her department, and it reflects the sense of exasperation she felt trying to find consensus on the issue.

  I had assumed that school-level leaders and department chairs would identify teachers' lack of formal training in education (Bassett, 2009; Evans, 2013; Fish & Wolking, 2019;

Jorgenson, 2006) as the primary challenge, but this factor was less frequently cited. While one

school-level leader and a few department chairs mentioned that there are many teachers who lack

specific training in pedagogy, the issue of teachers' sense of autonomy in independent schools

was highlighted as a challenge much more frequently - especially by department chairs.

Type of challenge. School-level leaders and department chairs differed in how they

perceived the need for instructional leadership. Whereas department chairs across schools largely

perceived mission alignment as an adaptive challenge, school-level leaders sometimes perceived

it as a technical problem. Department chairs described the task of mission alignment as one that

"generates resistance" because it requires teachers to forget their previous approach to work

(Heifetz, 2006). Department chairs portrayed this when they discussed transforming the

curriculum in certain subjects to be aligned to the mission (Kane, 1991). For instance, one

department chair at Arles School noted:

> The school has recognized the need for a lot of racial equity work, and we put a lot of
>
> money into professional development to try to re-assess our curriculum along equity
>
> lines…and I think we've been just making sure that the teachers value that and are taking
>
> that serious.

This comment reflects the fact that the school values equity and they are serious about revising

the curriculum to support this endeavor – in addition to making sure that teachers do, too.

Examples of specific curricular changes related to this include the creation of elective courses in

biology at Le Cannet School or the integration of algebra, geometry, Algebra II, and trigonometry

into one course of mathematics at Arles School. These curricular changes generate resistance

because they represent "loss of competence" (Heifetz, 2006, p. 79). This is because teachers have

to adjust to a new curriculum and differentiate their instruction and assessment. It also requires

keeping the mission of the school center-stage, which reflects a change in values for teachers – as

well as department chairs and other school faculty like counselors, as is the case at Grasse School

and Arles School respectively. Finally, department chairs described the role of department chair

as instructional leader as one that provides regular feedback to teachers on their performance – a role that many teachers are unaccustomed to in independent schools given their autonomy (Jorgenson, 2006).

In contrast, some school-level leaders perceived the need for instructional leadership as a technical problem (Heifetz, 2006). They explained that teachers may not be meeting aspects of the strategic plan, but department chairs, acting as an expert, need to model technical skill, such as how to incorporate creativity into assessments. From the perspective of these school-level leaders, it seems that if department chairs are able to model the skill successfully, teachers will willfully implement the practice in their classrooms.

Leadership Practices. School-level leaders and department chairs both identified similar leadership practices for the role of department chair as instructional leader.

Setting directions and building relationships and developing people. They each discussed the importance of setting directions and building relationships and developing people (Leithwood, 2012b). This is aligned to the literature because a number of studies indicated that school-level leaders prefer department chairs to focus on visioning and providing instructional support (Brent, DeAngelis, & Surash, 2014; Wettersten, 1992). School-level leaders and department chairs who perceived mission alignment as an adaptive challenge identified the need for department chairs to get buy-in for their respective visions (Harris & Jamieson, 1995), as well as to look at the process of change as incremental steps over an extended period of time in order to lay a foundation of trust among teachers (Harris & Jamieson, 1995). In addition, they perceived developing people as not only being a master teacher and sharing new ideas, but also challenging teachers' assumptions, and motivating their learning (Printy, 2008). In contrast school-level leaders and department chairs who perceived mission alignment as a technical challenge did not emphasize the process of change as incremental steps over an extended period of time in order to lay a foundation of trust among teachers, and while they also looked at the

112

department chair as a master teacher who shares ideas, they did not emphasize the department

chairs' need to challenge teachers' assumptions.

       Securing accountability. One leadership practice in which school-level leaders and

department chairs differed is securing accountability (Leithwood, 2012b). Kane (1991) discussed

the independent school characteristic of self-governance, which results in a "fluid organization

where roles of administrators and teachers are less rigidly prescribed" (p. 399). Across all four

schools in my study, nearly all department chairs discussed the role of department chair as

instructional leader in terms of securing accountability. While department chairs discussed

securing accountability as evaluation at Grasse School, department chairs at the three other

schools more commonly discussed it as observing in classrooms to make sure that teachers'

instructional practices aligned to the school mission (Kane, 1991). This included listening for

discussions focused on critical thinking or ensuring that that teachers are giving a diversity of

assessments. In fact, a few department chairs expressed that school-level leaders should be more

transparent to the faculty about the role of department chair. For instance, one department chair

at Le Cannet School remarked:

> The role has changed. I've been in this role for eight years now and early on I played a
>
> little more of an evaluative role. Like I had a say about what teachers were doing and it
>
> really did impact whether they're going to be renewed…Now, I still feel I do that, but
>
> that's not what I'm presented as. That's about the administration kind of wanting to
>
> soften [their approach] and I personally don't agree with that. I think that it's too big a
>
> school for me not to have a more evaluative role and just be upfront about it.

This comment reflects that the department chair thinks that he might as well have the ability to

evaluate given that he provides feedback to school-level leaders about teachers' performance.

Other department chairs, such as those from Arles Schools, clearly stated that the role of

department chair is not supervisory, but they provided examples that indicated they had

significant power to secure accountability because of their ability to voice concerns about teachers to school leadership, which is not taken lightly.

Enactment

School-level leaders and department chairs differed in terms of how they perceived that department chair instructional leadership is supported and facilitated. School-level leaders largely perceived that time in the form of course release and the job description served to support the role of department chair, while department chairs commonly perceived that they were supported in their role through enhancement of self-confidence to act as leaders in their schools.

Time.

Course release. School-level leaders identified time in the form of course release to plan as a means of support (Harris, 2003). While the amount of time provided to department chairs varied, school-level leaders seemed to think that this is an important way in which department chair instructional leadership is facilitated, even though some school-level leaders indicated department chairs may need more time. In contrast, department chairs at all schools except Le Cannet School cited time in the form of course release as a challenge. While they acknowledged that they often receive at least one extra block of time off, they felt that it was not a sufficient amount of time to fulfill all of their instructional leadership duties (Peacock, 2014; Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007). Furthermore, some department chairs mentioned that course release is not guaranteed. For example, at Arles School, the department chair discussed that this past school year she did not have any course release due to a staffing shortage. Department chairs at Le Cannet School were the exception because they are provided with course release that amounts to 50% of their total working hours per week. In fact, department chairs at Le Cannet School expressed that they knew the role of department chair as instructional leader would be impossible without the course release they are provided (Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007).

Job description. School-level leaders and department chairs also differed in terms of how they perceived the job description for the role of department chair, which identifies how

department chairs should spend their time in their role. Most school-level leaders discussed how the job description for the role of department chair is a support because in some cases it has been revised to focus on instructional leadership. Department chairs, however, felt the job description still does not facilitate the role of department chair as instructional leader. One department chair described the job description as a "laundry list" and expressed that he would like to see the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader reduced to the "essence of the job instead of the actual duties." This dovetails with the literature, as department chairs perceive that their role includes many administrative tasks (Bliss et al., 1996; Feeney, 2009; Weller, 2001).

   Enhancement of self-confidence. While school-level leaders perceived time in the form of course release and the job description as a means to support department chair instructional leadership, department chairs commonly perceived enhancement of self-confidence to act as leaders in their schools as a way in which department chair instructional leadership is facilitated. This relates to the literature as department chairs cite lack of formal authority as a barrier to their effectiveness to be leaders (Feeney, 2009; Weller, 2001). For instance, department chairs across most schools in my study discussed the importance of school-level leaders "having their backs" as they carry out their role. They explained the necessity of having a school-level leader support them by reiterating the same message, research, and logic to others as they have (Barth, 2001; Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Muijs & Harris, 2003). In addition, they talked about the usefulness of having school-level leaders stand with them as they announce a plan of action (Barth, 2001; Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Muijs & Harris, 2003). This is because department chairs explained it has the effect of teachers "just doing it," which indicates teachers may be ignorant of the role of department chair as instructional leader (Muijs & Harris, 2003).

   Professional development. Professional development was expressed by department chairs at a couple of schools as an important means of support for the role of department chair as instructional leader. Department chairs mentioned off-campus workshops on leadership that their schools provided funding for them to attend. School-level leaders, however, rarely mentioned

professional development as a means of support for the role of department chair as instructional

leader. Similarly, the literature shows that few department chairs receive any leadership training

prior to accepting their position (DeAngelis, 2013; Weller, 2001). The only exception to this was

the school-level leader at Grasse School who discussed that she provided workshops to

department chairs on *Schooling by Design.* Another school-level leader mentioned professional

development as a support when I probed, but she described it in comparatively vague manner.

While department chairs expressed that professional development is a valuable support, school-

level leaders do not commonly provide it to department chairs.

Development

  Growing pains. Drago-Severson (2004a) defined growth as "increases in our cognitive,

affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities that enable us to manage better the complex

demands of teaching learning, leadership, and life" (p. 8). School-level leaders and department

chairs in my study identified various complexities that department chairs came to manage. For

instance, school-level leaders and department chairs both explained that department chairs grow

in their role in terms of being able to conduct difficult conversations with teachers. School-level

leaders also highlighted the ability of department chairs to make decisions independently and

embrace the role of instructional leader as opposed to manager. Department chairs expressed an

increased sense of confidence and calmness that they feel after "putting out a few fires" during

their tenure. This applies to broaching conversations with teachers, as well as accepting that

effective leadership requires patience and understanding. In addition, they both acknowledged

that the process of development is slow and tedious because department chairs do not have prior

leadership experience. For instance, a department chair at Le Cannet School recalled the time

when she accepted the position of department chair. She remarked:

> I knew that I had [a difficult group of teachers in my department]. I mean everyone sort
>
> of sarcastically congratulated me, you know, "Oh, lucky you! Now, you get to herd the
>
> cats." There were massive personality conflicts. Just the most unmanageable

department, and it was at first tremendously difficult and I just had to oftentimes just sit

there and take it.

This comment signifies that some department chairs felt paralyzed to lead due to a lack of

intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.   Therefore, they need help not only "finding their voice" as

the school-level leader at Grasse School mentioned, but they also require assistance learning

leadership skills, including: providing feedback to teachers, establishing norms at department

meetings, facilitating professional development opportunities for teachers, etc. Finally, school-

level leaders emphasized the need for the role of department chair as instructional leader to

develop cognitive skills in regard to establishing a vision and ensuring that curriculum and

instructional practices within the department support the school mission.

Pillar practices. School-level leaders and department chairs both perceived mentoring

as enabling growth. Whereas school-level leaders also perceived teaming as important,

department chairs emphasized leadership opportunities and collegial inquiry.

Mentoring. School-level leaders and department chairs across all four schools cited

mentoring as a key way that department chairs develop in their role (Drago-Severson, 2007).

School-level leaders and department chairs explained that mentoring provides opportunities for

"broadening perspectives, sharing expertise and leadership…and providing emotional support"

(Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 63). School-level leaders provided mentoring most commonly

through an informal evaluation process for the role of department chair as instructional leader.

Both school-level leaders and department chairs discussed how department chairs are typically

provided a summary that represents feedback on their leadership from the teachers in their

department. Using that summary, department chairs establish a goal in collaboration with the

school-level leader and receive constructive feedback about progress toward their goal.

Additionally, school-level leaders mentioned the importance of having an open-door policy so

that department chairs can come talk to them at any time in regard to an issue or concern.

Similarly, department chairs discussed the usefulness of these open-door policies to not only

117

discuss such matters, but also to brainstorm an upcoming conversation with a teacher. School-level leaders in some cases also discussed matching department chairs to other department chairs with more leadership experience if the situation or problem the department chair was experiencing sounded familiar (Drago-Severson, 2008).

   Teaming. School-level leaders and department chairs differed in terms of how they perceived the use of teaming to develop department chairs. Along with mentoring, school-level leaders also emphasized the use of teaming to develop capacity (Drago-Severson, 2007). School-level leaders from all four independent schools mentioned teaming in the form of regular department chair meetings, and in some cases, curricular meetings. These meetings include a variety of school-level leaders and department chairs, and emphasize discussion about curriculum, instruction, and key educational issues (Danielson, 2007; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Wilhelm, 2013). School-level leaders explained that these meetings provide department chairs with opportunities to also share in decision-making (Drago-Severson, 2008). While a couple of department chairs from two independent schools voiced that team meetings were helpful to their development, it was because school-level leaders infused opportunities for department chairs to receive professional support from each other into the meetings (Jacobson et al., 2013; Lambert, 2002; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Supovitz, 2015; Wilhelm, 2013). As one department chair from Avignon School commented, "I have gotten so many pearls of wisdom from my more experienced colleagues" during the department chair meetings. This comment reflects that the department chair appreciates the opportunity to dialogue among other department chairs about matters related to instructional leadership in order to develop her capacity. In contrast, department chairs from the other schools stated that they did not perceive that teaming in the form of department chair meetings aided their development. This is because they felt that the department chair meetings are too focused on a strict agenda to incorporate any dialogue among department chairs and school-level leaders. Another department chair commented:

We have department chair meetings usually one a month…They're more of, uh, approving certain things or here are the things coming down the line. I wouldn't say there's much professional growth in those meetings.

This comment reflects that department chairs perceived that teaming as it occurs in department chair meetings offers very little to develop the capacity of department chairs because it is focused on nuts and bolts instead of opportunities to focus on the "learning needs" of department chairs (Klar, 2012b, p. 376).

   Leadership opportunities. School-level leaders and department chairs differed in terms of how they perceived the provision of leadership opportunities as a means to develop department chairs. Department chairs at most independent schools suggested that the provision of leadership opportunities facilitated their development (Drago-Severson, 2007). These leadership opportunities came in different forms, but were similar in that they involved school-level leaders permitting department chairs to participate in leadership tasks within the school (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Klar et al., 2016; Wilhelm, 2013). In all instances, department chairs expressed that school-level leaders invited department chairs to "supervise, coordinate, and create various projects in their schools" (Klar et al., 2016, p.124). For example, department chairs at Arles School expressed that school-level leaders "will let you take care of any problem you want to." This comment reflects that school-level leaders allow department chairs to share leadership by undertaking more responsibility for department matters. At Le Cannet School, department chairs expressed how school leadership honors their sense of creativity in terms of revising the curriculum. Similarly, department chairs at Arles School commented that the head of school is "interested in innovation" and will permit department chairs to lead curriculum change in the event that something is not working. Finally, department chairs at Avignon School expressed that the school-level leader will push department chairs to take on extra responsibility "beyond the supervision and coordination of activities" (Klar et al., 2016, p. 124). For instance, in response to a question that inquired about the experiences that the school-level leader provides to help

119

department chairs grow, one department chair stated, "She makes us do it, right?" This comment reflects that the department chair appreciates that the school-level leader encourages department chairs to learn by doing as way "to test out new ways of working as professionals" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

In contrast, school-level leaders did not uniformly mention the provision of leadership opportunities as a way that they perceived department chairs develop in their role. Only school-level leaders from Arles School and Avignon School suggested that the provision of leadership opportunities help department chairs develop in their role. For instance, the school-level leader at Arles School expressed how she does not "micromanage" department chairs in regards to how they choose to run their meeting. According to her, she "gives a lot of choice and they respond to that." The school-level leader at Avignon School cited many examples of ways that she allows department chairs to participate in leadership tasks in the school (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Klar et al., 2016; Wilhelm, 2013). For example, she explained how she relies on department chairs "to be the first line of defense" when problems arise in their department, including requiring that department chairs conduct difficult conversations with teachers as necessary, as opposed to relying on her. Additionally, she explained that department chairs play an indispensable role in the faculty professional growth program.

Collegial inquiry. School-level leaders and department chairs differed in terms of how they perceived collegial inquiry as a means to develop department chairs. Department chairs at Le Cannet School, Arles School, and Avignon School cited collegial inquiry as a means of fostering their development. Department chairs at these schools appreciated the opportunity to have shared dialogue among department chairs to "regularly think and talk about practice" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62). For instance, department chairs at Le Cannet School explained how an office space that is shared by department chairs functions to engender inquiry, reflection, and strategizing among department chairs. At Arles School, department chairs discussed that department chairs will initiate meetings about issues and concerns without the presence of

administration. One department chair explained that collegial inquiry developed organically as a result of school-level leaders' practice of hiring department chairs internally, which has created a strong bond among department chairs. The examples at Le Cannet School and Arles School relate to a study by Klar (2012b) in which he examined how principals developed instructional leadership capacity through "professional communities" (p. 365). Finally, department chairs at Avignon School expressed a desire for collegial inquiry. For example, one department chair expressed:

> I mean, it'd be nice to get with department chairs at other schools. I did initiate a conversation with the department chair at my old high school, and again, that was reaching out and saying, "What do you guys do?" But, like, somewhere around here – getting more chances to sort of just talk shop and mix stories about how they do certain things. That would be more helpful, I think.

This comment reflects that department chairs want more opportunities to dialogue with other department chairs about leadership skills to "become more aware of their assumptions, beliefs, and convictions about their work" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

In contrast, only two school-level leaders suggested collegial inquiry helps department chairs to develop in their role. Bredeson (2013) claimed that principals "channeled and reinvigorated" department chairs' capacity to be instructional leaders because of "professional development, collaboration and joint work" (p. 382). For example, the school-level leader at Grasse School highlighted that department chairs have "worked to articulate a vision statement for each department. We've also done a cross-department analysis of those visions to see if they are aligned to the school mission." This comment reflects that the school-level leader is facilitating collegial inquiry to "create situations for adults to regularly think and talk about practice [which] encourages self-analysis and can improve individual and school or system-wide practices" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62). In addition, it reflects Smylie and Eckert's (2018) distinction between training and development. This is because the school-level leader provides

training to department chairs in the form of workshops, but she also encourages development by requiring department chairs to put their learning from the workshops into practice. Lastly, the school-level leader at Avignon School discussed the power of collegial inquiry to develop department chairs. For instance, she explained that she created a situation in the form of a summer retreat at her house for department chairs to dialogue about how they were each going to take a leadership role in fulfilling the upper school faculty goals for the upcoming school year. Hence, both school-level leaders at Grasse School and Avignon School transformed the function of the team meetings to be less focused on acquiring relevant information and more focused on meaningful dialogue (Klar, 2012a).

Summary

School-level leaders and department chairs across schools both perceived that the demand environment has resulted in a re-focusing of the role of department chair as instructional leader. They largely explained that competition and unique school-specific factors have compelled their schools to focus on the school mission. Consequently, the role of department chair as instructional leader is necessary to set directions and build relationships and develop people in order to improve the instructional program and achieve mission alignment. In addition to these common leadership practices, department chairs also perceived that they must secure accountability to make sure teachers' instructional practices are aligned to the school mission.

Due to a strong sense of teacher autonomy that exists at each of these schools, department chairs perceived that the task of mission alignment represents an adaptive challenge. In contrast, only half of the school-level leaders described mission alignment as an adaptive challenge, which may be the reason why they were less uniform and emphatic about department chairs' need to secure accountability. School-level leaders and department chairs differed in terms of how they perceived the role of department chair is supported. Whereas school-level leaders perceived department chairs are supported by time, a majority of department chairs perceived the lack of adequate course release as a challenge. While department chairs emphasized that enhancement of

self-confidence is an important support in order to enact change, only two school-level leaders highlighted this as a means of facilitating the role of department chair. Though school-level leaders perceived the job description for the role of department chair as a support because it clarifies responsibilities, department chairs think that the job description is too long and task-oriented. Both school-level leaders and department chairs recognized that department chairs lack leadership skills, but department chairs have a broader understanding of the tools by which school-level leaders can develop department chairs' capacity. Though school-level leaders and department chairs perceived mentoring as important for development, department chairs also stressed the importance of leadership opportunities and collegial inquiry. School-level leaders and department chairs did not see eye-to-eye on the use of teaming, as department chairs only perceived that they develop when teaming includes opportunities for reflection.

My conceptual framework hypothesized that the role of department chair as instructional leader is composed of three elements: constitution, enactment, and development. Findings show that these elements proved useful to illuminate the role of department chair. I assumed that school-level leaders considered the demand environment in terms of all three elements when they refocused the role of department chair as instructional leader. Instead, I found that school-level leaders primarily focused on how the demand environment affects the constitution of the role of department chair. Greenfield (1995) discussed threats as one of the components of the demand environment that compels school-level leaders to exert leadership – and therefore, as it relates to my study, re-focus the role of department chair as instructional leader. Results from this study suggest that competition from public and independent schools is that threat, although there are also unique school-specific factors at play. This may lead to a renewed focus on the school mission, which necessitates that department chairs act as instructional leaders to achieve mission alignment. Given that school-level leaders and department chairs also mentioned additional apolitical reasons for the need for instructional leadership, and the school mission statements across the four schools in my study incorporated values such as equity and inclusion, it could be

123

that the moral character of schools (Greenfield, 1995) also plays a role - and for that reason is intertwined with competition and school-specific factors as conditions affecting the need for instructional leadership.

The findings resulting from my study suggest that school-level leaders minimally consider the demand environment in terms of supporting and developing the role of department chair. Greenfield (1995) referred to teacher autonomy as an additional condition that forces school-level leaders to employ leadership. Department chairs across schools emphasized the strong sense of teacher autonomy that exists at each of their schools. Furthermore, they expressed the task of conducting difficult conversations with teachers about changes in their values and approaches to work as a challenge. Hence, it makes sense to me that department chairs perceived the importance of school-level leaders elevating the role of department as instructional leader. It is also logical that they perceived that they develop through the use of leadership opportunities with chances for mentoring from individuals with more experience to either strategize and/or reflect on a difficult conversation afterwards. I assumed that school-level leaders considered the demand environment in terms of support and development when they refocused the role of department chair as instructional leader, yet the internal conditions and opportunities for development provided by school-level leaders were relatively limited and mostly not aligned to the condition of teacher autonomy in the demand environment.

Figure 2 on the next page represents the role of department chair as instructional leader based on the findings from this study.
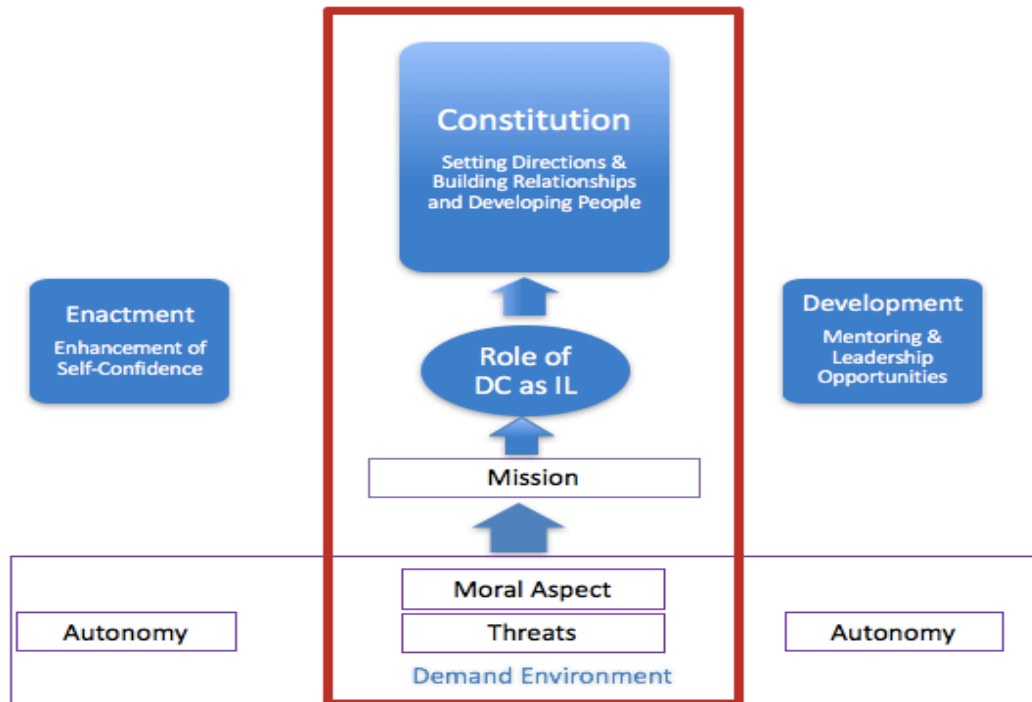
Figure 2. Revised conceptual framework for the role of department chair as instructional leader

The findings from my study have implications for future research. One assumption I had implicit in the vignette in the introductory section of this capstone was that school-level leaders and department chairs would not have a similar understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader. Yet, findings from my study indicated the opposite to be true. While school-level leaders and department chairs had a similar understanding of the role of department chair in terms of leadership practices, it is not clear from my study the way in which department chairs attain this. This is because department chairs across schools perceived that the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader was focused on management instead of leadership practices. Therefore, future research may explore the means by which department chairs have come to understand the constitution of their role. Additionally, an assumption I had at the beginning of this study is that department chairs who are instructional leaders are the result of effective leadership practices. It is not clear how some department chairs managed to enact their role in the face of minimal internal conditions, namely course release and professional development.

Recommendations

Recommendations provided here intend to help school-level leaders in independent schools define, support and develop the role of department chair as instructional leader. Below I present five recommendations to achieve this endeavor.

Recommendation One: Dialogue with department chairs to gain insight on the challenges they face as they carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader and consider how to best support and develop them.

A change in the role of department chair may be difficult for schools that have not appraised their current state. Therefore, it is important to analyze the present circumstances of the school in order to shift to a different function for the role of department chair. For instance, department chairs across schools emphasized the strong sense of teacher autonomy that exists at each of their schools. Due to this autonomy, department chairs perceived that the task of mission alignment represents an adaptive challenge. In contrast, only half of the school-level leaders described mission alignment as an adaptive challenge, which may be the reason why they were less uniform and emphatic about department chairs' need to secure accountability.

Two potential means for school-level leaders to gain insight on the challenges department chairs face as they carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader include the department chair evaluation process and department chair team meetings. Based on the semi-structured interviews that I conducted during my study, the evaluation process is typically focused on department chairs' creation of personal goals based on a summary of feedback from teachers in the department. I did not find, however, that school-level leaders used this time to inquire about the challenges that department chairs face as they carry out their role.

In addition, school-level leaders can use department chair team meetings to also touch base with department chairs about this issue. This represents a fitting opportunity to incorporate collegial inquiry into department chair team meetings, as will be discussed in Recommendation Five.

Recommendation Two: Reduce the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader to highlight leadership practices, especially setting directions and building relationships and developing people.

School-level leaders should create a job description that focuses on instructional leadership practices instead of tasks and activities. School-level leaders and department chairs both understand the role of department chair as instructional leader as incorporating the following leadership practices: setting directions and building relationships and developing people. Among independent schools that perceive the task of mission alignment as an adaptive challenge, school-level leaders should be clear to emphasize that setting directions is not just articulating a vision statement for the department in alignment with the school mission, but also requires that department chairs work over a period of time to engender buy-in from teachers within the department. In addition, they should be unambiguous that developing people necessitates challenging teachers' assumptions about instructional practice within a community of trust. Lastly, given that most department chairs felt strongly that they need to secure accountability in order to be effective in carrying out the role of department chair as instructional leader, school-level leaders and department chairs should come to a consensus as to precisely what securing accountability will look like at their school.

To facilitate this endeavor, school-level leaders and department chairs can examine the job description for the role of department chair to ensure it prioritizes instructional leadership. This requires establishing a common understanding among school-level leaders and department chairs about the definition of instructional leadership – and also critically assessing whether department chairs will have adequate course release to carry out these duties.

Recommendation Three: Ensure a solid support structure for the role of department chair - namely by elevating the status of the role and providing course release.

School-level leaders should survey the internal conditions that they provide for the role of department chair as instructional leader. Given that school-level leaders and department chairs

tended to identify only one means of support – and the fact that some department chairs felt unsupported in their role, school-level leaders should consider a broader base of support for department chairs. This includes elevating the status of the role of department chair to the faculty. Across all schools in this study, department chairs discussed teacher autonomy as a challenge to their role. Because department chairs are still middle managers, they need to have support from school leadership to enact change within their departments. School-level leaders can use various means to enhance the self-confidence of department chairs to act as leaders in their school, including: communicating to the faculty that department chairs are the instructional leaders of the school, reiterating the same message, research, and logic to teachers as department chairs, and being present when a department chair announces a plan of action to teachers in the department.

Furthermore, school-level leaders should ensure that the role of department chair as instructional leader has guaranteed time in the form of course release to fulfill their instructional leadership duties, including conducting observations and providing requisite feedback to teachers to ensure mission alignment. As previously mentioned, this requires collaborating with department chairs to critically assess whether there is sufficient time given to them to carry out all stated duties in the job description for the role of department chair.

Finally, school-level leaders should encourage department chairs to participate in professional development that will facilitate the role of department chair as instructional leader. Based on the semi-structured interviews that I conducted with school-level leaders and department chairs during my study, department chairs may benefit from professional development in the following areas: curriculum development, including identifying objectives and aligning those objectives to assessments; visioning, including setting direction for the department, establishing buy-in among teachers, and helping teachers understand how what they do every day either supports the vision or is some distance away from it; and engaging teachers in supportive yet direct conversations, including giving feedback – especially related to recognizing

where each teacher in the department is in relation to the vision and having the skill to bring him or her back in.

Recommendation Four: Develop the capacity of department chairs through the use of mentoring and provision of leadership opportunities.

Department chairs across all schools expressed that they perceive that they develop through school-level leaders' use of mentoring. Mentoring allows department chairs to have a private space to set and reflect on goals, strategize, and receive emotional support from more experienced colleagues, including other department chairs. Many school-level leaders in this study use the process of evaluation for department chairs to be the catalyst for mentoring. For example, school-level leaders and department chairs across schools discussed fruitful conversations that resulted from departmental surveys, in which department chairs are provided a summary of the feedback and then set personal goals for improvement.

Additionally, department chairs across all schools suggested that the provision of leadership opportunities allowed them to test new ways of working as a professional. Leadership opportunities for department chairs came in various forms including participation on an accreditation team to having input on hiring. Other means of providing leadership opportunities to department chairs include: providing feedback to teachers; acting as a "first line of defense" when problems arise in the department related to teachers, including mediating conflicts between teachers, students, and parents; and "honoring creativity" by allowing, if not encouraging, department chairs to design and implement new curriculum in alignment with the school mission. While leadership opportunities can look different, they should be similar in that they provide opportunities for department chairs to practice conducting difficult conversations with teachers in order to develop intrapersonal, affective, and interpersonal skills.

Many department chairs in the study discussed the usefulness of leadership opportunities coupled with opportunities for mentoring as a means to strategize with someone with more experience before enacting a task, as well as reflecting on the outcome afterwards.

Recommendation Five: Incorporate opportunities for department chairs to have collegial inquiry, including during department chair meetings.

School-level leaders and department chairs across schools agreed that department chairs lack leadership experience. While conversations about mission, vision, curriculum, instruction, and key educational issues are necessary, school-level leaders should ensure that there are opportunities for department chairs to reflect on their role in regard to these issues and "talk shop" amongst their colleagues. One school-level leader explained how she required department chairs to not only articulate their vision statements, but she also had them analyze each other's vision statements to assess alignment to the school mission. Department chairs across schools expressed the desire for more opportunities to talk with other department chairs about the day-to-day leadership of teachers in their department. They highlighted that department chair meetings are informational, but rarely include opportunities for collegial inquiry. Hence, school-level leaders should consider ways in which they can integrate collegial inquiry to provide department chairs with opportunities for development.

School-level leaders can use various means to accomplish this endeavor, including: incorporating opportunities for reflection on practice during department chair team meetings, creating a shared office space for department chairs, or hiring department chairs internally in order to create a "bond" among department chairs that may engender collaboration, as described by one department chair at Arles School.

Table 12 on the next page shows the recommendations above, along with the findings from my capstone that lead to the recommendations and the research that supports them.

Table 12

Sources of Evidence for Recommendations

Recommendations	Study Findings	Other Research
Dialogue with department chairs to gain insight on the challenges they face as they carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader and consider how to best support and develop them.	Department chairs across schools explained the task of mission alignment as an adaptive challenge due to teacher autonomy.	Independent schools often have strong traditions of teacher autonomy that may act as a barrier to improvement (Bassett, 2011; Evans, 2013).
Reduce the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader to highlight leadership practices, especially setting directions and building relationships and developing people.	Most department chairs across schools stated that the job description was too long to be useful and focused on the nuts and bolts of the job instead of instructional leadership.	Department chairs are asked to carry out a multiplicity of tasks and face role ambiguity (Bliss et al., 1996; Peacock, 2014; Weller, 2001; Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007). Instead of focusing on curriculum and student learning, department chairs focus their time working as a taskmaster instead of "engaging in leadership activities that would generate collaboration and mutual learning" (Feeney, 2009, p. 216). Kelley and Salisbury (2013) emphasized that department chairs' administrative duties, across school settings, were reduced "to allow their work to be re-centered on instructional leadership practices" (p. 310). Instructional Leadership Practices (Leithwood, 2012b). A number of studies indicated that school-level leaders prefer department chairs to focus on visioning and providing instructional support (Brent, DeAngelis, & Surash, 2014; Wettersten, 1992).

Ensure a solid support structure for the role of department chair – namely by elevating the status of the role to faculty and guaranteeing course release.	School-level leaders and most department chairs across school typically identified only one means of support for the role of department chair. Several department chairs expressed that they felt they are not being adequately supported in their role.	Department chairs often have teaching duties associated with their primary role, which rarely allow adequate time to engage in instructional leadership activities (Peacock, 2014; Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007). Principals may offer support by structuring time for teacher leaders so that they can attend to instructional leadership tasks (Heineke & Polnick, 2012; Jacobson, Johnson, Gurr, & Drysdale, 2013; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). The role of department chair as instructional leader in a distributed leadership framework means that school-level leaders provide department chairs with the necessary internal conditions to enact change (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Harris, 2008). When department chairs are provided with adequate resources, professional development, and support, they can effectively implement instructional leadership (Peacock, 2014).
Develop the capacity of department chairs to be instructional leaders through the use of mentoring and provision of leadership opportunities.	Most department chairs across schools perceive that they develop through the use of mentoring and the provision of leadership opportunities.	Mentoring includes conversations to help bolster teacher confidence (Muijs & Harris, 2003). Klar (2012a) found that principals provided department chairs with leadership prospects. Various methods included requiring department chairs to deliver a presentation about their departments to the school community, including chairs in the creation of the school improvement plan, and asking chairs to interview new teachers for their departments (Klar, 2012a). Klar et al. (2016) found that principals created leadership opportunities for teacher-leaders that allowed them to "supervise, coordinate, and create various projects in their schools" (p. 124). Providing leadership opportunities helps department chairs to "uncover their assumptions and test out new ways of working as professionals" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62).

| Incorporate opportunities for department chairs to have collegial inquiry, including during department chair meetings. | Most department chairs across school expressed department chair meetings are too informational to play a role in their development. They expressed a desire for more opportunities to "talk shop" about leadership among department chairs. | Few department chairs receive any leadership training prior to accepting their position (DeAngelis, 2013; Weller, 2001) A recommendation is to teach leadership skills (Barth, 2001; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Supovitz, 2015; Wilhelm, 2013). Numerous empirical studies highlighted this strategy (Bredeson, 2013; Kelley & Salisbury, 2013; Klar, 2012a; Klar 2012b; Youngs & King, 2002).

Klar (2012a) found that principals transformed the function of the leadership team meetings to be less focused on acquiring relevant information and more focused on meaningful dialogue and a model for the type of community that principals hoped would form in the chairs' respective departments. |

Possible Impediments to Recommendations

The previous five recommendations were derived from comparing school-level leaders' and department chairs' understanding of the role of department chair as instructional leader. Next I discuss possible obstacles to implementation of these recommendations.

Lack of effective communication. Change is more likely to succeed if all stakeholders are involved. Therefore, department chairs need to be involved in the change process in terms of shifting their role. This requires school-level leaders to inquire about and take note of department chairs' opinions on issues and concerns. Some organizations, including schools, have top-down structures that may impede two-way communication.

Lack of priorities. Most department chairs across schools stated that the job description was too long to be useful and focused on the nuts and bolts of the job instead of instructional leadership. Therefore, school-level leaders should reduce the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader to highlight leadership practices, including securing accountability. Yet, an impediment to reducing the job description for the role of department chair may be easier said than done, as department chairs are traditionally in charge of many tasks – and there is also the issue of lack of resources and budget.

Lack of resources or budget. School-level leaders and most department chairs across schools typically identified only one means of support for the role of department chair. Several department chairs expressed that they felt they are not being adequately supported in their role. Ensuring a solid support structure for the role of department chairs by guaranteeing course release – especially amounting to 50% of a department chair's working week as seen at Le Cannet School, and providing professional development may be too costly for some schools to implement.

Force of habit. Most department chairs across school expressed department chair meetings are too informational to play a role in their development. They expressed a desire for more opportunities to "talk shop" about leadership among other department chairs. As new

processes or systems are implemented to incorporate opportunities for collegial inquiry, some

school-level leaders may continue to rely on "informational" team meetings. This is usually the

result of habit, rather than a conscious decision to resist change. Habits are challenging behaviors

to correct, as they aren't rooted in deliberate actions (James, 1890). After all, some school-level

leaders may have been using the same method to conduct department chair meetings for years.

Making that change suddenly is not a simple task.

Summary

This section of my capstone discussed my findings from my research questions using my

conceptual framework and literature review. I also provided recommendations to school-level

leaders in independent schools who are interested in re-focusing the role of department chair as

instructional leader. The final section of my capstone conveys the action communication to

school-level leaders about my five recommendations stated above.

SECTION FIVE: ACTION COMMUNICATIONS

In the previous section I presented my findings and offered recommendations based on those findings and the literature that I reviewed. In this section, I provide the action communications that I will use to communicate with the school-level leaders of the four independent schools in which I conducted my study. These communications include a briefing memo and slides that I will present to school-level leaders outlining my research and the resulting recommendations.

Briefing for School-Level Leaders

Subject: Department Chair Instructional Leadership at Independent Schools, Findings and Recommendations based on research conducted in Fall 2018 to Spring 2019

Issue: Department chairs are crucial connections to teaching practice, and yet their role as intermediaries is typically not used effectively for improving instruction. Often, department chairs focus on managing their departments instead of assisting school-level leaders to improve teachers' instructional practice and/or translating the mission of the school to specific student achievement goals within the department. An understanding of the ways in which the role of department chair as instructional leader is defined, supported, and developed may help independent schools vie with other schools in a competitive environment.

Research Methods: I used a qualitative multiple case-study design to answer the research questions regarding exploring the ways that school-level leaders define, support, and develop the role of department chair among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership role for this position. I conducted semi-structured interviews at four independent schools with the school-level leader identified by the head of school as working most closely with department chairs, as well as three department chairs per school. I analyzed the semi-structured interview transcripts for patterns and trends in the data.

Current Status: School-level leaders and department chairs in this study generally understand the role of department as instructional leader in a similar way as it pertains to constitution of the role. This means they perceive the rationale for re-focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader as related to the school mission due to competition and school-specific internal factors. Additionally, school-level leaders and department chairs were similar in terms of the leadership practices they associated with the role of department chair as instructional leader. They differed, however, in how they perceived the task of mission alignment due to the presence of teacher autonomy – and for that reason, department chairs also expressed a need to secure accountability as part of their role and also receive targeted support and development. For example, given department chairs' perception of teacher autonomy as a challenge to their role, they expressed the utility of having school-level leaders elevate their position to the faculty. Furthermore, department chairs perceived that they develop through the use of mentoring and leadership opportunities, as it helps them to "test out new ways of working as professionals" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 62) while receiving emotional support and guidance from those with more experience.

Recommendations: I make the following five recommendations based on the literature review and my findings.

- **Recommendation One: Dialogue with department chairs to gain insight on the challenges they face as they carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader and consider how to best support and develop them.**
    - School-level leaders and department chairs perceived the task of mission alignment differently.
    - Use the department chair evaluation process and department chair team meetings to keep abreast of the challenges department chairs face in their role.
    - Means of support and development provided to department chairs need to be aligned to the challenges they face.

- **Recommendation Two: Reduce the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader to highlight leadership practices, especially setting directions and building relationships and developing people.**
  - Emphasize that setting directions requires working over a period of time to engender buy-in from teachers. In addition, be unambiguous that developing people necessitates challenging teachers' assumptions about instructional practice within a community of trust.
  - Examine the job description to ensure it prioritizes instructional leadership. This requires establishing a common understanding about the definition of instructional leadership – and also critically assessing whether department chairs will have adequate course release to carry out these duties.

- **Recommendation Three: Ensure a solid support structure for the role of department chair – namely by elevating the status of the role to faculty and guaranteeing course release.**
  - Means to enhance the self-confidence of department chairs to act as leaders in their school include: communicating to the faculty that department chairs are the instructional leaders of the school, reiterating the same message, research, and logic to teachers as department chairs, and being present when a department chair announces a plan of action to teachers in the department.
  - Collaborate with department chairs to critically assess whether there is sufficient time given to them to carry out all stated duties in the job description.

- **Recommendation Four: Develop the capacity of department chairs through the use of leadership opportunities coupled with mentoring**.
  - Leadership opportunities should help department chairs practice conducting difficult conversations with teachers.
  - Leadership opportunities for department chairs include: serving on an accreditation team, providing input on the hiring of new teachers, acting as a "first line of defense" when problems arise in the department related to teachers, including mediating conflicts between teachers, students, and parents; and "honoring creativity" by allowing, if not encouraging, department chairs to design and implement new curriculum in alignment with the school mission.
  - Maintain an open-door policy to give department chairs the emotional support they need as they carry out their role and use an informal process of evaluation to help department chairs set personal goals for improvement.

- **Recommendation Five: Incorporate opportunities for department chairs to have collegial inquiry, including during department chair meetings**.
  - Collegial inquiry allows department chairs to develop complex perspectives on leadership practice.
  - Means to accomplish this endeavor include: incorporating opportunities for reflection on practice during department chair team meetings, creating a shared office space for department chairs, or hiring department chairs internally in order to create a "bond" among department chairs that may engender collaboration.

Considerations for Recommendation: I also highlight factors to consider in order to implement these recommendations, along with possible barriers to accomplishing my suggestions.

- **Lack of effective communication.** Department chairs need to be involved in the change process in terms of shifting their role. Some organizations, including schools, have top-down structures that may impede two-way communication.

- **Lack of priorities.** Department chairs are traditionally in charge of many tasks.

- **Lack of resources or budget.** Ensuring a solid support structure for the role of department chair may be too costly for some schools to implement.

- **Force of habit**. Most department chairs expressed department chair meetings are too informational to play a role in their development. This is usually the result of habit, rather than a conscious decision to resist change.

Summary: Recommendations regarding the constitution, support, and development of the role of department chair should be considered in order to strengthen the position and to allow for department chairs to facilitate mission alignment within their schools.

Department Chair Instructional Leadership at Independent Schools

Findings & Recommendations

Presentation to School-Level Leaders
December 2019

Agenda

- Overview of Research
  - Problem of Practice
  - Purpose of Study
  - Research Questions
  - Conceptual Framework
  - Research Design & Methods
- Key Findings
- Recommendations
- Questions

Problem of Practice

3

- Department chairs are crucial connections to teaching practice, and yet their role as intermediaries is typically not used effectively for improving instruction

- Independent schools are facing crisis due to rising tuition costs and student attrition – which means parents are demanding these school articulate their value

Purpose of Study

4

- To investigate the ways in which the role of department chair is **defined** and **supported** and how department chairs **develop** as instructional leaders among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair

Overarching Research Question

- Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chairs, in what ways is the role of department chair defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders?

Research Question #1

**Question 1:** How do school-level leaders understand the role of department chair?

- **SQ1.1:** In what ways do school-level leaders espouse the role as one of instructional leadership?

- **SQ1.2:** In what ways do school-level leaders perceive that department chair instructional leadership is supported and facilitated?

- **SQ1.3:** How do school-level leaders explain that department chairs develop in their role?

Research Question #2

Question 2: How do <u>department chairs</u> understand and enact the role of department chair?

- **SQ2.1:** In what ways, if any, do department chairs enact the role as one of instructional leadership?

- **SQ2.2:** In what ways do department chairs perceive that their role as instructional leaders is supported and facilitated?

- **SQ2.3:** How do department chairs explain that they develop in their role?

Conceptual Framework
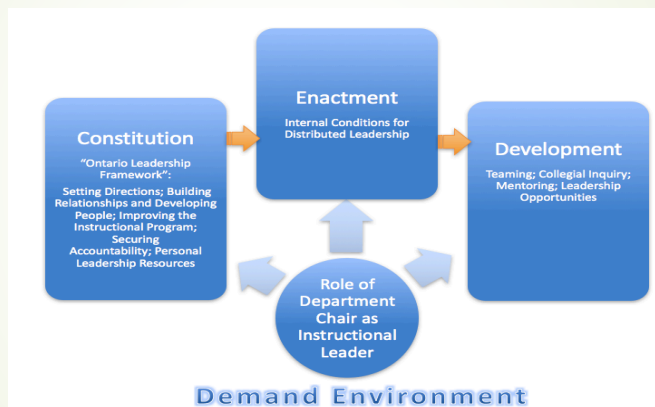
Research Design

Exploratory multi-site case study

Setting

- Independent schools within 100-mile radius of DC
  - ✓ Members of National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)
  - ✓ 500+ students
  - ✓ Elementary and secondary grade levels

Participants

- School-level leaders and department chairs (core subjects)

Participants

- 4 independent schools
  - 3 independent schools in VA
  - 1 independent school in DC
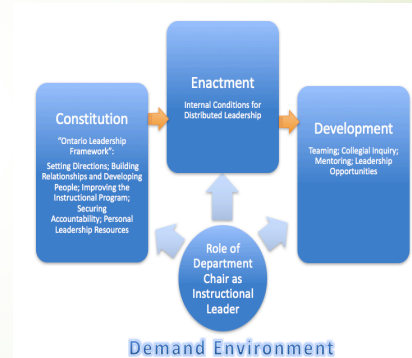- 1 school-level leader and 3 department chairs per school

Methods

	Method	n	RQ addressed
Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	20 This included <u>two rounds</u> of interviews with a school-level leader and <u>one round</u> of interviews with three department chairs at each of the four independent schools	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Data Analysis

- **Deductive coding**
  - Initial code list was derived from conceptual framework
  - Examples: Setting Direction; Mentoring

- **Comparative analysis within-school and across schools**
  - Composed analytic memos comparing/contrasting within-school information
  - Generated tables to compare within-school findings between school-level leaders and department chairs
  - Created matrices to compare/contrast within-school findings across schools

Overview of Key Findings In Relation to Primary RQ

- Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chairs, in what ways is the role of department chair defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders?

Key Findings – Constitution

School-level leaders and department chairs were relatively well-aligned in terms of understanding the need for instructional leadership (RQs 1.1 and 2.1)

- Need for instructional leadership is **school mission**
- Identified **external factors** and **school-specific** factors as reasons for focus on school mission
- **Setting direction** and **building relationships and developing people** are key duties of role of department chair
- Department chairs perceived mission alignment is an **adaptive challenge** due to teacher autonomy – and they also want to **secure accountability**

Key Findings – Enactment

School-level leaders and department chairs differed in terms of how they perceived that department chair instructional leadership is supported (RQs 1.2 and 2.2)

- School-level leaders identified **time** as a support
- Department chairs perceived they are supported when school-level leaders **elevate their role** due to challenge of teacher autonomy
- Department chairs largely felt that they **do not have enough time** to fulfill their instructional leadership duties

Key Findings – Development

School-level leaders and department chairs were semi-aligned in terms of their perception of how department chairs develop in their role(RQs 1.3 and 2.3)

- School-level leaders and department chairs both perceived **mentoring** develops department chair capacity
- Whereas school-level leaders emphasized teaming to develop department chair capacity, department chairs emphasized provision of **leadership opportunities**
- Department chairs desire more opportunities for collegial inquiry to "talk shop" about leadership practice
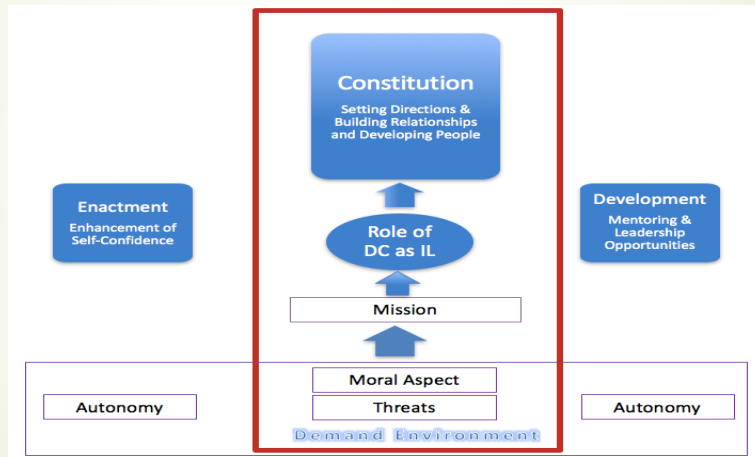
Revised Conceptual Framework

Recommendation One:

➤ Dialogue with department chairs to gain insight on the challenges they face as they carry out the role of department chair as instructional leader and consider how to best support and develop them.

Literature	Capstone Findings
Independent schools often have strong traditions of teacher autonomy that may act as a barrier to improvement (Bassett, 2011; Evans, 2013). Department chairs cite lack of formal authority as an impediment to effectiveness (Feeney, 2009; Weller, 2001).	Department chairs across schools explained the task of mission alignment as an adaptive challenge due to teacher autonomy.

148

Recommendation Two:

- Reduce the job description for the role of department chair as instructional leader to highlight leadership practices, especially setting directions and building relationships and developing people

Literature	Capstone Findings
Department chairs are asked to carry out a multiplicity of tasks and face role ambiguity (Bliss et al., 1996; Peacock, 2014; Weller, 2001; Zepeda & Krushkamp, 2007).	Most department chairs stated that the job description was too long to be useful and focused on the nuts and bolts of the job instead of instructional leadership.

Recommendation Three:

- Ensure a solid support structure for the role of department chair as instructional leader – namely elevating status of role and providing course release.

Literature	Capstone Findings
When department chairs are provided with adequate support, they can effectively implement instructional leadership (Peacock, 2014).	Given they are middle managers, they expressed the importance of having support from school-level leaders to enact change within their department. Most department chairs in this study felt that they do not not have adequate time to fulfill instructional leadership duties.

Recommendation Four:

- Develop the capacity of department chairs to be instructional leaders through the use of mentoring and the provision of leadership opportunities

Literature	Capstone Findings
Klar et al. (2016) found principals created leadership opportunities for teacher-leaders that allowed them to "supervise, coordinate, and create various projects in their schools" (p. 124). Mentoring includes conversations to help bolster teacher confidence (Muijs & Harris, 2003).	Department chairs discussed the benefit of taking on any problem within the department, including difficult conversations with teachers. Mentoring, however, was helpful to strategize before – and reflect on the task afterwards.

Recommendation Five:

- Incorporate opportunities for department chairs to have collegial inquiry, including during department chair meetings

Literature	Capstone Findings
Klar (2012a) found that principals transformed the function of the leadership team meetings to be less focused on acquiring relevant information and more focused on meaningful dialogue.	Most department chairs expressed department chair meetings are too informational to play a role in their development.

23 Questions?

REFERENCES

Balossi, M., & Hernandez, N. R. (2016). On teacher quality in independent schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *91*(5), 672-690.

Barth, R. (2001). Teacher leader. *Phi Delta Kappan, 82*(6), 443-449.

Bassett, P. F. (2011, Summer). Towards a professional culture in independent schools. *Independent School, 70*(4), 9-12.

Bierly, C., Doyle, B., & Smith, A. (2016). Transforming schools: How distributed leadership can create more high-performing schools. *Bain & Company Insights 12*(1), 41-61.

Birks, M., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research: Probing data and processes. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *13*(1), 68-75.

Bliss, T., Fahrney, C., & Steffy, B. (1996). Secondary department chair roles: Ambiguity and change in systemic reform. *Journal of School Leadership, 6*(1), 30-46

Bredeson, P. V. (2013). Distributed instructional leadership in urban high schools: Transforming the work of principals and department chairs through professional development. *Journal of School Leadership, 23*(2), 362-388.

Butin, D. W. (2010). *The education dissertation: A guide for practitioner scholars*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Clark Pope, D. (Academic). (2017). *Increasing validity in qualitative research.* [Streaming Video]. Available from http://methods.sagepub.com/video/increasing-validity-in-qualitative-research

Cooper, A. C. (2017, Summer). Millennial parents are driving a market shift. *Independent School, 76*(4). Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2017/market-shift/

Danielson, C. (2007). The many faces of leadership. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 14-19.

DeAngelis, K. J. (2013). The characteristics of high school department chairs: A national perspective. *The High School Journal* 97(2), 107-122.

D'Ercole, D. (2019, Fall). Research insights: Are independent school teachers happy? *Independent School.* Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/fall-2019/research-insights-are-independent-school-teachers-happy/

Drago-Severson, E. (2004a). *Becoming adult learners: Principles and practices for effective development.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Drago-Severson, E. (2004b). *Helping teachers learn: Principal leadership for adult growth and development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Drago-Severson, E. (2007). Helping teachers learn: Principals as professional development leaders. *Teachers College Record*, *109*(1), 70-125.

Drago-Severson, E. (2008). Pillars for adult learning. *Journal of Staff Development*, *29*(4), 60-63.

Drago-Severson, E. (2009). *Leading adult development: Supporting adult development in our schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.

Enrollment trends in independent schools. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/enrollment-trends-in-independent-schools.aspx

Evans, R. (2013, Fall). Be all you can be. *Independent School, 73*(1), 30-38.

Feeney, E. J. (2009). Taking a look at a school's leadership capacity: The role and function of high school department chairs. *Clearing House, 82*(5), 212-219.

Feild Baker, J. (2017, Spring). Innovation, culture, and radical thinking. *Independent School, 76*(3), 88-93.

Finn, C., Jr. (2013, May). Why private schools are dying out. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/05/why-private-schools-are-dying-out/275938/

Fish, T., & Wolking, J. (2019, Spring). Innovating from the other side. *Independent School, 78*(3), 62-67.

Forster, G., & D'andrea, C. (2009). Free to teach: What america's teachers say about teaching in public and private schools. Retrieved from EdChoice website: https://www.edchoice.org/research/free-to-teach/free-to-teach-what-americas-teachers-say-about-teaching-in-public-and-private-schools/

Governance models. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/governance-models/

Gow, P. (2010, Spring). World standards, local standing: What independent schools should know about the international baccalaureate. *Independent School, 69*(3), 58-65.

Hansen, B., & Lárusdóttir, S. H. (2015). Instructional leadership in compulsory schools in iceland and the role of school principals. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *59*(5), 583-603.

Harris, A. (2001). Department improvement and school improvement: A missing link? *British Educational Research Journal, 27*(4), 477-486. doi:10.1080/01411920120071470

Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership: heresy, fantasy or possibility? *School leadership & management*, *23*(3), 313-324.

Harris, A. (2008). Distributed leadership: According to the evidence. *Journal of Educational Administration, 46*(2), 172-188.

Harris, A., & Jamieson, I. (1995). A study of effective departments in secondary schools. *School Organization, 15*(3), 283-299.

Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., & Hopkins, D. (2007). Distributed leadership and organizational change: Reviewing the evidence. *Journal of Educational Change*, *8*(4), 337-347.

Harris, A. and Muijs, D. (2004*), Improving Schools through Teacher Leadership*. London, UK: Open University Press.

Heifetz, R. (2006). Anchoring leadership in the work of adaptive progress. In Hesselbein, F., & Goldsmith, M. (Eds.), *The leader of the future 2*: Visions, strategies, and practices for the new era (pp. 73-84). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Press.

Heineke, S., & Polnick, B. (2013). Pave the way for coaches. *Journal of Staff Development*, *34*(3), 48-51.

Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(2), 531-569.

Hoerr, T. (2009). The evolution of leadership. *Independent School, 68*(3), 95-96.

Jacobson, S., Johnson, L., Gurr, D., & Drysdale, L. (2013). Middle-level secondary school leaders: Potential, constraints and implications for leadership preparation and development. *Journal of Educational Administration, 51*(1), 55-71.

James, W. (1890). The Principles of Psychology. Vols. I-III. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Johnson, S. M., & Donaldson, M. L. (2007). Teachers as leaders. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 8-77.

Jorgenson, O. (2006). Going private? Insights for public school leaders considering the move to independent schools. *Clearing House, 79*(6), 265-270. doi:10.3200/TCHS.79.6.265-270

Kane, P. R. (1991). Independent schools in american education. *Teachers College Record*, *92*(3), 396-408.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problems and process in human development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R. (2009). What "form" transforms? A constructive-develop- mental approach to
transformative learning. In Illeris, K. (Ed.), *Contemporary theories of learning: learning
theorists... in their own words*. (pp. 47-67). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kelley, C., & Salisbury, J. (2013). Defining and activating the role of department chair as
instructional leader. *Journal of School Leadership, 23*(2), 287-323.

Klar, H. W. (2012a). Fostering department chair instructional leadership capacity: laying the
groundwork for distributed instructional leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in
Education*, *15*(2), 175-197.

Klar, H. W. (2012b). Fostering distributed instructional leadership: A sociocultural perspective of
leadership development in urban high schools. *Leadership & Policy in Schools, 11*(4), 365-
390. doi:10.1080/15700763.2012.654886

Klar, H. W. (2013). Principals fostering the instructional leadership capacities of department
chairs: A strategy for urban high school reform. *Journal of School Leadership, 23*(2), 324-
361.

Klar, H. W., Huggins, K. S., Hammonds, H. L., & Buskey, F. C. (2016). Fostering the capacity
for distributed leadership: A post-heroic approach to leading school
improvement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *19*(2), 111-137.

Lambert, L. (2002). A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 37-40.

Leithwood. K. (2012a). Core practices: The four essential components of the leader's repertoire.
In Leithwood, K. A., & Louis, K. S. (Eds.), *Linking leadership to student learning*. (pp. 57-
67). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K. (2012b). Ontario leadership framework with a discussion of the leadership

    foundations. Institute for Education Leadership, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,

    Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Leithwood, K. (2016). Department-head leadership for school improvement. *Leadership & Policy*

    in Schools, 15(2), 117-140. doi:10.1080/15700763.2015.1044538

Leithwood, K., Mascall, B., & Strauss, T. (2009). *Distributed leadership according to the*

    evidence. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mangin, M. (2007). Facilitating elementary principals' support for instructional teacher

    leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(3), 319-357.

Matsumura, L. C., Sartoris, M., Bickel, D. D., & Garnier, H. E. (2009). Leadership for literacy

    coaching: The principal's role in launching a new coaching program. *Educational*

    Administration Quarterly, 45(5), 655-693.

McManus, J. (2012, Fall). What dead school can teach us. *Independent School, 72*(1), 24-30.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New directions for adult and*

    continuing education, *1997*(74), 5-12.

Mezirow, J. (2009). An overview on transformative learning. In Illeris, K. (Ed.), *Contemporary*

    theories of learning: learning theorists... in their own words. (pp. 109-125). New York,

    NY: Routledge.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks,

    CA: Sage.

Mitchell, J. (2016, February). The rising cost of independent school tuition. Retrieved from
http://www.sais.org/news/273623/FastStats-2016-The-Rising-Cost-of-Independent-School-Tuition.htm

Muijs, D., & Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership - improvement through empowerment?: An
overview of the literature. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 31*(4),
437-448.

Mullen, C. A., & Hutinger, J. L. (2008). The principal's role in fostering collaborative learning
communities through faculty study group development. *Theory Into Practice, 47*(4), 276-
285. doi:10.1080/00405840802329136

Orem, D. (2017). From competition to collaboration: Independence and power in the new sharing
economy. *Independent School, 76*(4). Retrieved from
https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2017/from-competition-to-collaboration/

Peacock, J. (2014). Science instructional leadership: The role of the department chair. *Science
Educator, 23*(1), 36-48.

Printy, S. (2008). Leadership for teacher learning: A community of practice perspective.
Educational Administration Quarterly, 44(2), 187-226.

Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (Eds.) (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science
students and researchers*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Sage.

Seashore Louis, K, & Wahlstrom, K. (2012). Shared and instructional leadership. When
principals and teachers successfully lead together. In K. Leithwood, & K. Seashore Louis
(Eds.), *Linking leadership to student learning* (pp. 25-41). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1984). *Handbook for effective department leadership: Concepts and practices in today's secondary schools* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon

Siskin, L.S. (1991). Departments as different worlds: Subject subcultures in secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 27(2), 134-160.

Siskin, L. S. (1997). The challenge of leadership in comprehensive high schools: School vision and departmental divisions. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *33* (Suppl. 1), 604-623.

Smylie, M. A., & Eckert, J. (2018). Beyond superheroes and advocacy: The pathway of teacher leadership development. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *46*(4), 556-577.

Supovitz, J. (2015). *Building a lattice for school leadership: Lessons from England.* (Policy Brief No. 15-1). Philadelphia, PA. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Torres, A. (2013). Leadership challenges at public and independent schools. *Independent School*, *73*(1).

Torres, A. (2017). What independent schools can learn from new education models. *Independent School*, *76*(4). Retrieved from https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2017/breaking-the-mold/

University of Minnesota Center for Integrative Leadership. (2011, August 14). *Adaptive vs. Technical – Dr. Ronald Heifetz* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwWylIUIvmo

Wahlstrom, K. (2012). An up-close view of instructional leadership. In K. Leithwood, & L. K.

    Seashore (Eds.), *Linking leadership to student learning* (pp. 69-85). San Francisco, CA:

    Jossey-Bass.

Weller, L. D. (2001). Department heads: The most underutilized leadership position. *NASSP*

    Bulletin, 85(625), 73-81.

Wettersten, J. A. (1992, April). *High school department chairs as instructional leaders: Four*

    case studies. Conference paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational

    Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

What are independent private schools. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://parents.nais.org/learn/what-

    are-independent-private-schools/

Wilhelm, T., (2013). How principals cultivate shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 71*(2),

    62-66.

Youngs, P., & King, M. B. (2002). Principal leadership for professional development to build

    school capacity. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(5), 643-670.

Zepeda, S. J., & Kruskamp, B. (2007). High school department chairs--perspectives on

    instructional supervision. *High School Journal, 90*(4), 44-54.

Appendix A: Informal Correspondence

From August to October 2017, I corresponded via email or telephone with a variety of individuals affiliated with independent schools, including consultants, department chairs, heads of school, assistant heads of school, division heads, academic deans, and executive directors of regional organizations. This was done in effort to learn about the role of department chairs in independent schools and how school-level leaders are supporting and/or developing their capacity as instructional leaders. Initially, I began this preliminary fieldwork by reaching out to Independent School Management (ISM) and National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) in early August 2017. I incorrectly assumed that ISM and NAIS would simply point me to independent schools engaged in the work I sought to study. While the reply from ISM was rather discouraging, my correspondence with NAIS resulted in suggestions for various individuals to contact, including a department chair affiliated with an independent school, as well as an educational consultant – both of who I contacted and spoke to for an hour each. One of these individuals suggested that I use the directory feature on the NAIS website to select schools with similar characteristics and then begin contacting them to find out more information.

Hence, over the next two months, I emailed approximately 38 heads of schools using this method, and also reached out to all suggested contacts with expertise on my chosen topic. While not every head of school or person of interest responded to my inquiry, I managed to conduct approximately 20 informal interviews. These informal interviews ranged from 20-40 minutes each and provided me with personal insight into how the role of department chair is constituted, supported, and developed. Occasionally, these interviews resulted in suggestions for new contacts who then provided additional leads to individuals with knowledge and expertise related to my topic. These individuals included educational consultants and employees and executive directors of regional educational organizations. A discussion with my advisor, David Eddy-Spicer also led to an email to Ellie Drago-Severson who was able to connect me with several other relevant contacts related to my inquiry.

Criteria used during the telephone interview were taken from Drago-Severson (2007), and includes the following:

- Provided various forums for [department chairs] to discuss recent literature and reflect on practice through writing and discussion.
- Sought out additional resources to provide professional development opportunities (e.g., ensuring substitutes for [department chairs] when they were working on special collaborative projects, encouraging [department chairs] to attend and present at professional conferences).
- Provided opportunities for shared leadership [for department chairs] (e.g., through mechanisms such as cross-disciplinary teams, or cross-functional teams).
- Held [department chairs] accountable for creating high expectations for children while principals provided feedback and encouraged dialog in order to achieve these goals" (p. 83).

The informal interview began with a short introduction explaining that their school was selected using the NAIS directory. Next, I inquired about how the school-level leader understands the purpose of the department chair role, and if it is focused on instructional leadership. If it was focused on instructional leadership, I asked the school-level leader to describe duties associated with the role, as well as why the school-level leader feels that an instructional leadership focus for

department chairs is necessary. Additionally, I requested that the school-level leader answer a few questions related to the aforementioned criteria (Drago-Severson, 2007) to better assess whether the school is an appropriate fit for the data I hope to collect. Questions sought to clarify that they are in fact engaged in re-defining the role of department chair to focus on instructional leadership and thereby supporting their instructional leadership capacity.

As a result of these interviews, I learned several things. For instance, I learned that few independent schools have redefined the role of department chair to focus on instructional leadership. Furthermore, very few independent schools may be developing instructional leadership capacity of department chairs, although several seem to be implementing structures, tools, and/or routines to support and facilitate them. However, among schools that have taken the initial steps to redefine the role of department chair on instructional leadership, they are clear about the rationale behind the change, and they are also in many cases eager to better learn how to systematically develop capacity of their chairs to be effective instructional leaders. When asked about the rationale for the change in focus of the role of department chairs, school-level leaders described the challenge they faced in helping teachers at their schools learn to implement best practices, especially given many lack a background in pedagogy.

Given the baseline data I collected as result of these conversations, I decided to forgo the use of a survey as part of my methodology for my study. Instead, I have opted to conduct a qualitative multi-site case study using semi-structured interviews with school-level leaders and department chairs to probe more deeply about my research questions.

Appendix B: Initial Electronic Correspondence for Consent from School-Level Leaders

Dear *Administrator Name*:

I am currently a doctoral student in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia working on my capstone dissertation for my degree in Educational Leadership. I am very interested in researching the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders at independent schools in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC.

Because I am very impressed by the work you are doing related to focusing the role of department chair as instructional leader, I am inviting you and a selection of your department chairs to take part in this research study by participating in semi-structured interviews. School-level leaders would participate in two rounds of semi-structured interviews, while department chairs would participate in only one round. The University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board has approved my research.

I anticipate the semi-structured interview will require approximately 40 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for participating nor is there any known risk. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. All of the responses from the semi-structured interview will be confidential. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate by responding to this e-mail. At that point, I will send you further information.

If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at jlo6v@virginia.edu

Best regards,

Jaime Osborne

Appendix C: Follow-Up Correspondences to Participating Schools

E-mail to Administrator:

Administrator Name,

Thank you for choosing to participate in my doctoral research study. As I stated in my initial correspondence, I am currently researching the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders at independent schools in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC.

You will participate in two rounds of semi-structured interviews. I anticipate that each semi-structured interview will require approximately 40 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. All of the responses from the semi-structured interviews will be confidential. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time.

Here are the action items for you:

1. Check your calendar and let me know of dates that would work for an initial 40-minute interview with you.
2. Email me the name, position, and contact information of each department chair at your school. From this list, I will select three department chairs so that their participation will be confidential.

Attached is an informed consent form and sample interview questions for your review. Please note that I will bring a copy of the informed consent form for you to sign at the time of the interview. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at jlo6v@virginia.edu

Best regards,

Jaime Osborne

Appendix D: Initial Electronic Correspondence for Consent from Department Chairs

E-mail to Department Chairs:

Department Chair Name,

I am currently a doctoral student in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia working on my culminating Capstone dissertation for my degree in Educational Leadership. I am very interested in researching the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders at independent schools in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC.

Your administrator has agreed to participate in my research study. I am hoping you also might be willing to participate in this research study. This would entail one semi-structured interview. The University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board has approved my research.

I anticipate our interview will take about 40 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. All of your responses from the semi-structured interview will be confidential. Even if you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time

Please let me know if you are willing to participate by responding to this e-mail. At that point, I will send you further information.

If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at jlo6v@virginia.edu

Best regards,

Jaime Osborne

Appendix E: Follow-Up Correspondences to Participating Schools

E-mail to Department Chairs:

Department Chair Name,

Thank you for choosing to participate in my doctoral research study. As I said in my initial correspondence, I am currently I am researching the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders at independent schools in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC.

I anticipate the semi-structured interview will require approximately 40 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. All of the responses from the semi-structured interview will be confidential. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time

Here are the action items for you:

1. Check your calendar and let me know of dates that would work for a 40-minute interview with you.

Attached is an informed consent form and sample interview questions for your review. Please note that I will bring a copy for you to sign at the time of the interview. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at jlo6v@virginia.edu

Best regards,

Jaime Osborne

Appendix F: School-Level Leader Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My interview with you aims to explore how you understand the role of department chair at your school.
I intend to transcribe this conversation and use it as data for my capstone dissertation project. All comments will be treated as confidential and at no point will I ever connect one of your comments with your name. Our conversation will be most fruitful if I can get an accurate picture of what your experience has been, so please feel free to be completely open and honest. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. It is very helpful if you use specific examples in your answers.

I will be recording our conversation, which should last approximately 40 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about the role of department chair as instructional leader. You are not required to answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify me if you would like to stop the interview.

1. How would you describe the role of the department chair at your school in general?

2. If you see the role as involving instructional leadership, what's the need for instructional leadership at your school?
   - Probe: Is there anything happening internal to the school that might make the role of department chair as instructional leader necessary?
   - Probe: Is there anything happening external to the school that might make the role of department chair as instructional leader necessary?

3. I identified your school as one that focuses the role of department chair on instructional leadership. What does department chair as instructional leader mean to you?
   - Probe: What specific duties does the department chair enact?
   - Probe: What are some examples of department chairs enacting these duties?
   - Probe: Whom does the department chair interact with as he/she enacts these duties?

4. In what ways, if any, do you look for potential for instructional leadership in appointing department chairs?
   - Probe: Can you give me an example of someone you appointed recently and what qualities you thought would make him/her effective as instructional leader?

5. In what ways, if any, would department chairs have a similar understanding of instructional leadership?

   - Probe: Is there a job description for the role of department chair? (May I see a copy?)
   - Probe: Is the job description focused on instructional leadership?
   - Probe: What are some examples within the job description that demonstrate a focus on instructional leadership? (Can you show me on the copy?)

- Probe: If you were to write a job description or rewrite the one you have now, what changes would make? What would you emphasize/de-emphasize?
- Probe: How do you evaluate department chairs for instructional leadership, if at all?
- Probe: Have you ever had to remove someone who you felt wasn't effective as instructional leader? If so, why?

6. What types of challenges do department chairs face as they carry out the role of instructional leader?
   - Probe: Can you provide examples?
   - Probe: Are there any issues they face regarding resistance by teachers? If so, why?
   - Probe: If there are any issues they face regarding resistance, does this vary by department or is this common?

7. How are department chairs supported in their role as instructional leader?
   - Probe: What is your role in providing this support?
   - Probe: Can you provide an example for each means of support?
   - Probe: What is the purpose of each means of support?
   - Probe: Do you have evidence/artifacts to demonstrate this support? (May I see it/them?)
   - Probe: What has been the most effective/least effective means of support? Why?

8. What are some specific examples of how department chairs have grown in their role?

9. What types of experiences enable him/her to grow?

10. What do you do to give them the kind of experiences that will help them grow in their role?
   - Probe: Can you give me specific examples?

Appendix G: Department Chair Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My interview with you aims to explore how you see the role of department chair in your school, especially around instructional leadership.

I intend to transcribe this conversation and use it as data for my capstone dissertation project. All comments will be treated as confidential and at no point will I ever connect one of your comments with your name. Our conversation will be most fruitful if I can get an accurate picture of what your experience has been, so please feel free to be completely open and honest. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. It is very helpful if you use specific examples in your answers.

I will be recording our conversation, which should last approximately 40 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about the role of department chair as instructional leader. You are not required to answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify me if you would like to stop the interview.

1. How would you describe the role of the department chair at your school in general?

2. If you see the role as involving instructional leadership, what's the need for instructional leadership at your school?
   - Probe: Is there anything happening internal to the school that might make the role of department chair as instructional leader necessary?
   - Probe: Is there anything happening external to the school that might make the role of department chair as instructional leader necessary?

3. I identified your school as one that focuses the role of department chair on instructional leadership. What does department chair as instructional leader mean to you?
   - Probe: What specific duties does the department chair enact?
   - Probe: What are some examples of department chairs enacting these duties?
   - Probe: Whom does the department chair interact with as he/she enacts these duties?

4. In what ways, if any, do you think school leadership looks for potential for instructional leadership in appointing department chairs?
   - Probe: Can you give me an example of someone who was appointed recently and what qualities you thought make him/her effective as instructional leader?

5. In what ways, if any, would department chairs have a similar understanding of instructional leadership?

   - Probe: Is there a job description for the role of department chair? (May I see a copy?)
   - Probe: Is the job description focused on instructional leadership?

- Probe: What are some examples within the job description that demonstrate a focus on instructional leadership? (Can you show me on the copy?)
- Probe: If you were to write a job description or rewrite the one you have now, what changes would make? What would you emphasize/de-emphasize?
- Probe: How does school leadership evaluate department chairs for instructional leadership, if at all?

6. What types of challenges do department chairs face as they carry out the role of instructional leader?
- Probe: Can you provide examples?
- Probe: Are there any issues they face regarding resistance by teachers? If so, why?
- Probe: If there are any issues they face regarding resistance, does this vary by department or is this common?

7. How are department chairs supported in their role as instructional leader?
- Probe: Who supports you?
- Probe: Can you provide an example for each means of support?
- Probe: What is the purpose of each means of support?
- Probe: Do you have evidence/artifacts to demonstrate this support? (May I see it/them?)
- Probe: What has been the most effective/least effective means of support? Why?

8. What are some specific examples of how you have grown in your role?

9. What types of experiences enable you to grow?

10. What does school leadership do to give you the kind of experiences that will help you grow in your role?
- Probe: Can you give me specific examples?

Appendix H: School-Level Leader Post-Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. The purpose of this discussion is to check with you about the kinds of things I heard from department chairs across various schools. This is in effort to understand how the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders at independent schools.

I intend to transcribe this conversation and use it as data for my capstone dissertation project. However, all comments will be treated as confidential and at no point will I ever connect one of your comments with your name. Our conversation will be most fruitful if I can get an accurate picture of what your experience has been, so please feel free to be completely open and honest. There are not right or wrong answers to any of these questions, but it is very helpful if you use specific examples in your answers.

I will be recording our conversation, which should last approximately 40 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about the role of department chair as instructional leader. You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify me if you would like to stop the interview.

1. It seems from my conversations that the word or phrase I heard most frequently mentioned in terms of instructional leaders was "X". Does that align with your definition of instructional leadership?
   - In what ways?
   - How does it differ from your sense of instructional leadership?

2. Department chairs explained the need for instructional leadership as "X". Does that align with your rationale?
   - In what ways?
   - How does it differ from your sense of the rationale?

3. Department chairs identified "X" challenges in their departments as they carry out an instructional leadership role? Does that align with the challenges you know department chairs experience?
   - In what ways?
   - How does it differ?

4. Department chairs identified "X" ways that school-level leaders support the role of department chair as instructional leader? Do these ways align with the ways in which you support the role of department chair as instructional leader?
   - In what ways?
   - How does it differ?
   - No one really mentioned "X", which you brought up in our first interview. Why do you think that is?
   - Are there any means of support that department chairs identified that you don't currently use that might be practical to implement at your school? If yes, which ones and why?

5. Department chairs said that they perceive that they grow as instructional leaders through the use of "X". Does that align with how you perceive they grow?
   - In what ways?
   - How does it differ from your sense of how department chairs grow?

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form for School-Level Leaders

Project Title: Department Chair Instructional Leadership at Independent Schools

Informed Consent Agreement for School Level Leaders

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders in independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair.

What you will do in the study: As a school level leader who is identified as working most closely with supporting the instructional leadership capacity of department chairs, you will participate in two rounds of semi-structured interviews. These semi-structured interviews will be conducted to answer the primary research question: Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair, in what ways is the role of department chairs defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders? During these interviews, you can skip any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the interview at any time. If you participate in in-person interviews, they will be audio taped. If you participate in an Interview conducted via video conference, the audio portion will be saved and the video will be deleted.

Three rounds of semi-structured interviews will be required to compare and contrast the perspectives of school-level leaders and department chairs, as well as to conduct a follow-up session with school-level leaders about the types of things I heard from department chairs across schools.

First round of semi-structured interviews. During the first round of interviews, I will interview the school-level leader(s) at each independent school who is identified as working most closely with department chairs to support their instructional leadership capacity. This round of semi-structured interviews will comprise the first phase of my research study.

Second round of semi-structured interviews. During the second round of interviews, I will interview approximately three department chairs at each independent school. This round of semi-structured interviews will comprise the second phase of my research study.

Third round of semi-structured interviews. During the third phase of interviews, I will interview again the school-level leader(s) at each independent school who interviewed in the first round of interviews. This round of interviews will serve to check with them about my emerging understanding of the role of department chairs as instructional leaders within their school, as well as across research settings. This round of semi-structured interviews is very important for data triangulation. This round of semi-structured interviews will comprise the third and final phase of my study.

Time required: The study will require about 1.5 hours of your time. This includes two rounds of semi-structured interviews that will last approximately 40 minutes.

IRB-SBS Office Use Only		
Protocol #	**2018-0453**	
Approved	from: **11/01/18**	to: **10/31/19**
SBS Staff		

174

Risks: There are no risks to participating in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand the ways in which department chairs are viewed, supported, and developed as instructional leaders among independent schools that are taking an active interest in re-defining their role to focus on instructional leadership.

Confidentiality:

All documentation of interviews (audio files, transcripts) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and will be only accessible to the research and her faculty advisor. All research data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Your identity and that of your school will be kept confidential. Your information will be assigned a pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this pseudonym will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. Any recordings collected on an audio tape or by video tape will also be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, the audio or video tape of your interview and any transcripts will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. If you want to withdraw after the study is completed, please contact the researcher using the information below. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Jaime Osborne
12402 Cedar Lakes Drive
Fairfax, VA 22033
Telephone: (347)901-8461
jlo6v@virginia.edu

Dr. David Eddy Spicer
Associate Professor
EDLF, Curry School of Education
PO Box 400265

IRB-SBS Office Use Only		
Protocol #	**2018-0453**	
Approved	from: **11/01/18**	to: **10/31/19**
SBS Staff		

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: (434) 243-6417
dhe5f@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs

Agreement:
I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

IRB-SBS Office Use Only		
Protocol #	**2018-0453**	
Approved	from: **11/01/18**	to: **10/31/19**
SBS Staff		

Appendix J: Informed Consent Form for Department Chairs

Project Title: Department Chair Instructional Leadership at Independent Schools

Informed Consent Agreement for Department Chairs

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate the ways in which the role of department chair is defined and supported and how department chairs develop as instructional leaders in independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair.

What you will do in the study: As a department chair, you will participate in one round of semi-structured interviews. These semi-structured interviews will be conducted to answer the primary research question: Among independent schools that seek to promote an instructional leadership focus for the role of department chair, in what ways is the role of department chairs defined and supported and how are department chairs developed as instructional leaders? During these interviews, you can skip any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the interview at any time. If you participate in in-person interviews, they will be audio taped. If you participate in an interview conducted via video conference, the audio portion will be saved and the video will be deleted.

Time required: The study will require about 40 minutes of your time. This includes one round of a semi-structured interview.

Risks: There are no risks to participating in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand the ways in which department chairs are viewed, supported, and developed as instructional leaders among independent schools that are taking an active interest in re-defining their role to focus on instructional leadership.

Confidentiality:

All documentation of interviews (audio files, transcripts) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and will be only accessible to the research and her faculty advisor. All research data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Your identity and that of your school will be kept confidential. Your information will be assigned a pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this pseudonym will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. Any recordings collected on an audio tape or by video tape will also be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

IRB-SBS Office Use Only		
Protocol #	**2018-0453**	
Approved	from: **11/01/18**	to: **10/31/19**
SBS Staff		

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, the audio or video tape of your interview and any transcripts will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. If you want to withdraw after the study is completed, please contact the researcher using the information below. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Jaime Osborne
12402 Cedar Lakes Drive
Fairfax, VA 22033
Telephone: (347)901-8461
jlo6v@virginia.edu

Dr. David Eddy Spicer
Associate Professor
EDLF, Curry School of Education
PO Box 400265
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: (434) 243-6417
dhe5f@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs

Agreement:
I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

IRB-SBS Office Use Only		
Protocol #	**2018-0453**	
Approved	from: **11/01/18**	to: **10/31/19**
SBS Staff		

Appendix K: Cross-School Comparison of Explanations Regarding Need for Instructional Leadership

Grasse:

School-Level Leader: "Our mission alignment is huge for us."

Department Chair A: "Philosophically the school is behind the idea of experiential learning and progressive education…but there is a lot of autonomy that they give their teachers and we are in a place of transition…in terms of how we are teaching because we are getting rid of the AP curriculum."

Department Chair B: "The [school] mission is always on our mind."

Department Chair C: "I'm teaching English within a school whose mission is focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. And so, I'm not teaching commas and similes and five paragraph essays. And so, my job description feels almost nothing like the job of my peer department chairs. And when I actually try to reach out to other English department chairs at other schools who don't have the same mission component, my job feels totally different."

Le Cannet

School-Level Leader: "Our mission is defined as focusing on the learner and so it's really kind of driven by what the school is about."

Department Chair A: "Independent school teachers sometimes think that [they] can do things independently of whatever they want. Independent schools can choose its focus and people have to go along on that path line."

Department Chair B: "Our school has sort of a different mission than I think some other schools. We want to be a very experiential learning system…The school has recognized the need for a lot of racial equity work. All the department chairs [try] to make sure that the teachers value that and are taking that seriously."

Department Chair C: "The school definitely identifies objectives and based on those objectives we need to get our department to that place."

Arles School

School-Level Leader: "It's so important for the department chair to be that instructional leader to model [what is in the strategic plan] by example."

Department Chair A: "Our strategic plan has goals in it so we're directed towards those – transitions like standards based assessments and integrated courses have required instructional leadership."

Department Chair B: "So there's a strategic plan for the entire school that sets out our entire vision…the department chair's role is to make the teacher aware that all of these documents exist and have them read them and discuss them [in term of implementation]."

Department Chair C: "If there are major changes to the curriculum in my department, I have to bring it to the curriculum committee and as long as it meets the mission of the school, it gets approved."

Avignon School

School-Level Leader: Department chairs [work] with their department members both to buy into the vision but also execute that vision.

Department Chair A: "The administration would like for department chairs to run departments that serve the school's mission."

Department Chair B: "One of the things we have done is get rid of passive department chairs and put in [department chairs] in line with the school mission."

Department Chair C: "The school is transitioning…we've re-done our mission statement a few times now …getting people to buy-in…shift their thought process."